

LESSON 10

THE CHRISTIAN'S EARTHLY EXISTENCE

1 Peter 2:10-5:14

Introduction

In facing life, every person needs to consider both present reality and future hope. Describing the present as reality does not mean that future hope cannot become reality. Neither does it mean that spiritual existence is unreal. The spiritual realm and future hope are vital to man's present life. For him to experience emotional, spiritual, moral, and physical health, man needs a mixture of future hope and present reality. Since his spiritual life consists of purpose, meaning, desires, and goals, he must give attention to it also. These areas of life are derived from a blending of a realistic understanding of man's present situation, his idealistic future hopes, and his beliefs about his origin and destiny which point him to his divine Creator.

To live on the basis of future hope while denying present reality results in abnormal fantasy. To look altogether at present reality without any hope results in morbidity and despair. Future hope rises above unrealistic dreams when it is based on the promises of God. Confidence in God's promises is strengthened by reviewing history and noting the mighty acts of God for His people. Since man is finite and corruptible, hope not based on the Divine Being is fragile. Since God is sovereign and infinite, hope based on His promises is realistic.

Future hope affects the way the present life is faced. Peter recognized this fact and, before turning to the present realities of relationships, defeats, and victories, he described the living hope Christians have in God. The Christian's conduct under varying conditions will be determined largely by his spiritual life and his future hope, that is, by what he believes to be the meaning and destiny of his existence. It is important for a Christian to know how to conduct his life properly in the present world in the light of his destiny.

Man's spiritual life needs attention because it consists of p _____, m _____, d _____, and g _____, which are essential to his e _____, s _____, m _____, and p _____ health.

(purpose, meaning, desires, goals, emotional, spiritual, moral, physical)

Write the words present and future in the blanks to make a correct statement.

_____ hope affects the way the _____ life is faced.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

What a Christian believes to be the meaning and destiny of his existence influences his _____.

(conduct)

The Christian in Society

1 Peter 2:11-3:12

Relation to non-Christians (2:11-12)

Peter addressed the beloved brethren as aliens and exiles. Those terms could have meant that the Christians were not Roman citizens but were people who had been conquered by the Romans. They could have referred also metaphorically to their citizenship in heaven in contrast to the Roman Empire.

The admonition to refrain from following the desires of the flesh which wage war against the soul uses terminology similar to that of Paul (v. 11). Desires of the flesh could have a broader reference than what is ordinarily conceived as fleshly sins—adultery, drunkenness, etc. These desires apply to anything which interferes with the earthly level of life. Racism and nationalism are sins of attitude involving prejudice which grows out of pride, but they disrupt relationships in the world as much as adultery, drunkenness, murder, and theft. Since the recipients were aliens, nationalism would have resulted in disrespect for the established government and disregard for the laws of society. Such conduct by the Jews among the Gentiles would have destroyed the influence of their Christian witness. Likewise, immoral conduct would have resulted in non-believers concluding that Christianity had nothing to offer since its adherents were wrongdoers (v. 12). Instead of committing wrongs, the Christians should perform good deeds so that the Gentiles would see and would be influenced to turn to Christ. The result would be the Gentiles' glorifying God in the Day of the Lord.

Attitude towards government (2:13-17)

Since government is controlled by sinful human beings, no government is perfect; however, it is a necessity of society. Wherever people live together, there must be rules which control their conduct in order that problems over conflicting interests may be reduced. Those rules or laws must be enforced if they are to be effective. Frequently, laws are expressions of self-interest on the part of the dominating minority and are unjust because of discrimination. Even though government has its weaknesses, it is essential to regulate sinful man in society. Peter exhorted the Christians to respect human institutions and the emperor who was the supreme leader in his particular society.

Good government should not assume the role of God, but it should be the servant of God in maintaining equity among people who have been created by God. Since institutions are part of God's plan, respect for

Concerning 1 Peter 2:11, are the following statements true or false?

1. "Fleshly lusts" are mainly adultery and drunkenness. _____
2. Desires are "fleshly lusts" which interfere with the earthly level of life, such as sins of attitude which include racism and nationalism. _____

(1. false, 2. true)

Government is necessary to regulate sinful man in _____.

