

Peter's Epistles #35

Undeserved Suffering in Marriage and in Life – and the Example of Christ

1st Peter 3:1-22

(also available on-line at ichthys.com)

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I. Paragraph One (vv. 1-7)

(1) Likewise you wives [should be] subordinating yourselves to your own husbands, so that if any of them are not [at present] obedient to the Word of God, they may be won over without a word from you through the godly conduct of [you], their wives, (2) as they keep observing [that] pure conduct of yours [towards them], [rendered] with respect. (3) In regard to this, let not your outward appearance [be your top priority, adopting an inordinate concern for] orderliness in the styling of your hair, the display of your jewelry and the arrangement of your clothing, (4) but [focus instead] on the inner-person of your heart (i.e., spiritual growth) through the chaste humility of a quiet spirit (i.e., proper spiritual application) – this is of much [more] value in God's eyes. (5) This, after all, is how believing (lit., sanctified or holy) women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves, namely, through subordinating themselves to their own husbands, (6) just as Sarah heeded Abraham, in calling him "lord". You have become her (true) children, if you do what is right [for the right reasons] and not out of any fear of intimidation. (7) Likewise [you] husbands are to live together [with your wives] in accordance with [biblical] knowledge (i.e., according to what the Bible has to say by word and example about how to properly treat one's wife), [behaving] as [one ought] towards persons [who, as women, are] weaker. [You husbands] must bestow [all appropriate] honor [on your wives] as fellow heirs of the grace of [eternal] life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (i.e., sin in this regard compromising prayer).

1st Peter 3:1-7

The Responsibility of the Christian Wife in Marriage (vv.1-2):

(1) Likewise you wives [should be] subordinating yourselves to your own husbands, so that if any of them are not [at present] obedient to the Word of God, they may be won over without a word from you through the godly conduct of [you], their wives, (2) as they keep observing [that] pure conduct of yours [towards them], [rendered] with respect.

1st Peter 3:1-2

It is necessary at the outset of this section to remind ourselves that, although relations between the sexes and marital issues are if not paramount in the thinking of most human beings certainly very high on the list of what is considered of highest importance, from the divine point of view salvation, spiritual growth, spiritual progress and spiritual production are what this life is truly all about. This life is actually all about Jesus Christ. If that is true for unbelievers – and it is, since

they will acknowledge Him in the end (Is.45:23; Rom.14:11; Phil.2:10) and will be judged by Him in the end (Matt.25:31-46; Jn.5:25-29; Heb.9:27; Rev.20:11-15) – then it is certainly true of believers who claim, at least, to love and esteem Him and what He wants us to do beyond all else.

(17) For it is time for the judgment to begin, starting with God's household. And if it first begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not believe God's gospel? (18) For [as it says], "*If the righteous man is barely saved, where will the ungodly and sinful turn?*" (Prov.11:33)".

1st Peter 4:17-18

This being the case, it stands to reason that all instruction from the Word of God, the very thinking of Him who is the living Word of God (1Cor.2:16; Rev.19:13), is meant for our good in every way, meant to further what is really important in this life – and not to favor one person over another, one group over another, one gender over another. The latter is worldly thinking, political thinking, emotional thinking based upon incorrect attitudes so prevalent in our culture in our day and age. What every believer should want, whether male or female, gentile or Jew, married or single, young or old, is exactly the same thing: the salvation of all who are not saved, and the maximum possible spiritual growth, progress and production of all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 NIV

Maximizing the glory of Jesus Christ – which is what proper response by believers across the board would accomplish – is only possible through every part of the Body of Christ performing its proper function. An ear that refuses to hear or a foot that refuses to walk, will, in a human body, certainly handicap functionality to a significant degree. In the Body of Christ, this is doubly true because anyone who is not behaving in a proper Christian way in the secular realm will on the one hand be hindered in all spiritual activity as well, and on the other hand will be hindering all other believers with whom they are in contact. And the greater and more intimate the contact, the more detrimental the negative behavior will be.

But such people [who marry] will have tribulation in the flesh, and I am trying to spare you.

1st Corinthians 7:28b

[You husbands] must bestow [all appropriate] honor [on your wives] as fellow heirs of the grace of [eternal] life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (i.e., sin in this regard compromising prayer).

1st Peter 3:7

Marital strife, as any married person knows, is a great detriment to peace. And to peace we have been called (1Cor.7:15), since walking in peace with the Lord, the "faith rest" wherein we have ceased from our own labors and rely entirely on the Lord instead, is the Church Age's fulfillment

of the 4th commandment in our new dispensation of the Spirit (Heb.4:9-10; cf. Is.26:3; 57:2; Jn.14:27; Rom.5:1; Eph.2:14; Phil.4:7; Col.3:15; 2Thes.3:16; 1Pet.1:2). **This** is the reason, namely, to maximize our spiritual growth, progress and production (which requires peace as a prerequisite), that Peter in the Spirit weighs in here on the issue of marital authority, **not** to advantage one gender to the detriment of the other.

In fact, the Bible approaches the issue of marriage differently from the way in which almost any other secular – and sadly also most sermons and church teaching – treat it. Marriage, in the Bible, is more of an unfortunate necessity than it is a means of achieving happiness in this life. In his encouragement of Christian woman to do what is right, Peter will later appeal to the famous believing women of the Bible. We will indeed cover that below (vv.5-6), but what is important to note here is that very few such marriages could be described in terms of "happily ever after" or any such romantic fantasies connected with the ideal of marriage as found in our contemporary culture. We know of the issues between Abraham and Sarah. Rebecca also had to help her son deceive her husband in order for Jacob to receive his rightful blessing. And who would want to suggest that Jacob was happily married (even though he had four chances at it)? Hannah was a great believer – but not happily married. None of David's wives seem to have had a close and fulfilling intimate relationship with him, and his first marriage was a noted disaster. One could go on. What most of these and other biblical cases show definitively is that marriage, while often needful (1Cor.7:2), is presented in scripture not as a fabulous solution to all of life's problems and aspiration but in realistic terms instead. What we can say is that most of these godly individuals, husbands and wives alike, managed to fulfill God's plan for their lives in spite of the trials and tribulations marriage brings, and helped each other do so as well. No better biblical definition of a marriage which is good in God's eyes exist than of husband and wife supporting each others' God-given roles in order to do what we are all really here in the world to do, namely, to grow spiritually, walk ever closer with the Lord, and fulfill the personal ministries we have each been severally given.

It is from this point of view that Peter exhorts both sexes to embrace and fulfill their individual burdens imposed by the institution of marriage. No one, no man and no woman, can re-write the biblical parameters of what a godly marriage should be. Both parties are given by scripture very definite responsibilities, and only if both husband and wife accept these God-given duties and respect each other and the respective roles God has given each to play can there be sufficient peace for the marriage to survive and thrive – and for both parties to grow, progress and produce for Jesus Christ.

For we must all stand before Christ's tribunal, so that each of us may receive recompense for what he has accomplished through this body, whether it be good or worthless.
2nd Corinthians 5:10

This is true of men. This is true of women. We may have different roles down here on earth (and in fact no two believers have the same combination of gifts nor the exact same "jobs" from the Lord), but we are all playing by the same rules: we are all rewarded according to what we have done for the Lord in following the mandates He has given us, to deny ourselves, pick our crosses, and follow Him . . . in spiritual growth, progress and production. If we quibble about

our roles or specific jobs based on the gifts and ministries we have been given, we are only harming ourselves in the long run.

Does it really matter, for example, if in the Body of Christ we are a foot rather than a hand? Both are needful – and both have the same full and fair opportunity to win the three crowns of heavenly reward so as to hear "Well done!" from our Lord on that day. That is really our objective – or certainly should be. Focusing upon supposed inequality or inequity here on earth, whether personal or general, is a fool's errand. Because, after all, just as we are all coequal heirs of Christ and one with Him positionally here and now, we will all be experientially "one" in eternity, the perfect and complete Bride of Christ, with no more rancor or division or spot or blemish, coequal in the ranks of the Church in that we will all have a full share of Jesus Christ for all eternity – but definitely distinguished based upon how well we have served our Master here in this short life.

And all of us, it must be repeated, all believers, regardless of the disparate worldly situations we find ourselves in, are given a full and fair opportunity to earn the top rewards – because our Lord, the perfect Judge, takes into account the size of the talent we have been given and all circumstances related thereto, including our genders and the roles we have been assigned in this life. So regardless of how exalted or blessed or how humble or lowly our situations may be, we need to remember that our Lord, who created the universe and is its rightful Lord and Master, has shown us the proper way to behave here in the world, commanding us to walk as He walked in not demanding the honor due Him, but humbling Himself to carry out the mission the Father gave Him – in order to save us (cf. 1Pet.2:21-23).

"[In washing your feet] I have given you an example that you may do as I have done."
John 13:15 (cf. Jn.14:15; 14:23-24)

(5) You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. (6) Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. (7) Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. (8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].
Philippians 2:5-8

(1) Since then we too [like the believers of chapter 11] have such a large audience of witnesses surrounding us [both men and angels], let us put off every hindrance – especially whatever sins habitually affect us – and run with endurance the race set before us, (2) turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith (cf. "Alpha and Omega"), who, for the joy set before Him, endured the shame of the cross, treating it with despise, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2

If our Lord poured contempt on pride and endured the humiliation of the cross for us, should we not also accept whatever He has assigned us in this life? He was looking forward to the "joy set before Him" (Heb.12:2), and we are called to follow in His footsteps, esteeming and desiring and

hoping for a good report from Him for following His example in this life, rather than chasing after personal vindication or achievement or status in this life. The former is the proper perspective believers should adopt towards all worldly concerns, including marriage and the authority and responsibility issues within it.

The Bible approaches marriage from the standpoint of godly reality, not romantic fantasy. Rather than being an answer to all one's problems, the Bible tells us that marriage is a heavy burden (1Cor.7:32-35), albeit often a necessary one (1Cor.7:2; 7:9). If women are constrained by the need to respond to their husbands' God-given authority (Eph.5:22-24; Col.3:18), men are constrained by the burden of leadership and the concomitant need to do what is right by their wives (Eph.5:26-28; Col.3:19; 1Pet.3:7). And for believers, the over-arching concern should be the *spiritual* welfare of one's opposite number. That is why scripture discourages marriage in the first place (1Cor.7:1; 7:28), and seeks to mitigate marital friction in the second place (1Cor.7:3-5; 1Pet.3:7). Ideally, a spiritually mature husband and wife will be a perfect team, pulling together in the yoke for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Church. But that will only ever happen when and if both partners fully accept their biblical duties and responsibilities without demur.

To sum up in a nutshell, in biblical terms, wives owe their husbands responsive respect; husbands owe their wives responsible love.

(18) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (19) Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Colossians 3:18-19 NKJV

A good NCO follows the lead of his/her commander wholeheartedly; a good commander always has the welfare of his/her subordinates utmost in mind – after the need to fulfill the mission. That mission is really what all Christians ought to be primarily concerned with in any case, and that is why marriage can complicate the fulfillment of said mission, especially if either party is not prioritizing it so as to behave according to the rules. And if the burden of willing responsiveness to their husbands' authority which the Bible lays upon wives seems too onerous, or if the charge of loving, responsible care for their wives it places upon husbands seems too burdensome, then it is good to recall that marriage is a choice no one today is obligated to make – but that once made, the biblical responsibilities for both husband and wife are quite clear.

Pure and Godly Conduct Rendered with Respect: This is how unbelieving husbands, "not obedient to the Word", are to be won over to faith in Jesus Christ, namely, by observation of the good and godly behavior of their wives toward them – which should be far superior to that which they exhibited before becoming believers. A dramatic change in behavior of this sort working for their good in every way and accompanied by a proportional measure of respect cannot fail to impress an unbeliever who benefits from it. Giving unbelieving husbands the gospel – when it is opportune to do so – is of course not to be neglected. But as the old saying goes, "actions speak louder than words", and it is that truth which Peter has in mind here when he says "so that . . . they may be won over without a word from you". And while this passage is speaking of unbelieving husbands in particular, it certainly also applies in cases where a believing wife becomes enthusiastic about the truth while her believing husband is as yet still lukewarm: a sea

change in his wife's behavior for the good is likely to do more to adorn in his eyes the teaching she commends than any verbal endorsement, no matter how glowing.

. . . demonstrating exemplary faithfulness, so that they may beautify the teachings of God our Savior in every respect.

Titus 2:10b

Proper Priorities (vv.3-4):

(3) In regard to this, let not your outward appearance [be your top priority, adopting an inordinate concern for] orderliness in the styling of your hair, the display of your jewelry and the arrangement of your clothing, (4) but [focus instead] on the inner-person of your heart (i.e., spiritual growth) through the chaste humility of a quiet spirit (i.e., proper spiritual application) – this is of much [more] value in God's eyes.

1st Peter 3:3-4

The import of these verses is often missed. Peter, in the Spirit, is not telling the Christian women of his day that outward appearance is unimportant. Rather, he is telling all Christian women of all time that *outward* appearance is not even to be compared to the *inner* spiritual growth, progress and production which ought to be every Christian's primary objective, regardless of gender or of any other worldly consideration. This passage is also most revealing in terms of what Christian women ought to deem as of primary importance, namely, *not* the wishes and desires of their husbands (or the cultural expectations of the world in general) when these run counter to our spiritual objectives, but pleasing Jesus Christ. By doing what Jesus Christ wants, a good wife will be fulfilling the principle of legitimate and proper subordination to a good husband who is also intent on following the Lord as his first priority in this life.

If both husband and wife are making spiritual growth, progress and production for the Lord their top priorities, then all of the other conflicts that may arise in marriage will be much more easily minimized and resolved – since both parties are also zealous for the equal growth, progress and production of their spouses. But to the extent that selfish and non-spiritual priorities intrude, to that extent there will be friction and the hindering of spiritual progress. None of us is perfect. We all have ticks and warts and personality quirks which others find grating. We bring these into marriage with us, and that means a double set of such problems, often incompatible with the other set. So even in a marriage between two mature believers who truly do want the spiritual best for their opposite numbers, there will be times when harmony is challenged – and if this is true of such a couple, how much more so will it not be the case for those who are not mature or who are not fully committed to our true Christian purpose? At such times married believers must remember that they are responsible to the Lord to fulfill their own godly responsibilities, regardless of the attitude of the other party, namely, responsiveness to her husband's authority on the part of the wife (even when the husband is wrong – but not to the point of violating core spiritual principles), and diligent, loving care on the part of the husband (even when the wife is being unreasonable – but not to the point of spiritual compromise).

