

First Peter Chapter Three Supplemental Study Guide¹

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¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School
ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

I. Wives special instructions on submitting to their husbands and adorning themselves with a view to God (3:1-6)

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands....”

Peter begins this next section of his letter with, ‘ομοίως or likewise, which is implicitly drawing one’s attention to the continuation of an argument in progress and thereby connects what follows to that which has thematically preceded it, namely the principle and calls to biblical submission. In the preceding chapter two expressions of submission were directly addressed.

In 2:13-14 all believers were instructed to be subject to every human institution (primarily having various levels of governing authorities in view).

In 2:18 servants were instructed to be subject to their masters (both the just and unjust).

When examining the challenging instructions to submit in various contexts and in various relationships it was stated that biblical submission is bringing oneself under the authority and/or influence of another who is in some form of leadership or authority. It is a relationship of order designed and instituted by God. The context of submission might vary, but it is never a matter of the nature or quality of the one that another is called to submit to, but the Lord who is honored in this submission from one to another.

Now, with opening chapter three with “likewise” Peter is continuing his instructions on biblical submission, recognizing that God has designed various structures and relationships – the most basic personal relationships being those found in the family unit and here he addressed the principle elements of the family unit, the husband and wife. The submission that Peter is addressing here is specifically in the marital context – it may be that culture and circumstance require submission in broader or other contexts, but here it is precisely addressed in the marital context. Wives are specifically called upon to submit to their husbands – the pattern expressed in the New Testament.²

“Wives, *submit to your own husbands*, as to the Lord.” Ephesians 5:22 ^{ESV}

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also *wives should submit in everything to their husbands*.” Ephesians 5:24 ^{ESV}

² It is important to note that “own husbands” is a limiting qualifier for this context of application.

“Wives, *submit to your husbands*, as is fitting in the Lord.” Colossians 3:18 ^{ESV}

“...to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and *submissive to their own husbands*, that the word of God may not be reviled.” Titus 2:5 ^{ESV}

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives....” 1 Peter 3:1 ^{ESV}

Note that the “own husband” language is also used in 1 Corinthians 7:2,4 when addressing marital intimacy³ – further expressing this union of husband and wife while also helping make it clear that this language is not one of ruling possession, but union. A relationship unlike any other with an impact unlike any other too.

However, there are roles that are being clearly addressed. Husbands are the leaders of their homes/families and an element of this relationship is that wives are called to submit to their husband’s leadership. Wives are to bring themselves under the authority of their husbands who will give an account for the leading and care of their families (beginning with their wives). Like the previous relationships in which believers are called to submit there must not first be an exploration for limits and exceptions. This is a comprehensive call for wives, and it may produce unique struggles or hardships (not unlike servants having an unjust master 2:18). Ultimately this is a submission to Christ exercised in a righteous entrustment to the Lord who will deal justly and is good.

This is not to communicate that wives do not have a voice in the marital relationship and the direction of the home/family, but it is ultimately an advisory voice and it must bring itself under the husband’s final decision, direction, and leadership.

This is not a measure or reflection of a wife’s intellect, skill, abilities, or otherwise any more than such is the case of persons under governing authorities or servants/slaves under masters. This is a relationship that reflects the order of creation, the design of the family, and the providential context in which God has placed both husbands and wives. Peter goes on to express how extraordinary a wife’s impact is on her husband. It is the direct contrast to the fabled sirens of Greek mythology who would lure sailors to their destruction on the rocks of the shore by the sweetness of their deceptive song. Not in mythology but in truth rich lives women who are submitting to their husbands as an expression

³ “But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have *his own wife and each woman her own husband*.” “For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” 1 Corinthians 7:2,4 ^{ESV}

of their submission to the Lord are silently putting the glories of Christ on attractive display and wooing their husbands to life.

“...so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.”