(society)

and submission to them are part of man's responsibilities to God—"For the Lord's sake" (v. 13). One's respect was to begin with the emperor, who was the supreme ruler, and to extend down through the lesser officials, like governors who were sent to the provinces to judge and to punish those who broke the law (v. 14).

Since Christians refused to abide by the law requiring worship of the emperor, they were accused of being traitors to their country. Peter did not advise his readers to submit to idolatry, but he did explain that respecting and obeying laws are part of God's will for man and will serve the purpose of putting to silence the uninformed and unthinking men—"the ignorance of foolish men" (v. 15). Since the Christian is responsible to a higher power, he is free from the control of lower powers (v. 16). But the fact that government officials are part of God's plan places him under responsibility to them. It is possible to use exemption from the law as a cloak for evil deeds (v. 16). Such hypocritical action rejects one's servant relationship to God.

Christians are to respect all men because they are created in the image of God (v. 17). In addition, they are to express special concern (love) for the brethren of the Church. Their attitude towards God should be reverent awe, and the emperor should be honoured.

Relation to masters (2:18-25)

Apparently the majority of early Christians were from among the poor people who were actually slaves. The word 'servant' refers to household servants who worked without pay rather than to hired servants. Some of their masters were kind and gentle, but others were overbearing. Peter admonished them to respect not only the kind but also the unreasonable (v. 18). Injustice does not go unnoticed by God (v. 19). If a slave is punished justly for wrongdoing, there is no reward for him. If he is punished unjustly for wrongs he has not committed and bears the punishment patiently, he is approved of God (v. 20). There is no virtue in suffering punishment which one deserves, but there is virtue in suffering patiently for undeserved punishment. The Day of the Lord was an expression of hope that the righteous who had suffered maltreatment would be vindicated. Because of the evil of this age, the unjust suffering of the innocent is a frequent occurrence. If this is a moral world, it is unreasonable for injustice to go unpunished and the unrighteous person to suffer with the compensation.

The supreme example of unjust suffering is Christ, who suffered for the sins of others (v. 21). Peter's implication that there is virtue in the suffering of the righteous because of the wrongs of the unrighteous was based on the example of Christ. He concluded

A part of God's will for man is for him to _____ and _____ laws.

(respect, obey)

Christians are to respect all men because they are created in the _____ of _____.

(image, God)

Peter admonished servants to respect their masters even if they were unreasonable because God notices _____.

(injustice)

On the basis that this is a moral world, those participating in injustice will be _____, and the righteous will be _____.

(punished, rewarded)

The supreme example of unjust suffering is _____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

that Christians were to follow in the steps of their Master. Although Christ had done no wrong nor reviled any man, He was insulted (vv. 22-23). In the midst of the insults and afflictions cast upon Him, Christ did not return insults, nor did He threaten those who put Him to death even though the power of God was available to Him. Rather, He trusted His heavenly Father who judges justly.

The discussion on suffering unjustly naturally led to the subject of Christ's death on the cross (v. 24). Although Christ did not deserve the suffering which He endured, it had purpose. He was innocent, but he bore the punishment for the sins of the guilty in His body on the tree. His life and death were essential to break the control of sin over the lives of men by defeating Satan's allies of sin and death. In order that liberated men could be controlled by God for righteousness, His death had the purpose of spiritually healing rebellious men. They had gone astray under the control of Satan like straying sheep, but through the death of Christ they had been restored to their Creator and Redeemer (v. 25).

Relation in the home (3:1-7)

"Likewise" refers back to 2:18 where the servant was admonished to submit to his master and to show respect. This instruction was addressed especially to wives whose husbands were non-believers. Although Christ recognized man and woman as equals, He did not disrupt social relations within the home by denouncing the authority of the husband over the wife.

A distinction needs to be made between the natures, functions, and relations of members of the family. The natures of man, woman, and child are equal in dignity and essence. The function of each is determined by the characteristics of his physical nature. The woman, who is referred to as the weaker sex (v. 7), is not expected to do the heavy labour of man, who is physically stronger. A woman has certain emotional, mental, and physical characteristics which equip her for making a home happy and stable. Her work is as important as the man's in making the family comfortable, happy, and successful. Although the man is known in public and the woman may not be, it is her influence through her children which moulds society. There is no superiority of man to woman regarding nature and work.