(9) I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, (10) but with good deeds, appropriate for

women who profess to worship God.
1st Timothy 2:9-10 NIV

The passage above makes no mention of marriage relationships and is clearly addressed to all women in the Church, but the sentiments expressed by Paul above are essentially the same as those voiced by Peter in our present passage: it is the inner person and our individual efforts for Jesus Christ in spiritual growth, progress and production ("good deeds" all) which ought to be of primary concern for women (married or unmarried), not outward appearances – and this same principle applies equally to Christian men as well (married or unmarried). For it is "the inner-person of your heart" (1Pet.3:4) where the real battle is being waged, and the victory is won only "through the chaste humility of a quiet spirit". That is Peter's way of saying that the outward characteristics of a mature Christian wife are really reflective of the good things going on in her heart as she takes pains to apply the truth of the Word of God to her attitude – the precise sort of proper spiritual application all believers should be engaging in at all times (husbands included).

Biblical Precedent (vv.5-6):

(5) This, after all, is how believing (lit., sanctified or holy) women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves, namely, through subordinating themselves to their own husbands, (6) just as Sarah heeded Abraham, in calling him "lord". You have become her (true) children, if you do what is right [for the right reasons] and not out of any fear of intimidation.

1st Peter 3:5-6

Peter, married man that he was (1Cor.9:5), seems to have anticipated resistance to the scriptural guidance he has just provided to married Christian women in the previous four verses. Roman women in particular in his day and age were famously independent and free to a significant degree from the severe parochial restraints which were the norm in the ancient world. So Peter appears to have been under no illusions about how his words here, inspired though they are, were apt to have been received in some quarters. He also was given to realize that the responsiveness he is commanding wives to offer toward their husbands would have to be completely voluntary and genuine in order to have the desired effect of leading unbelieving husbands to Christ on the one hand, and of glorifying Christ and faith in Him generally as unbelievers witnessed the godly conduct of Christian women on the other. No doubt for this reason Peter is directed by the Spirit to demonstrate that this responsive approach is nothing new, but precisely the pattern that godly believing wives have always adopted towards their husbands.

As no husband is perfect, not even the best Christian husband, so also Abraham was not a perfect husband. He did not acknowledge Sarah as his wife to Pharaoh when they entered Egypt on account of famine (Gen.12:13-20), and repeated this behavior later in Canaan with Abimelech (Gen.20:2-18). He seems to have been all too quick to accept Sarah's suggestion to have children by her maidservant Hagar when Sarah had not yet been able to provide him with an heir, and likewise too quick to allow Sarah to drive Hagar out once she conceived (Gen.16:1-6), then wrongly resistant to do so once Isaac was weaned (Gen.21:9-12).

And as no wife is perfect, not even the best Christian wife, so also Sarah was not a perfect wife.

She seems to have assumed that Abraham was the one not capable of producing children when she came up with the scheme to have him sleep with Hagar and then vindictively demanded her rival's expulsion once Hagar had conceived (Gen.16:1-6). Sarah was also slow to trust the Lord when given the promise of a son (Gen.18:11-15).

But throughout the Genesis narrative, we do see Abraham being a good, loving husband to Sarah overall, and we do see Sarah being a good, responsive wife. And we further see in the dynamics of the relationship between them what Peter is telling us in the Spirit is to be the standard for Christian marriage: husbands need to love and to act lovingly and responsibly toward their wives; wives need to respect their husbands and to act responsively towards them. And throughout the Old Testament, when it is truly a question of believers, we see this same pattern continuously repeated: not perfection (on the part of either spouse), but of proper love and respect.

From our contemporary perspective, it is certainly fair to ask why any Christian woman would wish to place herself under such marital constraints. But that is also the case for men, if the biblical requirements are properly appreciated as the disciples clearly saw:

(10) The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."
Matthew 19:10 NIV

So the first thing to reiterate here is that marriage is definitely *not* commanded by scripture. Marriage is an institution that God designed for the entire human race, but it only ever functioned with complete harmony in the garden of Eden (and even there, as we all know, that harmony did not last long). But for all who do choose to marry, the biblical requirements are quite clear: husbands must love their wives and act accordingly; wives must respect their husbands and act accordingly (Eph.5:33).

We have observed elsewhere that under such circumstances, without the desire for a husband and for children imputed to women as part of the Genesis curse, it is doubtful whether most women would be at all enthusiastic about entering into marriage, given a choice.¹ Even so, it is fair to observe that the disadvantage of having to be the subordinate party still looms large. If this world and this life were all that existed, then one could well ask why believing women in the past did not occasionally fall into despair. Peter is given to share with us the reason they did not when he writes that it was through focusing on spiritual issues that such godly women set their hopes on better things to come: "women of the past *who put their hope in God*". For the true Christian objective, for men as well as for women, is *not* bettering our status or success or positions or material circumstances here and now in this temporary world. We have a higher hope, a better hope (Heb.7:19; cf. Rom.8:20-25; 15:4; Gal.6:9; Eph.1:18; Col.1:27; 1Thes.1:3; Heb.6:18-20; 11:6; 1Pet.1:3-5): we are looking forward to an eternal reward based upon how well we respond to the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. For we are looking forward to a "Well done!" from our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt.25:23; Lk.19:17).

¹ See Bible Basics 3A: Biblical Anthropology, section IV.3, "The Judgment".

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

1st Corinthians 11:3 ESV

We are all under authority in this present life – and all Christians are most importantly under the authority of Jesus Christ. Having others under our authority, whether a husband in regard to his wife or a pastor-teacher in regard to his flock or any other position of authority in this world one may occupy, may be thought of as a privilege by those on the outside, but in truth any position of authority entails serious responsibilities . . . if handled in a godly way. As we know from our previous discussion of other authority relationships (in the previous installment of this series), the purpose of all divinely established authority is to provide a structure of order and sufficient freedom for salvation and spiritual growth. That is also the case with marriages and families. For without peace and good order, no family member will be likely to make much spiritual progress, not the husband, not the wife, not the children. Therefore every believer in Jesus Christ should look beyond personal desires and all selfish considerations and keep their eyes instead on the bigger picture, namely, the edification of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Calling him "lord": The example of proper wifely subordination Peter gives is also revealing. Sarah granted Abraham a measure of overt respect by freely granting him this honorific title. We can note that such overt displays of respect while they cost very little yet can gain much, especially if we are speaking of believing wives with unbelieving husbands. Here is no physical abuse or exploitation – and no demand on the husband's part. Rather this gesture of respect acknowledges the husband as the one in authority without at the same time diminishing the wife in any way – except perhaps in terms of misplaced pride (which we all should be eschewing in any case).

Not out of any fear of intimidation: This qualification is also very important to understand. A godly Christian wife is *not* told to be knuckling under to the unjust demands of a tyrannical husband. Indeed, this stricture tells us specifically that she is *not* to obey ungodly demands, especially to do anything which is not right, or to cease from doing the godly things (such as prayer and Bible study) which the Lord requires. Further, all of the good things she does do for her husband, including showing a measure of proper biblical respect that inheres in his position of authority, must come from the right motivation, namely, of seeking to glorify Jesus Christ and to make the faith we hold in common as attractive as possible for all the right reasons.

Christianity is not a libertine movement giving wives an excuse to disrespect their husbands – any more than it gives any of us any excuses to disrespect and disobey any legitimate authority (see Peter #34). But neither does our faith hand wives over to their husbands to do as they will without any consideration for the rights and spiritual welfare of the wives – any more than it condemns any of us to suffer unjust treatment beyond what is authorized and legal at the hands of employers or government authorities. When we add to this picture the responsibility of Christian husbands to treat their wives in a loving and considerate way – and God's superintendence and protection of all who are otherwise at the mercy of powers greater than themselves – we find that far from the cruel and patriarchal picture that opponents of the Bible want to find here, what we have instead is the best possible recipe for a happy, harmonious and successful marriage, where

husbands and wives both fulfill their obligations to each other in an environment of mutual love and respect, and where the spiritual even more than the material welfare of the partner is the top priority.

The Responsibility of the Christian Husband in Marriage (v.7):

(7) Likewise [you] husbands are to live together [with your wives] in accordance with [biblical] knowledge (i.e., according to what the Bible has to say by word and examples given about how to properly treat one's wife), [behaving] as [one ought] towards persons [who, as women, are] weaker. [You husbands] must bestow [all appropriate] honor [on your wives] as fellow heirs of the grace of [eternal] life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (i.e., improper behavior in this regard compromising prayer).

1st Peter 3:7

First of all, even though we have here only one verse for husbands (as opposed to six for wives), the entire burden of responsibility for the marriage is hereby placed upon the husband. Wives, as we have seen, are required to follow their husbands' lead (and time and space is devoted in scripture to explain the need for and the manner of doing so), but husbands are commanded both to know (and therefore to have learned) what is necessary to be good husbands to their wives and also to follow through in actually caring for them properly. And if there is failure (hindered prayer being a measure of that failure), the husbands, we see here, are responsible for that failure, not the wives.

We may glean from this passage that no Christian man should contemplate getting married before he himself is spiritually mature. Since he will be held responsible for "knowing" the proper way to conduct himself in marriage in order to give his wife due honor while properly managing the marriage in every biblical respect, being well-versed on everything the Bible has to say about marriage, family and the proper Christian way to walk through this world in general is an absolute prerequisite to having a successful marriage. Moreover, beyond merely "knowing" what is right to do in all these regards, having the inner spiritual resources to actually carry out this serious mandate is also essential. And finally, knowing what to do and having the spiritual resources to be able to do what one should are merely preliminaries to godly follow-through in actually doing what is right. Failure of the marriage, temporarily or permanently, is placed by scripture squarely at the husband's feet.

The Weaker Vessel: This phrasing is the KJV's. The word "vessel" is also used of male bodies by Paul at 1st Thessalonians 4:4, so the differentiation between men and women here resides entirely in the word "weaker". Comparing the average woman to the average man, we can say with certainty that women are neither mentally nor intellectually weaker than men. It is certainly true that the average man is physically larger and stronger than the average woman (hence in our country the good and proper distinction between men and women's sports). But neither is this difference primarily what is being referred to by Peter in this verse. Women, according to common knowledge, are often described as being more emotional than men. However, men are emotional too, and anyone with any serious life experience should be aware that women are exceptionally resilient. So while men and women are different in the way they process and

express their emotions, this is not a weakness per se, and not what scripture is referring to here either.

(1) Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; (3) but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " (4) Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:1-6 NKJV

We have covered this critical passage before.² Suffice it to say here that Eve was created for Adam to be his perfect partner. She was created to respond *to him*, to be the "help" he needed in every way, physically and emotionally. Eve fell into trouble when she began listening to – and responding to – someone else, someone who was not responsible for her and who did not have her best interests at heart but instead was merely pretending as much. Eve did not recognize this deception, and that was her downfall. But while she was guilty, she was not responsible in the same way that Adam was. Adam was aware of what he was doing, choosing for the woman outside of the garden rather than for God inside of the garden, and that made all the difference.

And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent *deceived* me, and I ate."

Genesis 3:13 NKJV

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent *deceived* Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2nd Corinthians 11:3 NKJV

(13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (14) And Adam was *not deceived*, but the woman being *deceived*, fell into transgression.

1st Timothy 2:13-14 NKJV

As all of these passages make very clear, the capability of being deceived is the critical factor. Women sin. Men sin. But women, even very smart, talented, resilient and capable women, are more vulnerable to deception than is the case with men. This has to do with the way God made them – as responders. And if a perfect woman with a perfect husband in perfect environment could be deceived by the evil one, how much more women with sin natures here in the devil's world. This is why husbands are placed in authority in marriage by the Lord – not because they are more worthy. Not at all. But because, all other things being equal (i.e., positing a husband

² See [Bible Basics 3A: Biblical Anthropology](#), section IV.1, "The Temptation".

and wife of precisely equal spiritual maturity), they are less likely to be deceived in making the myriad decisions which a marriage will entail. A wise husband will appreciate that his wife has insight, intelligence and perspective which he likely lacks. He will hear her out whenever any important decision is being contemplated. But all Christian husbands need never to forget that the responsibility for the consequences of all important decisions is theirs and theirs alone. And that is why the authority has been given to them.

Bestow all appropriate honor: This bestowal of appropriate honor is a command which Christian husbands must fulfill towards their wives, keeping in mind they are equally "fellow heirs of the grace of [eternal] life". In other words, we believers are all on the same team. We do all have different life roles (and different roles in marriage, based on gender), and we do all have different spiritual gifts and different ministries. But we are *all* equally part of the Body of Christ, and *no* single member is of any more worth or value or importance than any other to Jesus Christ.³ The fact that our roles are different in the Body of Christ does not make any Christian of less worth – just as feet are as necessary as eyes are to the proper functioning of the physical body (1Cor.12:14-27). And the fact that our roles are different in marriage likewise does not diminish the worth in the Lord's eyes of anyone, man or woman, husband or wife – because marriage does not define our lives here in this temporary world; rather it is our individual relationship with Jesus Christ which is paramount.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3:28 NKJV

As with all other biblical commands regarding all other authority relationships, therefore, the objective of biblical instructions on marriage is not to assign power and authority to one group to the disadvantage of another – in fact, those who would win highest honors in the Church must become servants to all (e.g., Matt.20:26; 23:11). Rather the purpose of placing husbands in authority in the marriage is the furtherance of the plan of God for both husband and wife. And to achieve this goal, husbands are placed under a very strict standard of behavior and made responsible for the success of the marriage.

Husbands, love your wives as also Christ loved His Church and gave Himself over [to death] on her behalf.
Ephesians 5:25

This verse sums up the Christian husband's responsibility to his wife in a powerful way. There can be no higher standard than for husbands to love their wives as Christ loves us, His Bride the Church. Therefore any Christian man contemplating marriage should take this sacrificial standard well to heart before committing – because in the end we are all responsible for our actions to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ loved us so much that He came into this world for us and died for us. That same willingness to sacrifice everything on behalf of one's wife is the very standard to which husbands are held – by the Lord.

³ See Bible Basics 6B: Ecclesiology, section I.A.3, "The Body and the Head".