Immediately after Peter gives the instruction for wives to submit to their husbands he uses a strong qualifier: "so that" a clear advantage that this conduct appears to adorn the gospel. However, this qualifier also brings an important contextual element to bear that helps one understand that submission is not just an evangelistic campaign in marriage, but the normal expected pattern that happens to potentially yield evangelistic benefits too. Highlighting Peter's statement, "even if some do not obey the word" Wayne Grudem states that the expectation is that this is not the majority experience of his readers – it is presumed that most, but not all, of the women in the church have believing husbands. However, for those who do not... there is a special benefit in their fidelity of righteous submission.⁴ Further, because it is "some" who do not obey the word one should rightfully conclude that this pattern of submission and inward adornment is expected to be the consistent pattern of the believing wife whether her husband is in Christ or not.

Now, the conclusion that the husband in this context is not a believer has been reached by how Peter describes this hypothetical man as someone who does not obey the word. This is fitting language because as Peter has made plain in chapter one – the child of God is born again through the word of God. "...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...." 1 Peter 1:23 ^{ESV} He then goes on to speak to the unrighteous stumbling because they disobey the word. "So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." 1 Peter 2:7-8 ^{ESV} Finally, Peter plainly distinguishes those of the household of God and those who do not obey the Scriptures. "For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" 1 Peter 4:17 ^{ESV}

⁴ Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter; Wayne Grudem; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988; (Hereafter: Grudem), Pg.137

Therefore, the wife's conduct is effective a mercy mission to her unbelieving husband. The testimony of conduct by a faithful wife potentially being so impactful in silence that it addresses the failure of her husband to believe that which has been clearly communicated in word by the Lord through his Scriptures and through his people's verbal testimony. However, it is imperative to note that the word of God is not altogether absent as the winsomeness of a believing wife effectively uniquely primes the heart of a callous unbelieving husband to hear the lifegiving truth of the Scriptures (through her, someone else, or by the written word read). While esteeming her unparalleled influence and impact we also must remember what Peter has stated about the role of the Scriptures in regeneration, "...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...." "...the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you." 1 Peter 1:23,25 ^{ESV}

In her righteous submission a wife may very well "win" her husband to the Lord.

However, by its nature submission is a humbling position and many resist the command on this fact alone – confusing humbling with humiliating. Because of the wickedness of unregenerate people, the two may accompany one another (humility and humiliation) but not by necessity. Paul saw humbling himself to also be a "winsome" strategy and gladly embraced it.

"For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 ^{ESV}

Paul also plainly expressed the call to humility for all believers – a call rooted in Jesus' own perfect and redemptive example.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of

men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:3-8 ^{ESV}

Respectful and Pure Conduct

Next we observe the nature and qualities of a wife’s witness bearing role, first through respectful and pure conduct. The term used here for “respect” is φόβος which is commonly either translated “fear” or “respect” depending on the context. As observed in chapter two it is ultimately God who is to be feared and people within various roles of authority who are to be highly respected. Here, one’s wife is expressing herself in a way that highly respects her own husband.

Her conduct is also pure or innocent – without reproach or stain. This would be an expression of life/practical holiness. Further, this is not a begrudging requirement, but joyful obedience as unto the Lord and potentially yielding an unparalleled influence for gospel opportunities.

“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear — but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.”

Peter then goes on to more precisely unpack how a wife exalts Christ in her righteous self-adornment⁵ of her inward person.

Now, to be clear while Peter expresses how the wife is not to adorn herself: the braiding of hair, the wearing of jewelry, and/or extravagant clothing he is not giving an outright prohibition on such elements for a believing woman/wife. The matter is one of priority and emphasis.⁶ Paul makes a like statement as he provides Timothy instructions on the proper ordering of the church in 1 Timothy.

“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.” 1 Timothy 2:8-10 ^{ESV}

⁵ Adorn: the ordering, framing, or decorating of someone/something

⁶ To conclude otherwise would require Peter to state that believing wives should not wear clothes as he only states in the text not to adorn themselves with clothes. That would be preposterous and have not textual merit. Context must be carefully respected here and not abused in either direction of potential extremes (gaudy self-indulgence or a conviction to be homely and unkempt out of a misapplied principle).