In order to live together as a social unit, family members must follow patterns in relating to one another. Children are to be submissive to both parents. The Scripture states that the wife should relate to the husband by being submissive. This does not mean that the wife is inferior; but the social unit of the home, like other social units, must recognize a leader who is responsible for guiding the family. If Christian wives

<p><i>Christ's undeserved suffering brought spiritual _____ to rebellious _____.</i></p> <p><i>(healing, men)</i></p>
<p><i>Is this statement true or false?</i></p> <p><i>There is no superiority of man to woman regarding nature and work. _____</i></p> <p><i>(Compare your answer with the text.)</i></p>
<p><i>The leader of the home as a social unit should be the _____.</i></p> <p><i>(husband)</i></p>

had refused to submit to their husbands in the Roman society, their religion would have been blamed for their insubordination, and they would have driven their husbands away from the Gospel. In the Roman society of that time, a wife was the property of her husband. The Hebrew culture offered some improvement, but even there the wife had a lower social position than her husband. Christianity has brought a gradual change of concept regarding husbands and wives and has prepared for the contemporary emphasis on equality and freedom. There is the present danger in the women's liberation movement, however, that the drive for freedom will go too far. A woman's characteristics qualify her for a particular contribution to society. If she refuses to fill the role of mother and homemaker, the emotional health of the next generation will suffer greatly and relations will deteriorate. There is no substitute for the love and warmth of a mother relating to her children and husband. A mother's love best exemplifies the Christian's commission to love.

Women have been more receptive and responsive to Christianity than men. Their faithful demonstration of Christian virtues has brought multitudes of men to the Gospel through the ages (vv. 1-2). Through their pure ("chaste") and reverent behaviour ("conversation") there is a strong witness to the Christ whom they profess. The beauty of the wife does not depend on extravagant outward adornment—the braiding of hair, jewelry, or dress—but on her inner spiritual attractiveness (vv. 3-4). Her unfading loveliness which comes from her calm and gentle spirit grows out of her religious devotion (v. 4). The extravagant dress, the braiding of hair, and the wearing of gold chains actually identified women with the irreligious part of society in the day of Peter. In contrast to the women who emphasized external adornment, there were the holy women whose hope was in God and whose lives were adorned with submission to their husbands (v. 5). Sarah was an example of a holy woman because she called Abraham lord (v. 6).

Verse 7 states that the husband has a corresponding duty to that of his wife. In relation to her, he should be informed and guided by a proper awareness of her condition in relation to himself, both in nature and in grace. He should recognize her more limited physical powers as a woman and should give her corresponding consideration and protection. He should honour her, which means to be a worthy and faithful companion. In addition to the natural enjoyment of each other, husband and wife should establish a spiritual fellowship with God in Christ ("grace of life"). Wives are to be respected as equal heirs of the grace of life; therefore, there should be freedom for companions to join together in prayer. When both recognize their heritage of grace in Christ, their prayers will not be hindered.

In Roman society, if a woman had not been submissive to her husband, her religion would have been blamed and she could not have won her husband to _____.

(Christ)

A husband should recognize his wife as w _____ than himself.

He should give her p _____, h _____, and l _____.

Wives are to be respected as equal heirs of the g _____ of G _____.

(weaker, protection, honour, loyalty, grace God)

Relation with brethren (3:8-12)

Oneness of spirit should characterize the Christian society. Unity is accomplished through sympathy which involves sharing the sorrows and troubles of others. Closely connected with sympathy is "love of the brethren, which involves the kind of concern for others that causes a person to sacrifice for them. A tender heart expresses an attitude of compassion, and a humble mind accepts one's brother as an equal. Perhaps no attitude destroys human relations more than that of superiority.

A just man returns good for good and evil for evil, but a Christian must go beyond justice and return good for evil (v. 9). He is to bless those who revile him, that is, speak well of those who speak ill of him. Peter reminded his readers that they were called to return blessings for revilings even as God blessed undeserving sinners. To extend forgiveness and good will is to enter into the full enjoyment of the blessings of God. To return good for evil enables man to understand how God has treated him.

Peter provided scriptural support for his teachings (cf. Ps. 34:12-16). The Psalm describes a man who desires a long and good life. Peter adapted the verse, putting the emphasis on making life worthwhile by love. Four requirements for a worthwhile life are suggested:

1. Clean speech—"Let him refrain his tongue from evil" (v. 10).
2. Honest speech—"Let him refrain ... his lips that they speak no guile" (v. 10).
3. A righteous life—"Let him eschew evil, and do good."
4. A peaceful life—"Let him seek peace" (v. 11).