II. Paragraph Two (vv. 8-17)

(8) And finally, all of you should be of one mind, sympathetic, loving your brethren, tender-hearted, humble, (9) not repaying evil for evil or slander for slander, but blessing [others] instead because to this purpose you were called, namely, that you might [in turn] inherit a blessing. (10) For, [as it is written (Ps.34:12-16)], "Whoever loves [his] life and desires to see good [in the] days [ahead], let him stop his tongue [from speaking what is] wrong and his lips from speaking [what is] deceitful. (11) Let [such a one] turn away from [doing what is] wrong, and let him do [what is] good [instead]. Let him seek peace and pursue it. (12) For the eyes of the Lord are [directed] towards the righteous [for their good], and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord [is set] against those who do wrong." (13) And if you [really] are eager for [all that is] good [in God's eyes, and are behaving consistently with that desire], who is likely to do you wrong? (14) But even if you should suffer for [doing] what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened" (Is.8:12). (15) Instead lift up Christ as Lord in your hearts [above all else]. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (16) But do so with humility and respect, maintaining your good conscience [in doing so], so that those who threaten [you] on account of your decent behavior in Christ Jesus may become ashamed of slandering you as wrongdoers. (17) For even if it is God's will for you to suffer [at the hands of unbelievers], it is better [for you] that you do so in doing what is good than for doing what is wrong.

1st Peter 3:8-17

Having completed his digression on authority relationships in general (1Pet.2:13-17) and in regard to slavery/employment (1Pet.2:18-25) and marriage in particular (1Pet.3:1-7), Peter here resumes his discussion of proper Christian behavior under pressure, ill-treatment, and persecution (begun at 1Pet.2:11-12). Many of the terms and commands above are synonymous and overlap in various ways. But if the material here seems somewhat repetitive, repetition is at the heart of all good teaching, as any good teacher tries repeatedly to reach his/her students through different avenues and approaches until the light finally goes on. And there is no better teacher than the Holy Spirit.

Be Of One Mind: This is a common and important exhortation found throughout the New Testament (e.g., Jn.17:11; 17:20-23; Rom.12:16; 15:5-6; 1Cor.1:10-17; 2Cor.13:11; Eph.4:3; Phil.2:2; 4:2), yet it is still often misunderstood.⁴ Christian unity is meant here, of course, but true Christian unity is not to be found in outward displays or in ecumenicalism. True Christian unity – the unity which Christ desires of us – is entirely based upon the truth. Only when believers are standing equally solid in the truth of the Word of God, understanding, accepting, believing and applying the same truth, the only truth, can there be any unity sufficient to produce "one mind", the desire for which Peter is given to express here. Only when we all see things the same way – because we are all perfectly understanding and applying the truth to whatever situations we are facing, individually and collectively, will there ever be true *biblical* unity.

⁴ See Bible Basics 6B: Ecclesiology, section II.C.3.f, "Christian Unity".

Conversely, the "unity" which modern ecumenical movements espouse comes at the expense of the truth. Truth is unifying – drawing together all who accept it. Truth is also divisive – repelling those who refuse to accept it. Believers are charged with casting out non-essentials when it comes to Christian unity, but also with casting out of their fellowship those who reject the truth when refusal to accept it is at the heart of the disunity (1Cor.5:11; 2Thes.3:6; 3:14-15; 2Jn.1:9-11; cf. 1Tim.4:1; 2Tim.3:1-5). It is the "belief in and full-knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph.4:13) alone – saving faith in Jesus Christ, His true person, human and divine, and His work for us on the cross in dying for our sins – that is truly "unifying". Any compromise with this fundamental tenet of our faith flirts with apostasy.

(11) Christ Himself appointed some of us apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers (12) in order to prepare all of His holy people for their own ministry work, that the entire body of Christ might thus be built up, (13) until we all reach that **unifying** [goal] of belief in and full-knowledge of the Son of God, that each of us might be a perfect person, that is, that we might attain to that standard of maturity of the fullness of Christ; (14) that we may no longer be immature, swept off-course and carried headlong by every breeze of so-called teaching that emanates from the trickery of men in their readiness to do anything to cunningly work their deceit, (15) but rather that we may, **by embracing the truth** in love, grow up in all respects with Christ, who is the head of the Church, as our model. (16) In this way, the entire body of the Church, fit and joined together by Him through the sinews He powerfully supplies to each and every part, works out its own growth for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Sympathetic: The Greek word here is a compound meaning "suffering with". As such, it is an exact parallel of the Latin derivative often used in various versions for the translation here: "compassionate". Clearly, if you cut your finger, I may "feel bad" for you, but only you fully know the pain of your damaged finger. But rather than ignoring the pain and trouble of our brethren (as the world often does when viewing the suffering of others), or of making a show of "sympathy" without any genuine feeling of heart or positive action taken to help (as the world often does in "virtue signaling"), believers are encouraged here to actually care about the troubles our brethren face – and at least offer them whatever help is appropriate along with godly, Christian encouragement. If you cut your finger, I might be able to offer you a band-aid. If you lose a loved one, I cannot in any way "make it right", but I can at least offer you a willing ear and the words of comfort that the Spirit gives me to minister to you.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15 NKJV

Loving Your Brethren: Most if not all of the other items in this paragraph may apply to unbelievers as well as believers. That is to say, we are to be sympathetic, tender-hearted and humble towards all. But the word here translated "loving your brethren" (*philadelphos*; cf. Philadelphia, the putative "city of brotherly love"), applies specially to our conduct towards our fellow believers in Jesus Christ. While it is true the Greek words and word groups based upon *philia* and *agape* are synonymous in the main, the former is more often personal and the latter (for want of a better word) impersonal. That is to say, we are to treat everyone with loving

tolerance (*agape*), but believers are to be loved in a more personal way where possible: we specially esteem our brothers and sisters in Christ, because we are all part of the same Body, the same Church.

In practical terms, this does not mean the suspension of our good judgment (wayward believers are to be avoided: 1Cor.5:11); nor does it mean that we are required to socialize with others, just because they are believers. But it does mean that while in the case of unbelievers our prime concern is for their salvation (as no amount of help or care or charity towards an unbeliever is of any particular use if it does not have that result), we are zealous of having our fellow believers in Christ maximize their spiritual potential in this life in growth, progress and production. The main way we accomplish this is by ministering to them through the spiritual gifts and particular ministries we have been given. We also all have the charge of looking after the material welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ when given the opportunity to do so (1Tim.6:18; Heb.13:16; cf. Jas.2:15-16). In other words, instead of being passively tolerant and seeking to do no harm and cause no offense to unbelievers (while being eager to lead them to Christ if they demonstrate willingness), we are actively seeking to promote the welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ, materially and even more so spiritually. This is motivation for us to do our part in growing and progressing spiritually ourselves, because only in that way can we minister to them as effectively as we should.

Tender-Hearted: This adjective is derived from the Greek word *splagchnon*, translated "bowels" in the KJV, and the adverb *eu*, meaning "well" or "good" (cf. "euphonic"). The *splagchna* are actually all of the bodily organs in the torso, and thus this word refers to the various emotions the human body produces. While in our modern world, thinking and even emotions are considered to reside "in the head", in antiquity various bodily organs were felt to be the seats of anger, love, passion, jealousy, fear, etc. We still retain this idea in the word "heart", and use it in that same sense, even though we no longer feel compelled to see the physical heart as an actual organ of deliberation or emotional response.

Being "good-hearted" or "tender-hearted" means in our biblical context having one's emotions respond to the truth in a positive way. It means possessing genuine, positive motivation for the decisions and actions we take. Spiritually mature believers are inclined in their hearts to do what is good and right, especially in regard to the welfare of others, desiring their salvation and spiritual growth, and all other good things conducive thereto. Spiritually mature believers are not perfect, but rather than being controlled by their emotions and reacting to them (in unhelpful ways), ideally have their emotions respond to the truth within them, so that they are motivated to do what is good and right in all circumstances, casting out all that is negative, selfishness, anger, bitterness, Schadenfreude and the like, and instead functioning in love and patience and compassion towards all.

(1) Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any *tenderness* (*splagchna*) and compassion, (2) then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Philippians 2:1-2 NIV

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with *tenderhearted* (*splagchna*) mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.
Colossians 3:12 NLT

Humble: True biblical humility has *nothing* in common with effecting self-abasing, self-effacing conduct and behavior. Being humble in the biblical sense does *not* consist of focusing arrogantly on oneself and one's own appearance. Instead of being subjective, true biblical humility is completely objective, focusing on God and on the welfare of other Christians rather than on oneself and how one is perceived by others.

Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.
Numbers 12:3 NIV

This passage is surprising – for all those who have yet to grasp the true definition of biblical humility. No one has ever been more humble than Moses was – apart from our Lord Jesus Christ. But neither he nor our Lord can be accused of lacking confidence or of projecting worthlessness. Arrogance assumes and asserts confidence in things it cannot actually do, projecting a worth it does not actually have. True humility is not boastful, that is true, but it is also not inclined to deny what is true – or act as if what is true were not true, merely for the sake of how others will perceive things (cf. Jn.8:55). Moses (and our Lord, for that matter) was not at all reluctant to use the authority delegated to him in a confident yet selfless way – for the good of those who had been placed in his charge. He did not flout that authority or misuse or abuse it, but he did exercise it with confidence because he truly possessed it.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.
Romans 12:3 NIV

Humility is seeing things as they are. Arrogance distorts that truth. For believers who are walking closely with Jesus Christ, the objective is always in view: we are here in this world to fight the fight that our Lord has given us. Keeping that true objective in mind is what biblical objectivity – and biblical humility – is all about. It does not matter what others think about us. We are not seeking to exalt ourselves in the eyes of others, creating a false picture of who and what we are. Nor are we seeking to diminish ourselves in the perception of the world – for that equally distorts the truth. Instead, we are not particularly concerned with ourselves at all (that is subjectivity); rather we are entirely concerned, as far as is possible, to keep the focus on Jesus Christ and what He desires. Thus the key to true biblical humility is being occupied with Jesus Christ, not ourselves or how others may see us.

(24) By faith, Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) and chose instead to suffer maltreatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin, (26) because he considered the reproach [suffered on behalf] of Christ greater riches than [all the] treasure vaults of Egypt. For he was looking to his reward. (27) By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.

For he grew strong by seeing the One who cannot be seen (i.e., by keeping his mind's eye on the invisible Lord Jesus Christ).

Hebrews 11:24-27

Not Repaying Evil for Evil or Slander for Slander: Having given us detailed guidance as to what we should think, Peter now provides us with the "guard rails" on the opposite side of the road, and, in so doing, puts in starker relief what the prior list of positive attitudes really means. We should note, however, that the positive characteristics above, i.e., unity, sympathy, brotherly love, kind-heartedness, and humility, are all attitudes which result in godly words and godly deeds. For the negative side of the equation, Peter does not explore the sinful thought-patterns which result in vengeance by word and deed, but shows us instead the negative results of *not* adopting the godly thought patterns he had just recommended to us. Failure to keep ourselves focused upon unity, sympathy, brotherly love, kind-heartedness, humility and all like-minded holy thinking in the Spirit (Gal.5:13-26), will inevitably result in making us vulnerable to precipitous speech and ill-considered actions when the pressure is suddenly on.

While it is only natural – the nature of sin – to retaliate against others in the same coin, whether by deed or word, this is precisely the sort of all too human behavior believers are commanded to avoid.

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 7:12 NKJV

"And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise."

Luke 6:31 NKJV

The "golden rule", as it is conventionally known, consists more in what our present passage, 1st Peter 3:9, has to say, than in what is often assumed. When it comes to relations with others, more needful is often to be left alone and not interfered with in any malignant or malevolent way than receiving some sort of benefit from the hands of others. The latter is indeed sometimes truly "good" in God's eyes (i.e., believers helping other believers in genuine need, for example, where even here the spiritual help we give according to our gifts is our preeminent fulfillment of such commands; cf. Gal.6:8-10). But the former is the much more common situation – or the lack of it, namely, the desire not to be harassed or harmed by others, and the godly choice not to retaliate when such things do happen, even if we are upset by them as we well may be.

Anger is a dangerous emotion, a sort of near term insanity (not for no reason does the word "mad" cover both eventualities in English and in Greek both). Christians who are making a habit of confessing their sins regularly should easily be able follow the biblical guidance of "not letting the sun go down" on one's anger (Ps.4:4; Eph.4:26). More treacherous is the danger of an ill-advised and instantaneous response to such slights.

Those who are walking closely with Jesus Christ will want to avoid even the hint of retaliatory actions or defamation, not only for conscience sake but also out of practical considerations. For even in cases of very minor offenses whether by word or deed, this area is one where we are all

vulnerable to hasty and ill-considered responses, and counter-intuitively perhaps all the more so if the offenses are indeed trivial, since the possible damage of revenging ourselves in small ways is not so immediately obvious.

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.
Proverbs 17:14 NIV

In the end, following the Word of God is always the better of course. No satisfaction from revenge great or small could possibly compensate for the divine discipline and/or negative natural consequences of failing to heed this very clear guidance. But for all who follow the rule of love and tolerance instead, things always work out better.

(17) Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. (18) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (19) Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" (Deut.32:35), says the Lord. (20) On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head" (Prov.25:21-22). (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
Romans 12:17-21 NIV

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.
1st Thessalonians 5:15 NIV

Blessing Others Instead: The opposite approach to returning slander for slander and evil for evil is said here to be "blessing others". The Greek word *eulogeo* is one of two in the New Testament used to translate the Hebrew verb for "bless" (*barach*), and etymologically does have to do with verbal blessing (with the prefix *eu-* meaning "good", and *log-* having to do with words and speaking). However, the meaning of words in any language has to do with how they are actually used, etymology, which may give clues but which may also be misleading, notwithstanding.

"You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth **shall be blessed**' (Gen.22:18; 26:4; 28:14).'"
Acts 3:25 NKJV (cf. Gal.3:8-9)

The "blessing" in view here first comes from God and second is clearly something tangible rather than any verbal pronouncement. In the Old Testament, moreover, even verbal pronouncements which were delivered by prophets with the force of prophecy had tangible effects such as in the case above (we think as well, for example, of Isaac blessing Jacob and Jacob blessing his sons). This is also the sort of "blessing" to which we "have been called [so as to] inherit a blessing". Our blessings in the Lord, present and future are marvelous and manifold (Eph.1:3). We have the Holy Spirit. We are born again, born from above. We are one together in Jesus Christ. We have an inheritance waiting for us in heaven, life eternal and resurrection, and a place awaiting us

in New Jerusalem.⁵ But what does it mean to "bless others"?