Here it is helpful to remember the emphasis Peter overtly puts on one's conduct: "...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct...." 1 Peter 1:15 ^{ESV}

"And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile...." 1 Peter 1:17 ^{ESV}

"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." 1 Peter 2:12 ^{ESV}

"...having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." 1 Peter 3:16 ^{ESV}

Now, with this emphasis on conduct in view the utter uniqueness of a believing wife's conduct can be better appreciated – it is a holy, righteous, and faithful conduct that is potentially impactful in ways unlike anything else. Further, it is not primarily external actions but inner ones that carry over to seemingly simplistic external ones. This centering of one's attention on matters of the heart has and continues to be the pattern of a life pleasing to God who sees and knows that heart and is pleased with obedience that seeks an audience of one, The Lord.

This is put on display at the selection and anointing of King David:

"For The LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but The LORD looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7 ^{ESV}

This is also put on display through the teaching of the greater Son of David:

"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:3-4 ^{ESV}

"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:6 ^{ESV}

"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:17-18 ^{ESV}

What Peter is calling wives to is the same thing that all believers are called to: a conduct that displays the motive of heart being one that seeks to please God and not to make a spectacle of one's great conduct. A principle that carries over to common conduct - plain, faithful, and not interested in any audience, but him who sees and even rewards what he sees in secret/hidden/inner-man. The heart

being the defining element of a person: their will, motivation, desire, and character of person, life, and conduct. The unique difference being that when wives are exercising this expression of faithfulness it is from a position of unique and strategic value for their family, particularly an unbelieving husband.

These inner qualities that wives are specifically called to are given an eternal value - imperishable being used throughout the New Testament to reflect on that which endures in and through eternity, qualities of God and his gifts/rewards. This is observed in Peter too when addressing the new birth to imperishable or eternal life⁷ and are clearly not valuations that he cavalierly applies to things – these are actions of enduring value before God.

These qualities of being gentle, meek, quiet speak to a tenderness of conduct that is humble in disposition and peaceful. An expression of giving deference to others while looking first/primarily to their interest and welfare. Also, as stated they are not actions that should be viewed as demeaning to women or produce pity for their plight... they are actions whose value do not diminish and that are precious before God. If one truly values God then one also knows that there is no greater reward than securing his good pleasure.

Finally, regarding this matter of adornment it must be remembered that Peter is demonstrating that the heart of the matter is God's glory, it is certainly advantageous to one's husband, but it is pleasing to God and this must be the final focus and motivation.

“For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.”

Peter then goes on to root this expression of faithfulness to a legacy of like faithfulness of those who have preceded his readers in the faith and an example of exemplary faithfulness is provided through Sarah.

Sarah here serves as a figurehead of faithful women who have assumed this high calling and who are now described as: holy women, women who hoped in God, and those who centered their purpose and person not on their husbands or even themselves, but on God. This was expressed in their

⁷ “...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you....” 1 Peter 1:4 ^{ESV}

“...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God....” 1 Peter 1:23 ^{ESV}

inward adornment and outward conduct which was both winsome before man and precious before God.

Peter identifies Sarah as an example to be followed here as she demonstrated inward adornment expressed through submission to her husband, Abraham. It can be observed that submission in her context was plainly stated as obedience: doing what was instructed, commanded, or expected of her.

This likely causes many to bristle because obedience among equals would appear to diminish the dynamic of equality. This is a reasonable conclusion when we consider the exhortations and commands for children to obey parents and servants to obey masters – relationships where there are clear differences in standing. However, Jesus' example again helps balance this as he obeyed not only The Father to whom he is in equal relationship, but he even obeyed various authorities over him as he dwelt among his people: submitting to family leaders, religious leaders, and government leaders – though infinitely superior to them all. He had a precise role and it was one that included a relationship of submitting to others at various times and in various ways. It was a relationship that did not find its primary identity in bringing himself in subordination to others, but to God. Such is the calling of the believing wife. It is not a dismissal of structures in relationship, but a view of them through the lens of subordination in relationship to God and that finds satisfaction and joy that this is the role that he has entrusted and called her to which is uniquely valuable to others and precious to the Lord.