The Lord who has entered into covenant relation with His people has promised to watch over the righteous, to hear their prayers, and to deliver them from their enemies (v. 12).

Facing Afflictions

1 Peter 3:13-4:11

Occasions for afflictions (3:13-17)

Contrary to the opinion of many people, becoming a Christian and living righteously do not exempt from affliction. A rather common doctrine through the

A characteristic of Christian society should be _____ of _____.

(oneness, spirit)

Do you remember the four requirements for a worthwhile life as suggested by Peter? Try writing them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

ages is that the righteous will prosper and be blessed. Job faced and challenged the proposition that if a man does right, he will be wealthy and healthy, but if he does wrong he will be afflicted. Jesus warned His disciples that their preaching the Gospel would bring hardships and persecution. He taught that the disciple is not to fear the one who is able to destroy his body, but he is to fear God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Although most Christians expect safety and comfort, the fact that they have received Christ does not guarantee that trials will not come. Often Christian convictions are compromised in order to avoid persecution.

By receiving Christ, one is not guaranteed a life without _____.

(trials)

No one can do ultimate harm to Christians who have God on their side, but in this world it is always possible that they may have to suffer for righteousness' sake (v. 13). Peter did not reveal the kind or occasion of the persecution which his readers faced. He stated the general principle that, if a person does good because of Christian conscience, ordinarily he will not be ill-treated. Magistrates exist for the purpose of punishing those who do evil, not those who do good. Christians should set the example in doing good. There is always the possibility, however, that some will take advantage of those who actually practise the life of love—seeking peace and not returning evil for evil (cf. vv. 10-11). If they fear that others will mistreat them for doing good, they should remember that God watches over them.

Are these statements true or false?

- 1. In this world, Christians may have to suffer for righteousness sake. _____*
- 2. No ultimate harm can come to Christians. _____*

(1. true, 2. true)

Verse 14 implies that the recipients were not suffering, but there was a possibility that they would. Contrary to their thinking, they would be blessed if they suffered. To be blessed does not mean to feel delighted but to be highly privileged. Instead of regarding themselves as unprivileged or unfairly treated, they were to consider suffering for righteousness to be different from suffering for evil.

Underline the meaning of "to be blessed."

- 1. to feel delighted*
- 2. to be highly privileged*

(Compare your answer with the text.)

If the Christians feared or felt troubled by the prospects of persecution, they would be tempted to join in emperor worship or to revert to heathen idolatry. When persecution is faced, fear and anxiety should not be permitted to rule a person's heart, but he should reverence Christ (be ruled by Christ—v. 15). Fear causes a person to become defensive in explaining his actions. Christians should take the offensive and be prepared to give positively the reasons for their conduct. Rather than being apologetic to those who had called them into account for failing to worship the emperor, Christians should have given an account of the hope that was in them (v. 15). Their witness should have been without arrogance or self-assertion but with proper awe and reverence before God. Peter had learnt at Jesus' trial that it does not pay to boast of the witness one will give; therefore, one's witness should be "with meekness and fear" (v. 15).

It is important for Christians to keep their lives clean and their consciences free in order that those who accuse them of wrong behaviour may be proven wrong (v. 16). Those who criticize the Christian faith are put to shame if the lives of Christians measure up. Unfortunately, much of the criticism leveled against Christians today is justified. Verse 16 indicates that much of the persecution was in the form of insults and revilings. A person who is criticized for doing what he knows is right does not suffer nearly as much as the one who pretends to do good but whose deceitful actions are exposed (v. 17).

The example of Christ (3:18-4:6)

Christ is worthy of reverence, during trials, because He suffered for sins even to the point of death (v. 18). Christ was righteous, but He suffered at the hands of and for unrighteous men in order that they might be reconciled to God. In verse 17, Peter suggested that some suffering is according to God's will. Christ's death is an example of God's will for the righteous to suffer for the unrighteous. Suffering is not necessarily for nothing; it can be redemptive. Christ's death differed from all others in that it was one death for sins for all time.