One thing we can say definitively is that Peter does *not* mean saying "bless you!" or "God bless you!", as is the habit of many. For one thing, we do not have the power to call down God's blessings on others (cf. Heb.7:7). We can petition Him on behalf of anyone, but it is presumptuous to assume – and dangerous to give others the impression that we believe – that we have this power. The origin of this dubious phrase is, of course, a wish, and it stands for "May God bless you!" At least the full phrasing has the benefit of making it clear that we are merely wishing for God's blessing on someone, rather than commanding it (which we most certainly do not have the power to do), but even this is problematic since in fact mere wishes do no good. If we are planning to pray for someone, we should do so, but often it is best to do so without proclaiming off the cuff that we mean to do so by invoking this particular phrase (which in fact is rarely actually accompanied by prayer).

Secondly, while encouraging others with helpful words can be "a blessing", that is only part of the picture here. For there are many ways in which believers – instead of being individuals who retaliate tit for tat in word and deed – can be blessings to all those around them. People who are cheerful and positive and never slanderous are naturally more pleasant to be around. And believers who are walking closely with Jesus Christ, spiritually mature believers who are seeking first the kingdom, are "salt" to all around them (Matt.5:13): God blesses their organizations and everyone in their ambit on account of their association with those who are doing His will in the manner of Abraham as quoted above (Acts 3:25; cf. Gen.9:24-27; 30:30; Ps.37:26b; Prov.11:11; 14:26; 1Chron.13:13-14; Acts 27:24). Believers are also often given the opportunity to help others in material ways, words of encouragement and advice, and charitable actions as well – legitimate when these are person to person and contribute to opening the door for the gospel. And finally, all believers have spiritual gifts, and we are blessed to be able to use them for the benefit of our fellow believers and also, depending on the gifts, in the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ: all of these things are truly blessings indeed, and the proper focus of every believer's life – as opposed to the opposite possibilities we are warned off of in this verse.

Let Him Stop His Tongue:

For, [as it is written (Ps.34:12-16)], "Whoever loves [his] life and desires to see good [in the] days [ahead], let him stop his tongue [from speaking what is] wrong and his lips from speaking [what is] deceitful.

1st Peter 3:10

The proposition in verse nine to the effect that we have been called to inherit a blessing is supported and expanded by this quotation (from Ps.34:12-16), which expresses the well-known biblical principle that blessing in life goes hand in hand with staying away from behaviors which bring the opposite of blessing, beginning with sins of the tongue, of which there are many (so

⁵ There is no end to the blessings that fall to our lot now and in the eternal future. For a short list of major categories of such blessings see [Bible Basics 4B: Soteriology](#), section III, "What it means to be saved".

that the scriptures are replete with warnings against misusing the tongue in all manner of dangerous ways). Keeping one's tongue under control, however, is not the easiest thing to accomplish, and even mature believers who have made strides in the area of controlling the tongue can sometimes revert to "shooting off their mouths" when tempted to do so.

(1b) I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked." (2) So I remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good. But my anguish increased; (3) my heart grew hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue.
Psalm 39:1b-3 NIV

(2) For we all make many [sinful] mistakes (lit., "stumble much", i.e., sin somewhat inadvertently). If anyone avoids [sinful] mistakes in what he says, this person is perfect [in behavior and thus] able to bridle his whole body. (3) Consider how we put bridles into the mouths of horses so that they will obey us, and [thus we are able to] maneuver their entire bodies around. (4) Consider also what large things ships are and how they are driven by strong winds, and yet they are maneuvered around by an extremely small tiller wherever the helmsman intends. (5) In this same way the tongue, though it is a small member, makes great boasts. See how small a fire it takes to start a great conflagration. (6) The tongue is [just such] a fire too, and as it dwells among our other members the tongue embraces the entire system of wickedness, polluting the entire body, setting aflame every aspect of human existence, and in turn being set aflame by hell. (7) For every species of bird and beast, of things that creep and of things that swim, can and has been tamed by humanity. (8) But no man is able to tame the tongue. It is an implacable evil, filled with deadly poison. (9) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse our [fellow] man, born in the likeness of God. (10) From the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. It should not be that way, brothers.
James 3:2-10

In the quotation from Ps.34:13 which Peter quotes, "let him stop his tongue [from speaking what is] wrong", anything we say that should not be said is "wrong", bad, and evil in God's eyes – there is no difference between these words in the Hebrew from which this quote is taken. In short, depending on the motivation, almost anything a person says could be sinful, which is why silence is to be preferred to any speech where the tongue is given free rein with the result that what is said is not said with godly care (Prov.13:3; 17:28; 21:23; Jas.1:19; cf. Ps.141:3).

When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.
Proverbs 10:19 NIV1985

(36) "But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. (37) For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."
Matthew 12:36-37 NIV

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Ephesians 4:29 NIV

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:4 NIV

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Colossians 3:8 NIV

Given the wide-ranging nature of the above verses, even a brief consideration of the sorts of things that come out of the mouths of human beings is sufficient to demonstrate that the types and categories of verbal sins are multifarious and would rate an independent study of their own to effectively categorize everything the Bible has to say on the subject. The brief list below, therefore, does not aim at being comprehensive; rather its purpose is to provide some idea of the scope of what scripture considers wrongful speech (with many of the items mentioned either overlapping or often being combined with others).

a) Gossip: The perils of maligning, slandering, verbally judging others and meddling are well-known to anyone who has read the Bible, the book of Proverbs in particular (Prov.10:18; 11:16; 16:28; 17:4; 17:9; 18:8; 19:22; 25:23; 26:20; 26:22; 30:10; Matt.7:1; Lk.6:37; Eph.4:31; 1Tim.5:13; 1Pet.4:15).

A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.

Proverbs 20:19 NIV

b) Foolish Talk (Prov.17:28; 2Tim.2:23; Tit.3:9; cf. Is.32:6): Believers are representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, ambassadors for Him and for His truth (2Cor.5:20). As such, comporting ourselves with a certain amount of dignity – for the glory of the Master we represent – is to be preferred to being known as babblers who constantly spout forth all manner of silly conversation – especially if this foolishness leans towards anything false (which it must inevitably do).

. . . neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Ephesians 5:4 NKJV

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.

1st Timothy 6:20 NIV

Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

2nd Timothy 2:16 NIV

c) Quarreling: Strife, contention, disputing, squabbling and the like are disruptive of peace and lead to many other mental, verbal and often overt sins as well; therefore mature believers are

well-advised to avoid unnecessary verbal controversies whenever possible (Ps.31:19-20; Prov.15:18; 17:14; 18:6; 18:19; 25:23; 26:17; 26:21; 30:33).

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.
Proverbs 20:3 ESV

Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.
Proverbs 22:10 ESV

For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
Proverbs 26:20 ESV

(23) But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. (24) And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, (25) in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, (26) and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.
2nd Timothy 2:23-26 NIV

But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.
Titus 3:9 NIV

d) Complaining (Phil.2:14; Jas.5:9; 1Pet.4:9; cf. Is.29:24; Lk.5:30; 15:2; 19:7; Jn.6:41; 6:43; 7:12): Department stores used to have "complaint departments", and when it comes to things that are amiss and do need to be attended to, there is certainly nothing wrong with reporting problems to responsible individuals. It is also certainly the case that few of us can make it through the day without sharing some of our "concerns" with others with whom we are in contact – about one thing or another or one person or another. We have already covered gossiping above and have dealt with the proper attitude believers should have towards authority in the previous installment of this series. Relatively few of us, no doubt, can, without flinching, always hold onto the old standard of "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything", especially when it comes to our politicians, celebrities and problematic people in our lives. But there is a type of complaining that believers should avoid at all costs, namely, blaming God.

"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, (15) to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (16) These are grumblers, complainers (lit. "lot-blamers"), walking according to their own lusts.
Jude 1:14b-16a NKJV

So grumbling, griping, grouching, whining may be staples of everyday life (it is hard to imagine surviving a tour in the military with this avenue of venting reasonable frustration foreclosed), but believers always need to be very careful to separate the attitude of dissatisfaction that leads to complaining from any hint of putting the blame for it on the Lord. And since God is in control of

all things that happen in our lives, it is in fact very difficult to get too far down the road of complaint and **not** be finding fault with the Lord and His superintendence of our lives in fact. While this may not be obvious at first blush, believers who step back and examine their spiritual state in the heat of a "gripe-fest" will see that any "blaming of our lot" ultimately points back to Him who assigns us our lot – and that is a very dangerous thing.

(5) But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. (6) Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. (7) And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." (8) Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; (9) nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; (10) nor **complain**, as some of them also **complained**, and were destroyed by the destroyer. (11) Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
1st Corinthians 10:5-11 NKJV

The exodus generation was notorious for this. Whenever things "went wrong", rather than responding in faith to the tests that the Lord placed upon them, they blamed Moses – and thus in effect blamed God – for whatever presently displeased them. And herein we see what is really so wrong with the grumbling type of complaining (as opposed to reporting problems to responsible parties in a non-emotional way): grumbling about our personal situations is essentially expressing a lack of faith in God – and a lack of belief in His goodness and mercy.

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, (7) and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"
Exodus 16:6-7 NIV

e) Cursing: By this word we mean not the use of foul or profane language (which of course is also condemned by scripture; e.g.: Eph.4:29; 5:4; Col.3:8), but the invoking of oaths against others, verbally wishing them ill as opposed to wishing them the blessing of God.⁶

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
Romans 12:14 NIV (cf. Lk.6:28)

(9) With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. (10) Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.
James 3:9-10 NIV

⁶ Taking oaths or swearing by God is also strongly advised against by New Testament scripture (Matt.5:33-37; Jas.5:12).

f) Threatening: If anyone ever had both reason to threaten (because of the dire consequences to follow) and also the ability and authority to carry out any threats, it was our Lord. But what does scripture tell us about how He comported Himself in the midst of the most unfair abuse ever suffered at the hands of men?

(21b) For Christ also died on your behalf, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His footsteps: (22) "He committed no sin, nor was any guile found in His mouth" (Is.53:9b). (23) He did not return slander when He was slandered, did not threaten when He suffered, but He entrusted Himself to the One who judges righteously. 1st Peter 2:22-23

He is our example in all things, so that we should most definitely restrain our lips from making threats, even when we are about to be subjected to unfair abuse (Eph.6:5-9).

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
Romans 12:19 KJV

g) Flattering: By flattery we do not mean benign compliments. The sin of flattery is closely connected to the false motivation of intentional deceit, flattering someone with the intent of some evil or sinful purpose (seduction or deception in some matter, e.g.), and often accompanies other underhanded behavior (Ps.12:2-3; Prov.28:23; cf. Job 32:21-22).

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward part is destruction;
Their throat is an open tomb;
They flatter with their tongue.
Psalm 5:9 NKJV

A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it,
And a flattering mouth works ruin.
Proverbs 26:28 NKJV

Those who flatter their neighbors are spreading nets for their feet.
Proverbs 29:5 NIV

(17) I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. (18) For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.
Romans 16:17-18 NIV

These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.
Jude 1:16 NIV

h) Blasphemy: The Greek words from which our "blasphemy" derives sometimes refer to "bad mouthing" in general (which is also to be avoided: cf. 2Pet.2:10-12; Jude 1:9), but in scripture these words are often reserved for verbal assaults on God (Matt.15:19; Mk.7:22; Acts 26:11; 1Tim.1:20; 2Tim.3:2; Rev.13:1-6; 17:3). Needless to say, this is one of if not the most dangerous verbal sin – with one of the ten commandments being dedicated to its prohibition (Ex.20:7; Deut.5:11). As the third commandment makes clear, blasphemy is not restricted to saying negative things about God; it also significantly includes making false attributions to Him or affirming lies in His Name. Any Christian should always take care when invoking God's Name under any circumstances (Lev.24:16; Eph.4:31; Col.3:8).

Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

Exodus 22:28 NIV

"And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."

Matthew 12:31 NIV

i) Boasting: The biblical guidance to "let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" is the height of wisdom (Prov.27:2 KJV). Unfortunately, the "boastful pride of life" is a quintessential element in the sin nature of all human beings (1Jn.2:16)⁷, so that everyone is tempted to "toot their own horn" from time to time. While on some basic level, the mere mention of one's accomplishments or abilities need not stray over into boasting "beyond proper limits" (2Cor.10:13), we all recognize arrogant self-praise when we hear it, and exaggeration beyond the truth is often the determining factor between the two – with the latter being inconsistent with a good Christian walk (Ps.12:3; Rom.1:30; 2Tim.3:2; Jas.3:14; 2Pet.2:18; Jude 1:16).

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

1st Corinthians 13:4 NIV

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14 NIV

(8) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – (9) not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

James 4:16 NIV

⁷ The Greek word mostly translated "pride" at 1st John 2:16 (*ἀλαζονεῖα* / *alazoneia*) is intimately connected with boastfulness (the cognate verb means "to boast"; cf. Rom.1:30; 2Tim.3:2).

j) Lying: Perhaps the most significant and arguably the most ubiquitous verbal sin is that of lying. As Christians, we are saved by believing the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we grow, advance and serve our Lord through adherence to and testimony about that same truth of the Kingdom. Needless to say, the truth is antithetical to every lie, just as He who is the very Truth, Jesus Christ our Lord (Jn.1:9; 14:6; Rev.19:11), is completely opposed to the one who opposes Him and us – the father of all lies, the devil.

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."
Genesis 3:4 NKJV

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."
John 8:44 NKJV

Without question, some lies are worse than others. Lies told with the express purpose of deceiving others so as to harm them and benefit oneself, as in the case of the devil's deception of Eve, are clearly the worst of the worst. False teaching sprung of false motivations most definitely falls into this same category.

(17) I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. (18) For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.
Romans 16:17-18 NIV

It is also true that there can be circumstances where for a believer to reveal information might be destructive to others and therefore wrong to do. The midwives who refused to put the Hebrew babies to death and subsequently gave Pharaoh false information to protect them as well as themselves are not reprov'd in scripture; indeed, they were blessed by God as a result (Ex.1:15-21); as was Rahab for her faithfulness to the Israelite spies carried out through a similarly misleading report (Josh.2:3-6; cf. Heb.11:31; Jas.2:25). Jael's deception of Sisera is likewise commended by scripture (Jdg.5:24); while Hushai's ill-counsel to Absalom designed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel was quite literally an answer to prayer (2Sam.15:35). What all of these and similar instances have in common is that instead of being meant to deceive good people for foul purposes, these misleading statements were designed to prevent foul people from harming good people – and entailed no small risk for those determined to protect the good from the evil.

If there is no such exigent pressure to report to evil authorities (wherein a truthful report would endanger innocent parties), believers should remember that a full and self-righteously "honest" answer is not generally required in our dealings with the unbelieving world. We are not required to make small talk, and when the circumstances demand it, we can certainly say less rather than more. We do not have to give an exhaustive analysis of why, no, a person's outfit is not in our opinion attractive, or of why, no, in our opinion, the meal we were just served was not enjoyable.

A certain amount of tact in protecting others from hurt feelings is allowable and biblical.

(4) Love exercises patience. Love does what is honorable. Love is not envious. It does not go about boasting vainly. It does not swell with pride. (5) It does not behave in a shameful way. It does not seek after its own advantage. It is not easily provoked. It does not bear grudges. (6) It does not rejoice over wickedness, but it rejoices together with the truth. (7) It protects everything [which ought to be protected] (i.e., of a confidential nature). It believes everything [which ought to be believed]. It hopes everything [which ought to be hoped for]. It endures everything [which ought to be endured].

1st Corinthians 13:4-7

Where to draw the line here is a matter of individual conscience and circumstances – and cannot be reduced to a legalistic formula. In terms of our dealings with other believers, however, wherever and whenever the defense of the truth of the Word and the biblical principles we hold so dear are concerned, speaking the truth completely from the heart is absolutely essential.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Ephesians 4:25 NIV

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.

Colossians 3:9

Where love is present, the Spirit is present. Where motives are self-seeking, all deceit is of the evil one.

(13) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. (15) This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. (16) For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (17) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

James 3:13-17 NKJV

Let Him Turn Away from Evil and Do Good: For good reason, denying oneself in turning from evil is placed first before doing what is right and good (picking up one's cross and following Jesus Christ). It is not possible to "do good", that is, to do what God wants us to do, to commit to spiritual growth, progress and production and to do it, if we are embracing evil, that is, what God finds detestable. It is not possible to serve God and the devil at the same time.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

1st Corinthians 10:21 NKJV

Believers find this out very early on in the Christian life, and "spiritual recidivism" is always met

with divine discipline.

Now no punishment (i.e., divine discipline) is a cause of rejoicing as it is being experienced, but rather of regret – only later does it bear fruit for those who have been trained through it – the fruit of [personal] righteousness which corresponds to peace (i.e., restored wholeness and completeness in our relationship with God).

Hebrews 12:11

For those who respond to the Lord's correction and training, there is restoration and growing spiritual strength. For those who bounce around at the outer limits of our Lord's tolerance, lack of spiritual growth and flirting with straying past what the Lord will allow makes for a wasted Christian life at best and grave spiritual danger at worst: absent repentance, failing to "turn away from evil" inevitably results in a course of spiritual regression which ends in either the sin unto death or even apostasy (depending on the individual Christian's reaction to the Lord's steadily increasing disciplinary action).⁸

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Matthew 16:24 NKJV (cf. Mk.8:34; Lk.9:23)

Let Him Seek Peace and Pursue it: The Greek word for peace used here at 1st Peter 3:11 (*eirene* / εἰρήνη, cf. the personal name "Irene") is the standard translation of the corresponding Hebrew word, *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם). While both words can and do express an absence of hostility both in terms of nations and individual relationships, biblical peace is much more of a positive concept, emphasizing not what is lacking (i.e., hostility) but the wholeness and blessedness of a state of affairs wherein things are right between nations, between individuals, and, most importantly, between God and those who belong to Him. The latter application is the one meant in our context.

(19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, **having made peace** through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:19-20 (cf. Eph.2:13-18)

The initial peace – restoration and wholeness – that any human being should seek is the reconciliation with God the Father made possible through the cross, the sacrifice of our dear Lord and Savior for all of our sins (2Cor.5:18-21).⁹ Sin produces hostility between God and man; only through the blood of Christ, His spiritual death for the sins of all mankind, is that hostility which separates us from God removed. This ineffable blessing – of having God's hostility towards us replaced with His great love and mercy – falls to the lot of all believers at the point of faith in

⁸ See Bible Basics 3B: Hamartiology, section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

⁹ See Bible Basics 4A: Christology, section II.9, "Reconciliation".

Jesus Christ. As a result, we do "have peace with God" . . . because we belong to Jesus Christ. This peace is, as with many things received at salvation, "positional". God the Father is favorable towards us on the basis of our union with His beloved Son. And in eternity, that peace will be "ultimate", perfect in every way. Here in this life, however, the quality and the depth of our peace depends upon our responsiveness to the truth. Here and now, our peace is "experiential", with the depth, quality and consistency of it depending upon our spiritual growth and progress day by day. That is why the verse we are discussing is cohortative ("**let us** seek peace and pursue it"), giving us an exhortation to seek out and pursue this blessed peace as something that can be improved upon in this life as we grow, progress and produce spiritually for our Lord.

(1) So now that we have been justified by faith, **let us take hold of the peace** [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:1

In the verse above, justification, possessing the righteousness of God which comes through faith (Rom.3:28; 4:26; 5:9; 10:10; 1Cor.6:11; Gal.3:16; 3:24; Tit.3:7), is a given for believers; we are all "justified by faith", but fully attaining and exploiting the peace God offers us in Jesus Christ is not automatic. That requires effort on the believer's part – spiritual effort as opposed to "works". In an almost counter-intuitive way, the striving believers must do to enter into the peace God offers us – and in fact demands of us (as this is the New Testament fulfillment of the fourth commandment) – requires that we let go of our own works and instead rely on God to work for us.

(9) So there does remain a "Sabbath day's rest" for the people of God. (10) For he who has entered into [God's] rest has himself ceased from his works just as God did from His own. (11) Let us therefore be eager to enter into that [continual and spiritual] rest, lest anyone fall [from grace] following the same pattern of disobedience [as the Exodus generation did].
Hebrews 4:9-11

The fourth commandment is the only one not repeated in the New Testament, and the passage quoted above explains why. Under the Law, a special day was devoted to the Lord, a day for spending time with Him and, liberated from the day to day grind, for focusing instead on His teachings, symbolized throughout the Law. But the Law has been abrogated by the cross (Rom.6:14-15; 10:4; 1Cor.9:20; Gal.5:18; Eph.2:15; Heb.7:12; 8:13). Christ has now won the great victory of the ages, and His Church is now on the offensive and specially equipped for the spiritual combat in which we have been called to engage (Matt.16:18; Eph.4:8; 6:12). We have been called to be attacking 24/7 – not to sit on the defensive and wait (as is the habit of so many in Laodicea), but to produce for our Lord who is soon to appear (Lk.19:16; 2Cor.5:10; Tit.2:13). Our "rest" is thus **not** a literal day off; our rest is to be a continual one – not of ceasing from doing what the Lord wants us to do **but** of putting ourselves in His hands and letting the Spirit empower us in the diligent spiritual growth, progress and production that Jesus Christ expects of us **every** day, "while it is still called 'today' " (Heb.3:13; cf. Ps.118:24; 2Cor.6:2), remembering that the greatest rewards go to those who are willing to respond and offer ourselves up to Him for His use through the Holy Spirit (Rom.6:13; 6:19; 12:1-2; Gal.5:16-18).

For God [through His Spirit] is the One who is empowering you both to desire [what is right] and to put it into practice for the accomplishment of His good pleasure.
Philippians 2:13

(28) Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (29) To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.
Colossians 1:28-29 NKJV (cf. 1Cor.15:10; Eph.3:9)

For those who do put their lives entirely in the Lord's hands, resting in Him, ceasing from anxiety about our own efforts, letting Him carry the load for us (Ps.37:5; 1Pet.5:7; cf. Matt.11:29-30), the result is true inner peace in the midst of the storms of this life (Matt.8:23-26). We gain and maintain this peace by trusting Him and following through.

You will keep him in perfect peace (actually "double peace"), whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.
Isaiah 26:3 NKJV (cf. Is.30:15)

(6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (8) Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (8) The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.
Philippians 4:6-9 NKJV

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:15 NIV

These and many other verses make it clear that the "natural" state for the Christian should be one of peace (e.g., Is.26:3; 57:2; Jn.14:27; Rom.5:1; Eph.2:14; Phil.4:7; 2Thes.3:16; 1Pet.1:2), carrying out our new fourth commandment of resting in the Lord not just on one day but with every step of the way on our journey to Zion.

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.
Hebrews 4:1 NKJV

The Eyes of the Lord:

"For the eyes of the Lord are [directed] towards the righteous [for their good], and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord [is set] against those who do wrong."

The Lord is favorably disposed towards the righteous but is hostile towards those who do wrong. Inherent in this straightforward proposition is the assumption that believers – all of whom are "justified by faith" and therefore are righteous, possessing God's righteousness (e.g., Rom.4:1-5) – do what is right and just, and that only unbelievers do what is wrong, incurring God's wrath. It is a simple matter to conclude that believers who are not living up to our divine "job description" here are putting themselves in grave danger.

(7) Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. (8) The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (9) No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. (10) This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

1st John 3:7-10 NIV

We have affirmed many times that no one here on earth inhabiting a body of sin will ever be free from sin this side of heaven – and that it is a lie to suggest otherwise (1Jn.1:8; 1:0) – but that blessedly God has provided a means for our cleansing whenever we do fall into sin, namely, personal confession of our sins directly to the Lord (1Jn.1:9; cf. Ps.32:6). Jesus Christ has already died for all of the sins of all mankind and has thus made salvation available to everyone and restoration available to all believers always – He is our Advocate (1Jn.2:1; cf. Rom.8:26; 8:34). "Those who do wrong" in our context are not believers who are fighting the good fight – and confessing the occasional stumble; rather "those who do wrong" are any and all who are fighting against God by acting in outrageously sinful and violent ways, opposing what is good in what they think and say and do. Any believer who falls into this latter category will, absent repentance, soon find him/herself under terminal divine discipline, the "sin unto death" – unless the pressures of increasing punishment from the Lord cause said individual to fall away from the faith completely.¹⁰

Yet while the terrors of abandoning our good behavior in Christ are evident and sobering, the benefits of following Him in behavioral righteousness which corresponds to our positional righteousness are also profound: His eyes are upon us for good; His ears are open to our prayers. The former refers to God's divine superintendence of our lives when we are walking as He would have us to walk (Ps.90:1ff.), while the latter means that we are also promised the specific help we need whenever we ask for it (Matt.7:7-8). Both blessings are obviously interconnected, because God knows what we need ahead of time and He does what we need Him to do for us even without asking – and all of these blessings have been foreordained in the plan of God. Putting things in this very poignant and tangible way, however, is most comforting indeed. It is good to remember that we have a heavenly Father who is always looking after us and watching over us,

¹⁰ See Bible Basics 3B: Hamartiology, section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

"monitoring the situation" perfectly and providing all we need at every moment.

And we know that, for those who love God, He works everything together for good – [that is to say,] for those who have been called according to His plan.

Romans 8:28

Having one's prayers answered, is an especially wonderful and encouraging blessing. Prayer is so important in the Christian life, and answered prayer always an occasion for great rejoicing. God is for us – and He answers us! Peter well understood the importance of prayer. A few verses before, he had admonished husbands to do right by their wives so as not to hinder the effectiveness of their own prayers (1Pet.3:7b). Later in this same epistle, he will impress upon his readers then and now of the need for sobriety and consistency in prayer as all the more important with the end times approaching.

The end of all things has drawn near. Therefore exercise discretion and sober self-control for [the benefit of your] prayers.

1st Peter 4:7

One of the most wonderful and blessed things about drawing close to the Lord in spiritual maturity and progress in the Christian life is the intimacy we experience with Him – and the growing confidence that He hears our prayers.

(14) Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

1st John 5:14-15 NKJV

Eager for Good:

(13) And if you [really] are eager for [all that is] good [in God's eyes, and are behaving consistently with that desire], who is likely to do you wrong? (14) But even if you should suffer for [doing] what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened" (Is.8:12).

1st Peter 3:13-14

If we are eager (literally here "zealots") for what God considers good, namely, not only staying away from what He hates but also being consistent in doing what He desires in spiritual growth, progress and production, then we have a right to expect that in the normal course of events we will not run afoul of authorities or superiors or anyone else with whom we may have contact (cf. Rom.13:3). However, as the case of Job reminds us, there are times when advancing believers do receive "undeserved suffering" as a test of our status and also to promote our spiritual growth.

(2) Brothers, when you are being beset with all manner of trials, take pains to be joyful.

(3) For you should keep in mind that this testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) So let your perseverance develop fully, that you may become fully mature and entitled to a full reward, having been found lacking in no respect.

James 1:2-4

Blessed is the man who stands firm in testing, because when he has been [tested and] approved he will receive the crown of life which [God] has promised to all who love Him.

James 1:12

So if we are doing what the Lord desires and staying away from all that is evil, we can be confident in the face of suffering, knowing that this trouble we are facing is the will of God for us, and that He will bring us safely through it to the other side, even to the point of parting the sea before us if need be. Therefore we have the right to cast out fear, knowing of a certainty that the Lord, our Shepherd, will see us through.

(3) When I am afraid, I will trust in you. (4) In God, whose word I praise; in God I trust. I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

Psalms 56:3-4 NIV1985

(27) Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel (28) without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved – and that by God.

Philippians 1:27-28 NIV

Instead Lift Up Christ:

Instead lift up Christ as Lord in your hearts [above all else].

1st Peter 3:15a

"Instead", that is, of giving in to fear when we find ourselves under pressure, suffering for His Name. In this we should keep in mind the example of the apostles and their companions who sang the Lord's praises in the face of dire treatment suffered for no other reason than that they were spreading the gospel for the sake of His Church (Acts 16:25-26; cf. Phil. 1:29).