Verses 18-22 raise many questions. What does "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" mean? What is the meaning of Christ's preaching "unto the spirits in prison," and who are they? What was Peter's understanding of the relation of baptism to salvation? Perhaps Christ's death in the flesh has reference to that aspect of His being which related Him to the earthly order. "But having been made alive in the spirit" may refer to the new life in the glorified body after His resurrection. The new life on the spiritual level of existence is to be distinguished from the life of flesh which belongs to the earth.

Verses 19-20 have been given numerous interpretations. It has been suggested that Jesus, between His death and resurrection, went to the realm of the dead (the prison of the wicked dead in Hades) as a part of His suffering for man's sins. There He proclaimed God's redemptive work to the disobedient spirits—the spirits of the unrepentant. Another interpretation is that Christ did not descend into hell at all. The verse means that the same eternal Spirit in which He was made alive through the resurrection had witnessed to disobedient man at the time of his disobedience while Noah was building the ark.¹ Summers emphasizes that

¹Ray Summers, "1 Peter" in Vol. 12 of The Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), p. 163.

Is some suffering according to God's will?

An example of God's will for the righteous to suffer for the unrighteous is _____.

_____.

(yes, Christ's death)

Use the following words to fill in blanks in Dr. Summers' interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19.

<i>Spirit</i>	<i>preaching</i>	<i>disobedient</i>
<i>descend</i>	<i>resurrection</i>	

Christ did not _____ into hell, but the same eternal _____ in which He was made alive through the _____ had witnessed to _____ man through Noah's _____ in the past.

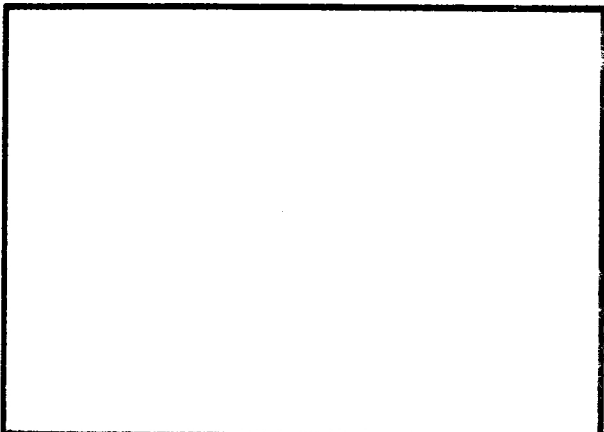
(descend, Spirit, resurrection, disobedient, preaching)

the participle is without an article and thus tells when the action took place. He translates the passage to read, "He went and preached to the imprisoned spirit when they were disobedient ... in Noah's day."² This interpretation means that the pre-existent Christ was present in the Spirit in the day of Noah to speak to sinful men through Noah's preaching. The fact that the disobedient spirits are imprisoned indicates God's power to keep them under punishment until the day of judgement (2 Pet. 2:9). Since the sin of the men of Noah's day was serious enough to require destruction by the flood, they were classic examples of wicked people. Their lives were contrasted to that of Noah, who was an example of righteousness.

Although God was patient during the building of the ark and waited for the repentance of the wicked, they refused to renounce their sins; therefore, all but eight persons died in the flood. Noah and his family of three sons and their wives were brought through the flood to safety; thus they were "saved by water" (v. 20). It would be more natural to speak of their being saved from water by the ark, but Peter's figure of speech required the expression "saved by water." In speaking of baptism, Peter explained that it does not save by putting away the filth of the flesh but is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (v. 21). The Jew believed that his faith had to be expressed. Baptism is an outward expression of an inner experience. It symbolizes both cleansing from sin and resurrection to a new way of life. Baptism within itself does not save by making man pure ("not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"), but it does express his decision and thereby publicly identifies him with God's redemptive work. It satisfies the demand of a good conscience before God. Paul spoke of baptism symbolizing the resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6:4-6). Peter stated that baptism saves one through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, baptism is a public profession of one's new life through faith in the resurrected Christ.

An elaboration of Christ as a worthy example of the righteous who suffer for the unrighteous is continued in verse 22. The suffering of the innocent at the hands of the wicked has a reward beyond the events of this earth. After Christ suffered, He was resurrected and exalted to heaven where He is on the right hand of God. That position indicates His authority over angels, authorities, and powers.