(40b) They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Acts 5:40b-41 NIV

"Lifting up Christ" in our hearts, literally "sanctifying Him" or "treating Him as holy" therein, means maintaining a "holy space" of communion with the Lord in our hearts where all that is foul is ejected, it means loving Him with all of our hearts, it means keeping ourselves focused on Him.¹¹ If we are walking closely with the Lord, we cannot help to be joyful in the face of trouble. For He is our ultimate happiness, and we rejoice in belonging to Him.

¹¹ See Bible Basics 6A: Peripeteology, section I.B.6, "Focusing on Christ".

I have kept the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be moved.

Psalm 16:8

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

For [Moses] grew strong by seeing the One who cannot be seen (i.e., by keeping his mind's eye on the invisible Jesus Christ).

Hebrews 11:27

(1) Since then we too [like the believers of chapter 11] have such a large audience of witnesses surrounding us [both men and angels], let us put off every hindrance – especially whatever sins habitually affect us – and run with endurance the race set before us, (2) *turning our gaze unto Jesus*, the originator and completer of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the shame of the cross, treating it with despite, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

This being occupied with our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who He is, what He has done for us, and what He is going to do for us, is both the result of and a function of spiritual maturity based upon diligent spiritual growth. We have to take pains to get to the point where we have sufficient truth in our hearts for the Spirit to use in helping us keep our eyes on Him, and then we have to make it a godly priority in our lives to keep on "seeing the one who cannot be seen". For those who make the effort, both in attaining the threshold of spiritual growth necessary for it and in making it a priority to keep focused on Him at all times, there is no greater joy in our lives on this earth.

(8) Though you have never laid eyes on Him, yet you love Him. And though you cannot see Him at this present time, yet you have faith in Him. For this reason you rejoice with an inexpressible joy that bespeaks the glorious future to come, (9) when you shall carry off in victory the ultimate prize – the deliverance (lit. "salvation") of your lives (i.e., personal salvation) – which is the very purpose and objective of this faith of yours.

1st Peter 1:8-9

Always be Prepared to Give an Answer:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

1st Peter 3:15b

This verse is often used in conjunction with discussions of Christian apologetics, and rightly so. But while an apologetics ministry for someone called to defend the faith in the public square is generally meant for those so called, this verse is for all Christians. When we are asked by unbelievers about our hope, we should be ever willing and ever ready to give the good news about eternal life and resurrection through faith in Jesus Christ, the God-man who died for all of

our sins and delivered us from a fate worse than death.

The important thing to note here is the context. While unbelievers in our ambit may know that we are Christians – we certainly hope so – the reason that they are here asking about the hope we have is not because of any prior protestation of our Christianity (much less wearing a crucifix, or having a WWJD bumper-sticker on our car, etc.); rather, in the prior verses we have been instructed to be bold and courageous in the face of suffering, especially if it is undeserved. This is the point: maintaining a calm and cheerful Christian witness *when the chips are down* is the thing that the hypothetical unbelievers here find remarkable. And it *is* remarkable. Because even the most courageous and self-assured unbeliever is apt to become bitter and vindictive when suffering through unjust treatment. It takes supernatural help – the ministry of the Holy Spirit – working with a mature Christian spirit to act and react differently from the way the world expects. Goodness knows many believers, even mature believers, have a hard time "counting it all joy" when times are tough, and especially if they are the targets of unfair treatment (Jas.1:2-4). So on those all too rare occasions when a Christian really is focused on pleasing Jesus Christ, looking forward to our eternal reward and thus being obviously hopeful in spite of pressure and trouble – because our hope, our "treasure chest", is on the other side of this short life (Matt.6:19-21) – that will naturally attract the attention of everyone around us. And if any are marked out for eternal life, a wonderful opportunity for witnessing will occur. Such opportunities are thus not handed to us on a silver platter. Rather they are earned by prior spiritual growth *and* courageous application of the truth under notably unfavorable circumstances.

If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great offenses to rest.

Ecclesiastes 10:4 NIV

With Humility and Respect:

But do so with humility and respect, maintaining your good conscience [in doing so], so that those who threaten [you] on account of your decent behavior in Christ Jesus may become ashamed of slandering you as wrongdoers.

1st Peter 3:15c-16

As to humility, when we do witness for our Lord, the above guidance is very important to remember. This is not about us – we are nothing. This is all about Jesus Christ who died for the individuals we are witnessing to. Whether they accept the truth the Spirit is making clear to them through our words or not is a matter between them and the Lord. We are no better Christians if they do respond and no worse if they do not – and we should never make the mistake of evaluating ourselves on the basis of how others respond to the truth or fail to do so (1Cor.4:5). Jesus died for them. The Spirit is making the truth real to them in their hearts. And the Father is giving them rebirth, birth from above – if they respond positively in faith. We are merely "worthless servants" who are only doing what we should have already been doing in the first place in such instances (Lk.17:10).

As to respect, every human being is endowed with the image of God, the free will right to make his/her own decision about whether or not to be reconciled to God, about whether or not to

accept the Gift of Jesus Christ through faith. Doing so or refusing will not, therefore, be the result of any rhetorical flourish or persuasive ability on our part, nor should we attribute any worth to ourselves if they accept nor berate ourselves if they do not: this is about Jesus Christ. So whether we personally like the individuals who are brought to us as opportunities for witnessing or very much the opposite, we understand that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for each and every one of them – He died for all of their sins and the Father desires all of them to be saved (Ezek.18:23; Matt.18:14; Jn.12:47; 1Tim.2:4; 2Tim.2:24-26; 2Pet.3:9). And the Spirit will make the issue clear to them in their hearts. But it most definitely is *their* decision, and believers have to be respectful of that fact always.

Part of such respect is also to be found in keeping the focus on Jesus Christ and the gospel and not allowing extraneous issues to intrude. When witnessing, we must never make the mistake of intimating in any way that salvation is about personal behavior, or take the opportunity to suggest that the person we are witnessing to should cease from this or that sinful activity. The gospel is, literally, "the good news" – good news of life eternal through faith in Christ alone, provided by the grace of God (Eph.2:8-9)! All who turn to Christ are changed – and will continue to change . . . if they follow Him. It is not our job to get ahead of God's program and in so doing sour the gospel with legalistic leaven.¹²

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
2nd Corinthians 5:20 NASB20

If we stand up to unjust treatment in an honorable and hopeful Christian way, and if we witness to the power of the truth in the gospel as Jesus would have us to do with proper humility and respect, then we will give no opportunity to those who oppose us to wrongfully slander us. Instead, the light of the truth in the power of the Holy Spirit will shine forth through us in a way which cannot be refuted, putting all slanderers to shame.

"For I will provide you eloquence and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to oppose or refute."
Luke 21:15 NASB20

Better to Suffer in Doing what is Good:

For even if it is God's will for you to suffer [at the hands of unbelievers], it is better [for you] that you do so in doing what is good than for doing what is wrong.
1st Peter 3:17

The bottom line for this section is that God always works everything out for the absolute good. The plan of God is perfect. If we are responding to the divine guidance given to us here, then even if things are going against us, in reality this is God "working all things together for good on behalf of those who love Him" (Rom.8:28). So even if it is God's will for us to suffer, there is

¹² See Bible Basics 4B: Soteriology, section II.6.f, "False Issues".

always a good reason for it. In the case above, our stalwart witness in the midst of the fiery furnace of testing is an amazing thing to unbelievers who intuitively understand that only some supernatural power could cause us not to be consumed (Lam.3:21-23). Peter anticipates that such situations will give us opportunities to witness for the Lord – that it may result in the salvation of those who are impressed by the power of God working in us. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, wrongly accused by his master's wife, thrown into prison, and overlooked by one he helped – but he was eventually brought forth by God from his captivity to be ruler over all of Egypt.

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Genesis 50:20 NIV

III. Paragraph Three (vv. 18-22)

(18) For Christ died once for us on account of our sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in [His] flesh, but having been made alive by the Spirit. (19) It was also by means of [this same Holy] Spirit that [Christ] visited the [angelic] spirits in prison (i.e., in Tartarus in the Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory to them]. (20) [These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed His judgment) while the ark was being built, in (lit. "into") which ark [brought in as a sort of baptism "into it"], a [precious] few, specifically, eight people, were brought safely through the water. (21) And it is [this true] baptism [of the Spirit] which now saves you: [you are saved] *not* through any [literal] washing away of filth from your flesh, but [through] an appeal to God for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) [this same Jesus Christ], who, having traveled to heaven, is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

1st Peter 3:18-22

For Christ Died Once for Us: Jesus Christ is the premier example for all believers (Matt.16:24; Phil.2:6-8; 1Pet.2:21; Heb.12:2; 1Pet.4:13). Our job on this earth after salvation is to follow Him, follow in His footsteps, follow His example, sharing the sufferings of Christ if called upon to do so (Rom.8:17; 2Cor.1:5; Phil.1:29-30; 3:10; Col.1:24; 2Tim.2:12; cf. 2Tim.3:12). When Peter says "for" above in beginning verse eighteen, he is connecting this verse and this paragraph to what precedes. We believers are to bear up under unjust suffering following the pattern of our Lord. No one ever endured more undeserved suffering that our Lord did, during His thirty three years of life prior to the cross, during the horrific gauntlet of abuse He had to endure to get there, and, most especially, after being crucified, during the three hours in darkness on the cross where He died for the sins of the world, paying the entire fiery price for everything you and I have done, and for everyone else as well, "that He might bring us to God" (1Pet.3:18). He suffered for us, the One just person for us who are unrighteous – or were, until we received God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom.3:21-24; 3:28; 4:4-5; 4:13; 5:1; 5:8-9; 8:1; 9:30-31; 10:6; 2Cor.5:21; Gal.2:16; Eph.2:8-9 Phil.3:9; Heb.11:7). Thus our Lord is also the premier example of how to comport oneself during unfair treatment – inasmuch as no one before or since has ever come close to suffering what He had to endure, even before the judgment for sin, and even before the gauntlet leading up to the cross.

(20b) But if you endure suffering for doing what is good, this is pleasing to God. (21) For it is indeed to this purpose that you have been called (i.e., sharing in the sufferings of Christ); for Christ also died on your behalf, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His footsteps: (22) "He committed no sin, nor was any guile found in His mouth" (Is.53:9b). (23) He did not return slander when He was slandered, did not threaten when He suffered, but He entrusted Himself to the One who judges righteously. (24) He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness. By His wound you were healed.

1st Peter 2:20b-24

So Peter has made this point before, and repeats it here for reinforcement, and also to close up this section on undeserved suffering by reminding us that our Savior walked this same path before we did, and that as those who belong to Him, it is incumbent upon us to try to live up to His example, should we be called upon to endure unfair treatment for the sake of His holy Name.

But this is not the only reason Peter reintroduces here the example of Christ's endurance of suffering for our sake. Having reminded us that our Lord did this for us and set down the pattern of how we should behave if it be the will of God for us to undergo analogous mistreatment, Peter now demonstrates to us *how* Jesus was able to do so, namely, through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the true idea and overarching theme of this last paragraph of chapter three, and that main point is most often completely missed and misunderstood.

Put to Death in His flesh; Made Alive by the Spirit: Although our Lord had to bear our sins in His physical body on the cross for us to be saved – and thereafter gave up His spirit and expired – He was resurrected by the Holy Spirit before His body ever saw corruption (Ps.16:10; Acts 2:32; 13:35).

(3) [The gospel] which is about [God's] Son, the One who was born of the seed of David according to His flesh, (4) and ordained as God's Son by the power of the Spirit of Holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 1:3-4

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:11 NASB

Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

2nd Corinthians 4:14 NASB

Next to the cross, the resurrection is the most amazing and wonderful thing to have happened in all of human history. It is the focus of our hope as the passages above relate, and the promise of being raised from the dead – in despite of all that this world and our present material life tell us – has always been the focal point of the gospel's appeal: through faith in Jesus Christ, we believers are no longer subject to the universal constant of physical death that inspires fear in all who lack

this great hope (Heb.2:14-15; cf. 2Tim.1:10). As such, the resurrection has always caught the attention of those to whom it has been proclaimed (e.g., Acts 4:2; 17:18; 23:6ff.). So it is surely appropriate that Peter employs this great ministry of the Spirit ("having been made alive by the Spirit"), in tandem with the cross whereby our Lord won the right for us to be saved and given eternal life ("having been put to death in [His] flesh"), as the other book end for summarizing the Spirit's work in the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure."

John 3:34 NASB

The Spirit, of course, was instrumental in every aspect of our Lord's life. Everything about our Lord's first advent was intimately connected to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was responsible for His conception (Matt.1:18-20; Lk.1:35); He was filled with the Spirit from birth (Is.11:2; 42:1; 48:16; Mic.3:8; Matt.12:17-18; Rev.5:6; Jn.3:34-35; cf. Lk.1:15); He grew in grace and prepared for the ministry of ministries through the Spirit (Isaiah 53:1-2a; Lk.2:40; 2:52; cf. Ps.1:1-2; 16:8; 119:9); He was visibly marked out by the Spirit at the commencement of that ministry (Matt.3:16; Mk.1:10; Lk.3:22; Jn.1:33b), and led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested (Matt.4:1; Mk.1:12; Lk.4:1); His ministry was mightily empowered by the Holy Spirit at every turn (e.g., Matt.12:28; 1Tim.3:16); and His sacrifice for us on Calvary's cross was only possible through the Spirit (Heb.9:14).¹³

Thus does Peter, in selecting for our consideration here the ultimate miracle of the Spirit in Christ's behalf, namely, His resurrection, encapsulate for us and remind us of the totality of the Spirit's various ministries to Christ during His time here on earth which culminated in that very resurrection (with its resultant ascension, session and glorification).

"But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate (*paraclete*, "Encourager / Empowerer) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

John 16:7 NIV

(4) There are different gifts, but the same Spirit; (5) and there are different ministries, but the same Lord (i.e., Jesus Christ); (6) and there are different results, but the same God who brings about all results in all cases. (7) And to every [Christian] has been given a manifestation of the Spirit for the good (i.e., gifts for the edification of the Church).

1st Corinthians 12:4-7

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1st Corinthians 12:11 NIV

¹³ The above is a brief synopsis; for a full description of the Spirit's ministry to our Lord throughout the first advent see BB 5: Pneumatology, section II.C, "The Example of Christ".

As the passages above demonstrate, the Gift of the Holy Spirit is the fundamental advantage which we Church Age believers have. It is only through Him, His power, and the gifts that He imparts to us as those who belong to Jesus Christ, that we are able to accomplish the mandates our Lord has given us to grow, progress and produce for Him. Jesus Christ is our example. He accomplished the will of the Father, the foundational victory of the cross and all that led up to it, through the Holy Spirit, and we have no hope of following in His footsteps without exploiting the Spirit's ministry to the full in emulation of our dear Lord.

For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the [true] sons of God.
Romans 8:14

And don't get drunk with wine which is dissipating, but instead be made [spiritually] full through the [Holy] Spirit.
Ephesians 5:18

If you are indeed being reproached on account of Christ's name, you are truly blessed, for the Spirit of glory, even the Spirit of God, rests upon you (i.e., to support you in the trial).
1st Peter 4:14

The Holy Spirit is the believers' Guide and Helper in all things, and, as the last passage above makes clear, He is the also the One who supports us in times of extreme trial and pressure. In order to be able to endure undeserved suffering even approaching that of the sort our Lord endured (i.e., "sharing the sufferings of Christ", covered above at the beginning of section III), like Him, we believers need to make full use of the Spirit's ministry.¹⁴ Only so, in fact, could we ever hope to carry out the mandates of the preceding paragraph. As the Spirit was with Jesus Christ and empowered Him every step of the way, through all the pressures and trials He endured, so we too need to take pains to be following the Spirit, filled and fulfilled by Him, so as to be empowered by Him to do what our Lord would have us to do at each at every point, regardless of what we are called upon to suffer in behalf of Jesus Christ.

This is the point of Peter's third paragraph, summarized by his addition of the words "having been made alive by the Spirit": Christ accomplished everything He accomplished through the Holy Spirit, and that is the way we too will be able to endure in a godly way the undeserved suffering related in the verses above (1Pet.3:13-17). By following the Spirit and allowing ourselves to be empowered by Him, all good things will come to us, the resurrection and everything connected with it and everything else preceding it in the Christian life, just as was the case with our Lord. If only we are patient and consistently make use of the Spirit's resources,¹⁵ we can have complete confidence not only of the resurrection (just as through the Spirit our Lord was resurrected after suffering death for us), but also of the most wonderful encouragement, help and support in living our lives for Jesus Christ – received directly from God the Spirit who

¹⁴ See BB 5: Pneumatology, section II.B.3.b, "Empowerment of the Believer", and BB 6A: Peripateology.

¹⁵ See BB 5: Pneumatology, section II.B.3.b.3, "Walking in the Spirit".

indwells us.

(16) But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for. (17) For what the flesh lusts for is contrary to the Spirit's will, and the Spirit is opposed to what the flesh lusts for. Since these are diametrically opposed to each other in this way, what you are doing is not what you yourself choose. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; (21) drunkenness, orgies – and whatever is similar to all these things. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, uprightness, faith, (23) humility, self-control. Against such things, there is no Law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its weaknesses and its lusts. (25) If we live because of the Spirit, let us also walk by means of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-25

By Means of this Same Holy Spirit:

It was also by means of [this same Holy] Spirit that [Christ] visited the [angelic] spirits in prison (i.e., in Tartarus in the Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory to them].

1st Peter 3:19

After our Lord gave up His human spirit and expired physically, He descended into Hades, specifically, into the paradise below the earth (1Sam.28:15; 28:19; 2Sam.12:23; Lk.16:19-31; 23:43), where all departed believers were entertained prior to being taken to the third heaven by Christ at His ascension (Ps.68:18; Eph.4:8-10; cf. Jn.12:26; 14:1-3; 17:24; 2Cor.5:8; Phil.1:23). So our Lord, in the short time between the cross and the resurrection, enjoyed a time of fellowship with Abraham and Lazarus and the thief on the cross – and all other believers who had previously departed this life – then, after the forty days He spent on earth after resurrection (Acts 1:3), took all the pre-cross believers with Him to heaven in His glorious ascension to the Father (Ps.68:18; Eph.4:8; cf. Ps.68:24-27; Jn.14:2-3; Col.2:15; Rev.1:18).¹⁶

(7) And to each of us this grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) For it says, “**When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive** (i.e., He brought pre-cross believers to heaven). He gave gifts to men (i.e., the Spirit and spiritual gifts).” (9) Now [as to] this [phrase] “He ascended”, what can it mean except that He had also [previously] descended into **the lower reaches of the earth** (i.e., to Hades, from whence He brought the pre-cross believers to heaven)? (10) The One who descended is also the One who ascended above all the heavens (i.e., into the third heaven, the place of the Father's residence), in order to fulfill all things (i.e., to complete the victory won at the cross; cf. Ps.110:1).

¹⁶ See BB 4A: Christology, section I.5.o.2.3, "The Transfer of Believers from the Subterranean Paradise to the Third Heaven".

Our current verse, 1st Peter 3:19, tells that during His short sojourn in "the lower reaches of the earth", our Lord also made a proclamation of His victory on the cross to the fallen angels imprisoned in the Abyss. Hades, the underworld, which, like the third heaven, is "not of this creation". That is to say, it is not part of the present "heavens and earth" (restored during the seven days of Genesis chapter one) which will be destroyed (Rev.20:11; cf. Ps.102:26; Is.13:13; 34.4; 51:6; Hag.2:6; 2:21; Matt.24:35; Heb.1:11-12; 12:25-29; Rev.6:14) and replaced by the new heavens and the new earth at the end of human history (Rev.21:1; cf. Ps.102:25-26; Is.65:17; Is.66:22; 2Pet.3:7-13). Hades has four compartments: Paradise (aka, "Abraham's Bosom"), Torments (where all departed unbelievers presently reside), the Abyss (aka, "Tartarus", where certain fallen angels are currently imprisoned), and the Lake of Fire (presently unoccupied, but the future "home" of all unbelievers and fallen angels).¹⁷ We know that the rich man was able to speak with Abraham by shouting across the "great gulf fixed" between Paradise and Torments (Lk.16:26), but there is no mention of any possibility for the fallen angels in the Abyss to have any such contact, however remote, with either of these other two sections of Hades. For that reason, in order for our Lord to be able to proclaim His victory to these rebels – the only creatures in the universe who had no other way of finding out about the decisive triumph of our Lord – the Spirit empowered a unique and miraculous journey for our Lord to Tartarus (the Abyss) in order for Him to inform these demons that their cause was now officially lost.

[God] has erased the charge against us along with its particulars (i.e., our sinful nature and personal sins) which opposed our [relationship with Him], and He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross. [For by means of the victory of the cross, God] has stripped [demon] rulers and authorities [of their power] and subjected them to public humiliation, *having triumphed* over them in [Christ].

Colossians 2:14-15

A good number of the demons so imprisoned have been in the Abyss ever since they were deposited there for having relations with human women before the flood and thus violating God's ground rules for the present heavenly conflict (1Pet.3:19-20a; 2Pet.2:4-10a; Jude 1:5-7). When our Lord appeared to them in refulgent light, it would have been the very first time since then that these quondam creatures of light were relieved of the darkness which currently oppresses them (2Pet.2:4; Jude 1:6; cf. Is.24:21-23; Lk.8:31; 2Cor.11:14) – and only to find out that all hope of defeating the plan of God had now been extinguished entirely. Scripture calls them "spirits" here, though there are other words for fallen angels in the New Testament¹⁸, and that is deliberate, in order to put into stark contrast the impotence of these followers of Satan compared with the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit through whose agency our Lord made this journey

¹⁷ See the chart "The Waters Above" and following discussion in BB 2B, and also the posting, "The Geography of Heaven and Hell".

¹⁸ See BB 2A: Angelology, section II.9.6, "The Organization of the Fallen Angels".

and gave this victorious proclamation.¹⁹

(16) "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Encourager (i.e., the Holy Spirit) **to be with you forever** – (17) the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and will be in you."

John 14:16-17

Just as the Holy Spirit was with our Lord, even unto His descent into Hades, even unto His journey to the lightless Abyss, so the Holy Spirit who now indwells every believer will be "with us forever", all the way to the end, even if that end stretches through the Tribulation unto the return of Jesus Christ at its end – He will be with us and in us, no matter how dark things may become.

Empowering our Lord to visit a never before visited place (by any save those imprisoned therein) was an amazing miracle. And the Spirit continues to do amazing miracles for us and through us every day. Perhaps not the attention-catching miracles of apostolic times, but miraculous feats of trust and perseverance, of believing the truth and sharing it, of walking with our Lord and serving Him in ways impossible without the Spirit within us – such as enduring all manner of otherwise unendurable suffering in the manner of our Lord through that same Holy Spirit.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (i.e., and will send the Holy Spirit; cf. Jn.14:16ff.)."

John 14:12 KJV

Though our Lord was "put to death in [His] flesh", yet He was "made alive by the Spirit". Analogously, we believers have through Christ "died to the flesh" and been born again, born from above, given new life, eternal life "by the Spirit" (Gal.2:20; 6:14; cf. Rom.6:6). And just as our Lord proclaimed the truth in Tartarus, lighting up the darkness with His glory, so we are to be beacons of light in this dark world, proclaiming the glorious light of the gospel of truth to all and sundry, through that same Holy Spirit (Matt.5:14-16).

Disobedient Spirits:

[These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed His judgment) while the ark was being built, in (lit. "into") which ark [brought in as a sort of baptism "into it"], a [precious] few, specifically, eight people, were brought safely through the water.

1st Peter 3:20

As mentioned above, the fallen angels referred to here are the ones who were involved in the Genesis chapter six attempt to destroy the human race through catastrophic contamination of the

¹⁹ See Col. R.B. Thieme, Jr., *Victorious Proclamation* (Houston 1977).

human gene pool. Noah was "perfect in his generations" (Gen.6:9), meaning that he and his family were among the last human beings alive not to have had their seed polluted by demonic interference. Like a virulent pandemic, the genetic alterations that gave us the Nephilim, the half-breed offspring of demons and human women, had spread to the point of almost obliterating true humanity – an outcome which would have made the coming of the Messiah as a true human being impossible.

In the Days of Noah: The greatness of Noah who stood in the gap for the entire human race at this time cannot be overemphasized. First, he resisted – and through him his entire immediate family resisted – the seductive temptations and societal pressures to mix his seed and that of his children with these putative "supermen". Secondly and of even more importance, Noah obeyed the Lord to a degree seldom seen in human history (Gen.7:5; 7:9; cf. Ezek.14:14; 14:20).

Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.
Genesis 6:22 NKJV

And [God] did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.
2nd Peter 2:5 NKJV

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.
Hebrews 11:7 NKJV

Just as Noah is distinguished from the wicked – and delivered while they are destroyed – so we need to follow his example in order to be brought safely through the flood of evil that surrounds us in the devil's world. Noah was spiritually successful because He listened to the Lord and obeyed His words. Our spiritual success likewise depends upon our hearkening to God – to the Holy Spirit who indwells us and who speaks to us through the Word of God – so that in the pattern of our Master Jesus Christ we too might fulfill the individual missions that God has apportioned to us, even if that involves suffering in the pattern of His suffering (impossible to endure without relying on the Holy Spirit).

Noah prepared diligently for the coming crisis, building an ark over a period of 120 years in spite of all ridicule and opposition. We may say that Noah had very specific instructions – and so he did. But so do we. Our "ark" is the spiritual growth we all need to attain to face the crises ahead, the Tribulation most especially, and the Bible is replete with instructions, exemplars and encouragement to that end. What if Noah had not built the ark? We shudder to think. But what if we do not accomplish the parallel task we have been given to prepare through spiritual growth and progress for the testing ahead, especially if it be our lot to have to endure the Tribulation? Shuddering is appropriate in contemplation of such a failure as well, and not only for ourselves. Noah was instrumental in saving not only himself through his obedience but his family as well. And we may well find ourselves in a similar situation.

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you *and your*

household.

Acts 16:31 NKJV

Noah and his family were "saved" through the flood, brought safely through the rising waters in the ark; it would not be surprising if the Lord uses our personal spiritual preparation to bring us safely through the great flood ahead, sparing our families as well on our account (cf. Acts 27:24).

God Patiently Waited:

And God said, "My Spirit will not strive with Man forever in their sinful manner of life – for this [is the way of] flesh. Therefore his days shall be 120 years."

Genesis 6:3

Satan's attack on the antediluvian civilization came very close to eliminating true humanity as the contamination, direct and indirect, from the Nephilim spread out more and more widely. The flood, rather than merely destructive, was thus actually a wonderfully gracious deliverance – of you and me and all future believers, because otherwise the Messiah could never have come and so we could not have been saved.

In the 120 year pause before the flood was brought on, we are given to see perspicuously the wisdom and grace of God. The delay not only gives Noah the time necessary to build the ark but also provides an abundantly generous opportunity for repentance on the part of all who might yet desire to be saved. God is perfectly merciful and also perfectly just. Jesus Christ died for all so that all might be saved, even though God could not help but know since before creation who would refuse His grace. And just as unbelievers today are given a sufficiently full life (of varying duration) in order to demonstrate to themselves and others that their rejection of the truth was fully culpable (as will be revealed at the last judgment), so in this case we see God providing more than ample time for repentance – on the part of any willing to repent. After all, the ark was a massive construction project and would have been common knowledge among all the inhabitants of the world at that time – and they no doubt mocked Noah for it. Scripture calls Noah a "preacher of righteousness" (2Pet.2:5), and we may infer that the ark was his "sermon", so to speak, a visible manifestation of the power and presence of God without whose help it surely would have been impossible to build it.

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Hebrews 11:7 NKJV

The fact that only his family responded does not invalidate Noah's ministry nor God's grace in delaying judgment and giving fair warning – rather it confirms both. The Spirit was clearly instrumental in all aspects of this oft popularized series of miracles, guiding and empowering everything from the initial commands to Noah, the construction of the ark, the assembling of the animals, the protection of everyone in the ark when the flood came on, all the way to the final exit from the ark when the flood waters had abated. Only through the Spirit could Noah have done what he did. Only through the Spirit can any of us do what the Lord calls us to do,

especially in times and circumstances of particular pressure and suffering, following the example of our Lord. And only through the Spirit will we "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1Cor.11:10) be able to properly prepare for and then endure the Tribulation ahead. Noah's obedience to the Lord in preparing for the coming catastrophe in precisely the way the Lord instructed him should be proverbial, more so than the ark which merely demonstrates that obedience. At present, we believers alive on earth today have much less time than Noah did to prepare for what is coming. But like Noah, we certainly know *how* to prepare: through spiritual growth and advance through the truth. When our flood waters come, may we be ready as Noah was ready.