The implications of Christ's suffering as an example for His followers are continued in 4:1-6. If it was necessary for Christ to suffer physically, though He was innocent, His servants should expect similar treatment; for the servants are not above the master. To have the same mind as Christ—that is, to oppose



Peter uses the figure "saved by water" to refer to _____.

(baptism)

Underline the correct words.

Baptism (does, does not) "put away the filth of the flesh."

Baptism (does, does not) symbolize cleansing from sin.

Baptism (does, does not) identify one publicly with God's redemptive work.

(does not, does, does)

²Ibid., p. 164.

evil though it brings suffering—is to repudiate sin as a way of life. A primary passion of the flesh is to seek comfort and pleasure; therefore, whoever is dominated by the flesh will avoid opposition from evil even though it means to reject the will of God (v. 2). To be controlled by the lust of the flesh is not limited to avoiding affliction but includes the pleasures characteristic of the past life (v. 3). Reference to the things which the Gentiles liked to do may indicate that the readers had a heathen background, implying that they were Gentiles. There is evidence, however, that some Jews as well as Gentiles were guilty of drunkenness, revelry, idolatry, and immorality. When involved in activities which broke the commandments of the Covenant, Jews were no longer considered to be the covenant people.

Those who practised licentiousness were surprised that a change had come about in the lives of those who received Christ (v. 4). The wrongdoers reverted to persecuting the Christians, who refused to share in their evil actions. The primary nature of the persecution may have been public scoffing. Affliction from evil-doers will not go unnoticed; for God, who judges the living and the dead, will call them into account (v. 5). Not only the living but also the dead will have to stand in judgement before God; therefore, those who are now dead had the Gospel preached to them before they died in order that they would cease to live in the flesh like men and would live in the Spirit in relationship to God (v. 6). Through the ages, wicked men have been warned by prophets of God to turn from their evil ways.

Vindication of the suffering righteous (4:7-11)

Peter joined Paul and the writer of Hebrews in encouraging afflicted Christians with the hope that Christ's coming was imminent. Christ's return would mean the end of all things—the consummation of the world order and the inauguration of the eternal order (v. 7). According to the Synoptics, Jesus had expressed this view. The readers were encouraged to keep a sound mind in the midst of their trials because of their hope that the end was at hand. This expectation should have prompted the believers to sane and sober lives given to prayer. Since none lived perfectly and was prepared absolutely for the coming of the Lord, each one was advised to give constant attention to loving others, "since love covers a multitude of sins" (v. 8-RSV). Love does not look for the sins and weaknesses of others but for opportunities to help. Jesus taught that man's judgement will be based on how he treats others. Love expresses itself in showing hospitality (v. 9).

Every Christian has received from God some gift of the Spirit. The way of love requires that he use that gift for the benefit of others (v. 10).

A primary passion of the flesh is to seek _____ and _____.

(comfort, pleasure)

All people will have to stand in judgement before God because they have been warned by _____ to turn from their evil ways.

(prophets)

Underline the correct ending for this sentence.

Love looks for

the sins and weaknesses of other opportunities to help.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

A spiritual gift is a talent of grace entrusted to man's stewardship. The two gifts named in verse 11 relate to speaking and serving. Speaking includes preaching, teaching, prophesying, etc. Serving or ministering implies using material possessions or abilities to help others. When Christians accept their endowments as gifts from God, they use them to honour Him rather than to bring praise to themselves (v. 11).

Two spiritual gifts named in verse 11 relate to _____ and _____.

(speaking, serving)

Proper attitudes during afflictions (4:12-19)

Jewish hope expected deliverance from trials and oppression when the Messianic Kingdom was established on this earth. Jesus taught that His Kingdom was not of this world but would be established in this world. This present world order had come under the control of evil powers; therefore, as long as it stands there will be suffering and oppression. Troubles will cease only when the present order ends and the new one is established fully at the return of Christ. Until that time, Christians living in an evil world should not be surprised when fiery trials come upon them (v. 12). The anticipated persecution was to be so severe that it was described as fiery. The ordeals would turn the Christians from faith in God unless they remembered the sufferings of Christ (v. 13), which resulted in resurrection and exaltation to glory. Therefore, the believers could rejoice in their sufferings, which were after the believers of Christ, since they would share in the glory to be revealed. To be reproached for acknowledging the name of Christ meant that they were faithful to their Lord and were being blessed because the glorious Spirit of God rested upon them. To have the Spirit of God indicated that they had been born into the Kingdom and would share in the glory to be revealed (v. 14). To suffer as a murderer, a thief, a wrongdoer, or a trouble-maker brought no blessings or hope, because these sins indicated that they were not of God (v. 15). That kind of suffering brought shame and disgrace, but suffering as a Christian brought no disgrace. To confess the name of Christ was a thing for which to praise God (v. 16).