(1) But concerning the times and the seasons (i.e., the eschatological time-line and the specific events within it), brothers, you have no need for anyone to write you. (2) For you yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord (i.e., the second advent preceded by the Tribulation) is coming just like a thief in the night. (3) When [people] are saying "Peace!" and "Safety!", at that precise time destruction will fall swiftly upon them, just like labor pains on a pregnant woman. (4) But you, brothers, are not in darkness that [this] Day [of the Lord] should catch you out like a thief. (5) For you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness. (6) So let us therefore not sleep like the rest [of unbelieving mankind], but be awake and alert. (7) For those who sleep do so at night. And those who get drunk do so at night. (8) But since we are of the day, let us put on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of hope (i.e., confidence) of salvation. (9) Because God has not appointed us for wrath, but for [taking] possession of [our] salvation (i.e., fully gained at the resurrection) through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) the One who died on our behalf, that, whether we stay awake or sleep (i.e., pass on to heaven), we will be alive together with Him [on that day of resurrection].

1st Thessalonians 5:1-10

Into Which Ark: It is interesting to note that this passage is the only place in scripture (outside of Genesis chapters six and seven) where the ark is even mentioned. Elsewhere, such as in the passages referenced and cited above, it is Noah who is remembered – because it is his victory of faith which is significant, not the ark which is merely a manifestation of that faith (cf. Jas.2:14-26). In terms of applying scripture, we can say, based on the above, that the ark may be seen as analogous to our personal spiritual growth, because it is the truth resident in our hearts by faith (cf. Eph.3:17) that will constitute the means by which the Spirit will deliver us through the Tribulation (should that be our lot from the Lord) just as the ark Noah had prepared was the means God used to deliver him.²⁰

It should be noted that while the word "ark" in the phrase "the ark of the covenant" is in English (and in Greek) the same word as that used of Noah's ark, in Hebrew they are different words (אֲרוֹן / 'aron, and תְּבִיחַ / *tebhah* respectively). The dimensions are also not exactly proportional: 2.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 vs. 300 x 50 x 30 in cubits (approx. 18") for the former and latter respectively.

²⁰ See in CT 7, section III.1, "The Analogy of Noah and the Great Flood".

Nevertheless the two arks are similar in that they both represent Jesus Christ.²¹ The symbolism of the ark of the covenant as a type of Christ is more widely taught, but Noah's ark also represents Jesus Christ as our passage makes clear. Peter uses Noah and his family to represent believers here and now, and their experience is recalled to guide and motivate us. Just as Noah and his family are "baptized *into* the ark" with the help of the Holy Spirit (whose ministry is the focus and the point of this digression on Peter's part) and thus brought through the otherwise destructive waters, so we believers today are baptized into Christ by that same Holy Spirit (Matt.3:11; 28:19; Acts 1:4-5; Rom.6:3-5; 1Cor.12:13; Gal.3:26-28; Eph.4:3-6; Col.2:9-10), and are brought safe by Him through this world of threats and troubles by responding to the Spirit's leadership and guidance.

(21) Now the One who has given us *security* in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also *sealed us* and given us His pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.
2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

(13) In [Christ] you also when you heard the Word of truth, the good news of your salvation, in whom [I say], when you believed, *you were sealed* by the Spirit of promise, the Holy [Spirit], (14) who is a pledge of our inheritance for redeeming its *preservation* (i.e., safeguarding our resurrection and reward in every way), for the purpose of the praise of His glory (in eternity).
Ephesians 1:13-14

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom *you were sealed* for a day of *redemption* (i.e., the resurrection; cf. Eph.1:14).
Ephesians 4:30

The Holy Spirit is the One who keeps us safe in Jesus Christ: we are "sealed" by Him with complete security unto our ultimate deliverance at the resurrection – as long as we remain "in Christ" through following the Spirit's guidance (cf. Jn.15:1-8). Just as Noah and his family were kept safe in the ark, a type of Christ, but certainly would not have been safe had they ventured out of the ark before the time, so also we must abide in Jesus Christ until His return by relying on the power of the Spirit. Just as they were "brought safely through the water", so our Lord will keep us safe in Himself by the aid of His Holy Spirit and bring us safely through this life, even through the great flood of the Tribulation, if only we take care not to abandon Him, our only true help and hope in this world.

For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.
Galatians 5:5 NIV

(11) Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; (12) If we persevere, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us;

²¹ For the symbolism of the ark of the covenant, see in CT 2B: "The Earthly Tabernacle and Temple as a Type of the Heavenly Temple".

(13) If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.
2nd Timothy 2:11-13

The Baptism which Now Saves You:

And analogously it is [this true] baptism [of the Spirit] which now saves you: [you are saved] *not* through any [literal] washing away of filth from your flesh, but [through] an appeal to God for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
1st Peter 3:21

The word "baptism" here has caused many problems of misinterpretation within this passage and in verse twenty-one in particular. First, (*pace* NIV, NLT, e.g.) the word "water" does *not* occur in the Greek here. That is an interpretation, and a grossly incorrect one at that since it completely reverses what Peter is saying: the "baptism" mentioned here is a "dry" baptism, not a wet one:

(1) Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, (2) all were *baptized into* Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
1st Corinthians 10:1-2 NKJV

As is evident in the passage above (and in a number of other biblical cases as well)²², baptisms in scripture do not always involve water. Literal water-baptism involves dunking one thing into another so that the two merge in some way, the thing dunked being "identified with" the medium into which it is dunked. So the baptism "into Moses" and other scriptural baptism which are dry and not wet are metaphorical identifications rather than literal wet dunkings. In other words, the Israelites were "dunked into Moses" but not in a wet way: they were "identified with Moses" so as to receive the blessings which came Moses' way. They were not destroyed for his sake (e.g., Ex.32:10-14; Num.14:12-20), but delivered with him (e.g., Ex.14:10-15).

The most important baptism in scripture is of course the baptism of the Holy Spirit – by which is meant the Spirit's placing all who believe into union with Christ so that we become one "in Him": we are specially "identified with Christ" by being placed into Him by the Holy Spirit.²³ It is precisely that baptism which this passage is speaking of. Just as Noah and his family were baptized, identified with, entered into the ark, so believers today are baptized, identified with, entered into Jesus Christ. That is the analogy. And just as Noah and his family were "brought safely through" the destructive waters of the great flood by virtue of thus being "in the ark" (a

²² For example, the "baptism of fire" where fire not water is the thing into which the unbelievers are dunked (Matt.3:11; Lk.3:16; cf. Mk.1:8; cf. Ezek.39:6; Zech.14:12-13; 2Thes.1:6-9; Rev.14:17-20).

²³ See BB 5: Pneumatology, section II.B.2.b, "The Baptism of the Spirit". The baptism "of the Spirit" consists of two parts, "by the Spirit", wherein He places us "into Christ" so that we are "in Him" (cf. Rom.8:1-2 et *passim* in the New Testament), and "with the Spirit" whereby He indwells us who believe.

type of Christ), sealed within it by the Spirit, so we believers today are brought safely through this dark world, even through the Tribulation if need be, by virtue of our being "in Christ", sealed securely in Him by that same Holy Spirit. This is the "baptism which saves us", not water-baptism – which in fact has no proper place in the Church today.²⁴

The word translated "analogously" above (i.e., "and analogously it is this true baptism of the Spirit which now saves you"), is the Greek *antitypon* / ἀντίτυπον from which is derived the English word "antitype". Peter thus leaves no doubt about that fact that he is drawing a deliberate analogy – **not** between the flood and water-baptism (which makes no sense on even peripheral consideration since the flood destroyed life and this baptism "saves us"), but between being **in** the ark and being **in** Christ. The latter is the "baptism which saves", our union with Christ accomplished by the Holy Spirit when we believe in Jesus (cf. Rom.8:9). That is why Peter explicitly states:

. . . **not** through any [literal] washing away of filth from your flesh, **but** [through] an appeal to God for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
1st Peter 3:21b

The first part above should now be clear: this verse is speaking not of any water-baptism but of the baptism of the Spirit, our being placed into union with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit when we believe so that we believers are now "in Christ" (e.g., Jn.14:20; 15:1ff.; Rom.16:7; 2Cor.5:17; Eph.2:6; 2:10; Heb.3:14; 1Pet.5:14). The second part of the above clarifies how this happens but from the believer's point of view. The "appeal to God for a clean conscience" is our expression to Him of our saving faith in Jesus Christ, our desire for deliverance from sin and death, repenting of the past and yearning for salvation as expressed when we first place our faith in Jesus Christ.

(8) But what does [scripture] say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): (9) that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."
Romans 10:8-11 NKJV

Salvation is by grace through faith – not of works (Eph.2:8-9), so that formally pronouncing or announcing our faith is not required to be saved (as some legalistic interpretations of the passage above have it)²⁵; rather, expressing our faith is something all believers naturally do, especially to the Father when we first believe – that is our "appeal for a clean conscience", namely, a verbal expression of our faith in Jesus Christ and of our hope for life eternal and deliverance from sin and death. That is also why Peter adds at the end of this verse "through the resurrection of Jesus

²⁴ See BB 6B: Ecclesiology, section II.C.3.b, "Water-Baptism".

²⁵ BB 4B: Soteriology: section II.6.f, "False Issues"

Christ": Christ's rising from the dead – through the power of the Holy Spirit – is the proof that we also will be raised through our faith in Him, and is thus both an important part of the gospel message (Acts 2:24; 2:32; 3:15; 3:26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:23; 13:30; 13:33-34; 13:37), as well as an encouragement to us who believe to look forward to that blessed eternal future, that "blessed hope" (Tit.2:13), and strive in the meantime to follow in our Lord's footsteps through the power of the Spirit who raised Him – and will raise us on that day of days to come.

(3) [The gospel] which is about [God's] Son, the One who was born of the seed of David according to His flesh, (4) and ordained as God's Son by the power of the Spirit of Holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 1:3-4

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:11 NASB

(20) But as it is [in contrast to the false hypothetical that there is no bodily resurrection], Christ has [indeed] been resurrected from the dead as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (i.e., died in the Lord so as now to be in heaven in an interim state). (21) For since death [came] through a man, resurrection of the dead also [had to come] through a man. (22) For just as in Adam, all die, so also *in Christ*, shall all be made alive.

1st Corinthians 15:20-22

Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

2nd Corinthians 4:14 NASB

Jesus Christ:

[This same Jesus Christ], who, having traveled to heaven, is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

1st Peter 3:22

The great gift of the Holy Spirit, the subject of this digression, could not be sent until the victory of the cross had been accomplished by our Lord and until He had ascended and been glorified as described in the verse above (Jn.7:39). Through His death for us, our dear Savior Jesus Christ not only took away all of our sins and opened up the way for us unto life eternal but He also made possible the baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby every believer today has the same indwelling that Christ possessed as those who belong to Him (Eph.4:7-10), the blessed "promise of the Spirit", making us one with our dear Lord, bestowing upon us individual spiritual gifts whereby we may serve Him better and earn wonderful rewards, and providing us with marvelous guidance and encouragement through the help and support the Spirit gives us – when we are willing to respond to Him.

"But, I tell you the truth, that I go away is profitable for you, because unless I go away the

Encourager (comforter/counselor) will not come to you; but after I make my way [where I am going], I will send Him to you."

John 16:7 (cf. Jn.14:22; 14:26; 15:26)

"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

Acts 2:33 NKJV

Therefore Peter's final points in this digression whereby he not only reminds us of and commends to us the example of our Lord but also demonstrates the means by which He accomplished His mission perfectly, namely, through His complete and total responsiveness to the Holy Spirit, brings his analogy full circle: we are now given to see the blessed fulfillment of all our godly behavior, all our endurance of undeserved suffering, all our perseverance through this difficult life through all the pressures we have had to endure – and once again the Lord Jesus Christ is our forerunner and our exemplar, for He received the Spirit "without measure" (Jn.3:34), and we have been given the blessed opportunity to exploit this great gift after the pattern of our Savior. Just as His resurrection vouchsafes our resurrection, the foundation of the hope with which we have been saved, life eternal and deliverance from the grave, death, and sin for ever more, so, following His resurrection, we see that His ascension ("having traveled to heaven"), His session ("is at the right hand of God"), and His glorification ("angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him") also exemplify the blessings that await us, His Church, when He returns. We too will ascend – to rise in resurrection to meet Him (Rom.6:5). We too will take our rightful places in the ranks of the Church – mustered in clouds at the second advent (1Thes.4:13-18). And we too will receive the glorification that comes with the rewards we are presently earning by growing and advancing and enduring and persevering and suffering through the present, temporary life in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:30).

"For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay every man in his own coin."

Matthew 16:27

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and I bring with me my wages with which to repay each according to his work."

Revelation 22:12

Everything we as Christians aspire to in this life and the next is intimately bound up with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Phil.1:21). He is our all in all, and it is His example that we are to follow, learning to yield our will up to that of the Spirit as He did so perfectly (cf. Is.11:1-3), following the truth the Spirit has taught us and which we have believed through that same Spirit, walking in the footsteps of our Lord through the Spirit's power, ablaze with the godly zeal that comes from the Spirit (1Thes.5:19), resting in the peace that passes all understanding and that guards our hearts through the Spirit (Phil.4:6-7), even in the midst of the greatest suffering and tribulation – following the example of our Savior.

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord of Hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

But you are not under the control of the flesh, but under the control of the Spirit – if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him.

Romans 8:9

(14) For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the [true] sons of God. (15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery [leading you] back to [a state of] fear [of damnation], but you have the Spirit who has entered you into God's family, in whom we cry, "Abba! My Father!" (16) For the Spirit Himself testifies to our spirit that we are God's children. (17) And if we are God's children, then we are also His heirs, even fellow heirs of Christ – that is if we have indeed suffered with Him so that we might also be glorified together with Him.

Romans 8:15-17

If we live because of the Spirit, let us also walk by means of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

For God [through His Spirit] is the One who is empowering you both to desire [what is right] and to put it into practice for the accomplishment of His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13