A Christian should not be surprised when fiery _____ come upon him.

When a Christian meets ordeals, he should remember the _____ of Christ.

Suffering as a Christian should not bring _____.

(trials, sufferings, disgrace)

Peter interpreted the persecution which the Christians experienced as the beginning of God's judgement. Affliction can be understood as a trial which proves one's faith, as a temptation which entices one to renounce his faith, or as a judgement which reveals one's faith. If Christians who live righteous lives are subjected to persecutions, what will the unrighteous experience (v. 17)? Salvation is difficult for anyone to obtain, even for the righteous. It required God's Son to die on the cross to provide salvation for those who believe. Satan constantly attempts to lead even the redeemed astray through persecutions. It is inconceivable that the impious and the sinful who reject God's grace have any hope (v. 18). By himself, man

Match the following ways affliction may be understood.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| ___ 1. a trial | a. which reveals one's faith |
| ___ 2. a temptation | b. which proves one's faith |
| ___ 3. a judgement | c. which entices one to renounce his faith |

(b-1, c-2, a-3)

cannot expect to obtain righteousness that qualifies him for fellowship with God; therefore, his only hope is to trust himself to his faithful Creator (v. 19).

Concluding Exhortations and Greetings

1 Peter 5:1-14

Exhortations to elders (5:1-5)

Elders were mature leaders of family or community life. In Judaism, they were leaders of the synagogues. This structure for leadership carried over into the organization of the Church, especially among Jews. Each Jewish community had its council of elders or its presbytery, which had general administrative oversight of the Jewish community. According to 1 Peter 5:1-4, elders exercised pastoral duties in the Church.

The author referred to himself as an elder who had witnessed the sufferings of Christ and who shared in the hope of glory that would be revealed (v. 1). This designation indicates that the author was a leader among others, but he did not claim superior leadership to others. This Scripture does not support the Roman Catholic claim that Peter was head of the Church; however, the fact that Peter had witnessed the sufferings of the Lord qualified him in a special way to teach the Gospel.

To tend the flock of God is a pastoral expression which denotes the work of the shepherd who feeds, shelters, guides, and guards the sheep. Christ had instructed Peter to "feed my lambs" (John 21:15) and to "tend my sheep" (John 21:16). Perhaps Peter's claim as a fellow elder was based on Christ's instruction to him. The elders were not to be forced to do their duty but were to perform it willingly and according to God's will (v. 2). They were not to seek pay for their service, but to give themselves with enthusiasm (v. 2).

Verse 3 gives important instructions concerning leadership. The elders were not to 'lord it over' the flock but were to lead it by being examples. A pastor is not to 'browbeat' his people, but he is to lead them in doing the work of the Lord. A shepherd who follows the sheep and drives them finds them going in various directions. A good shepherd trains the sheep to follow. He walks before them and calls them to green pastures and still water. The best training a pastor can give to his people is to take them with him in pastoral work and to show them how to serve Christ. The shepherd who serves faithfully in the face of obstacles and dangers will obtain an unfading crown of glory when the chief Shepherd is manifested (v. 4).

According to 1 Peter 5:1-4, who carried out the pastoral duties in the Church?

(elders)

Is this statement true or false?

First Peter 5:1 supports the Roman Catholic claim that Peter was the head of the Church.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Included in the pastoral duties of elders was the work of the shepherd who _____, _____, _____, and _____ his flock.

Underline the correct statement.

1. The elders were forced to do their duty.
2. The elders were to do their duty willingly without pay.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

A good shepherd trains his sheep to _____.

A good pastor leads his people to _____.

(follow, serve)

Sometimes younger members become impatient with the older leaders of the Church. This impatience is understandable when the leaders are simply occupying a position of honour rather than ministering to the Church and guiding it to maturity through teaching. Sometimes younger members are impatient, whereas the more mature leaders have learnt to wait on the Lord. Peter instructed the younger to be clothed with humility and not to conclude that they were superior as Christians to their more mature leaders (v. 5). They were reminded of the teaching in Proverbs 3:34 that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Exhortations to humility and endurance (5:6-11)

Pride causes undue competition and jealousy. It results in people wanting to rule and to give orders rather than to serve. The Christian Church should be characterized by service rather than by haughtiness. Churches which humble themselves under "the mighty hand of God" fill the servant role, but they will be exalted eventually (v. 6). When troubles come, the servant who is under the hand of God can commit his anxieties to his heavenly Father who he knows is taking care of him (v. 7). Jesus reminded His disciples that anxiety and worry will not add length of life nor remove man's obstacles; but God, who controls history, is able to take care of His children. He loves His people and cares for them.

Although God is concerned for His people, they are not to become careless. For they have an adversary who is active and looking for opportunities to overwhelm them (v. 8). The aim of the devil is to sow discord, to destroy fellowship, and to lead believers to doubt God. He succeeds when he leads Christians to become discouraged, to cease witnessing, and to give up. Although Satan is like a roaring lion, he cannot overcome the power of God nor destroy the Christian whose faith is firm in God. He uses the afflictions of Christians to bring about doubts and discouragements, but they are strengthened by knowing that suffering is required of all their brothers throughout the world (v. 9). They are comforted by the knowledge that their suffering is only temporary, and the God of grace is able to sustain them during this time. After their sufferings, they will share in the eternal glory of Christ. God's grace is sufficient to restore, establish, and strengthen His people in the midst of their trials.

Greetings and benediction (5:12-14)

These verses were discussed in the introduction. Silvanus is identified as Silas, and he served as the amanuensis of Peter (v. 12). Probably Babylon was used symbolically for Rome where the letter was

Choose two words of opposite meanings to fill in the blanks.

_____ causes competition and jealousy.

_____ brings about service.

(Pride, Humility)

Satan is like a roaring lion, but he cannot

overcome the _____ of _____

nor destroy the Christian whose

_____ is firm in _____.

(power, God, faith, God)

written. Mark was present and sent his greetings. The epistle closes with the suggestion that the readers greet one another with the kiss of love, which was a kiss on the cheek or forehead, and with an expression of blessings.

Peter's suggested kiss of love included an expression of _____.
(Compare your answer with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Why are the spiritual realm and the future hope vital to man's present life? _____

2. Define "fleshly lusts" as used in 2:11. _____

3. Why should Christians be obedient to government officials? _____

4. What should be the attitude of servants" _____

5. Interpret 1 Peter 3:1. _____

6. Interpret 1 Peter 3:7. _____

7. Name four requirements for a worthwhile life. _____
8. Interpret 1 Peter 3:14. _____

9. How does Ray Summers interpret 1 Peter 3:19? _____

10. What is meant by "saved by water"? _____

11. Interpret 1 Peter 4:6. _____

12. How should a Christian respond to affliction? _____

13. Describe the responsibility and the leadership of elders. _____

14. What does pride cause and how should it be controlled? _____

15. How does the adversary defeat Christians? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

Read pages 134-155 in Bowman and answer the following questions.

1. What kind of behaviour reflects the sanctified life?
2. Give Bowman's interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19-21.
3. What three points does Peter give concerning the Christian's sharing in Christ's suffering?
4. What instruction does Peter give to the elders and the laity in 5:1-11?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

Read pages 33-73 in The Letters of Peter and Jude by Leaney and answer the following questions.

1. Briefly outline the requirements of the Christian in the areas of obedience discussed by Peter.
2. What is Leaney's interpretation of Christ's "preaching unto the spirits in prison" and the saving of souls "by water" in 1 Peter 3:19-21?

3. Explain what is meant by "love cancels innumerable sins."
4. Outline the instructions of Peter to the elders and laity in 5:1-11.

Seminar Discussion

1. Existentialism instructs man to face the anguish of life's problems apart from faith in God or future hope. How do Peter's instructions for facing affliction differ from those of existentialists?
2. What should be the Christian's attitude towards government?
3. What advice does Peter give concerning relations in the home?
4. What does Peter mean by "preaching unto the spirits in prison" and being "saved by water" in 3:19-21?
5. What enables Christians to endure trials and afflictions?
6. What are the responsibilities of elders?