As a small sidebar it is helpful to remember that Peter's example of Sarah was not one of a homely sad woman, but a woman who was dangerously attractive. One should recall that Sarah was strikingly beautiful – to the degree that Abraham reasonably feared for his life as she would most certainly secure the physical attention of Pharaoh.⁸ However, being externally beautiful was not the grounds of Sarah's commendation – it was her inward adornment.

Before examining Sarah further it is important to recognize that her example was provided because she exemplified the proper marriage of hope (placing confident expectation in someone/something – expressed through one's actions) and submission (bringing oneself under the authority of another).

⁸ "When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, 'I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.' When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house." Genesis 12:11-15 ^{ESV}

Sarah's hope was in The LORD and it expressed itself in her consistent and faithful submission to her husband, Abraham.

This is important to remember here because Peter is making it clear that the whole of this present matter is framed in submission to one's husband - it is not a generic disposition, but one of submission:

Submission with a gentle spirit (3:4).

Submission with a quiet spirit (3:4).

These are the elements of submission by which the women are to adorn themselves (in contrast to the braided hair, gold, and clothing).

Returning to the context of Sarah there is immediately a statement that contemporary audiences might find archaic and jarring – Sarah calling Abraham her lord. However, this was not Sarah relegating herself as a mere subject to Abraham. It was a gracious expression of recognizing his role in leading and caring for her. It was an honor that patterned her relationship with her husband.

Contextually the reference to Sarah calling Abraham Lord was plainly a reference to Genesis 18, “So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?’” Genesis 18:12 ^{ESV} What is striking about this was not that Peter had to find some obscure reference to develop his point – that it is quite contrary to what is actually being drawn from here. The weight of Peter's argument in using Sarah is that her godly submission to Abraham was not a highlighted moment in her life, but who she demonstrated herself to be in the most casual of moments. Here, in Genesis 18, she was listening in on a conversation on the other side of the tent and says to herself (in the most private and unguarded of moments) a response that includes a reference to Abraham whom she calls her lord indicating that this was her natural disposition and thought of him.⁹ This was not some silly or forced formality, but a true disposition of submission that found its confidence and joy in God.

Grudem affirms this point but does not see a reference to any one moment with Sarah... but a pattern of obedience in submission.¹⁰ There would doubtless be a pattern, but a singular example does not diminish the value of such a pattern and does not appear to be a necessary conclusion.

⁹ The New American Commentary: 1,2 Peter, Jude; Thomas R. Schreiner; Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003; (Hereafter: Schreiner), Pg.156

¹⁰ Grudem, Pg.141

Peter states that Sarah obeyed Abraham. Obedience here being expressed as compliance in submission (in its pure/honorable form it is done willfully and with joy). To this point Thomas Schreiner makes a helpful observation: “Surely submission includes more than obedience, for the right spirit and attitude are also commended in v.4. What must be noticed, however, is that nothing less than obedience is required. In other words, submission does not merely involve being considerate or adapting to one’s husband. It is crucial to note that obedience and submission are different in various spheres. Peter was hardly suggesting that wives submit and obey in the same way as children, for the relationship is between two adults. We also learn from Paul that mutuality also characterizes the marriage relationship (1 Cor 7:3-5). Reading the whole marriage relationship through the lens of submission is liable to distort significantly the Scriptures. Nevertheless, what cannot be washed away is the responsibility of wives to follow their husbands’ leadership.”¹¹

Most who have been in the life of the Church for any length of time are likely familiar with Abraham being referenced to as Father Abraham – certainly by the Jews, but also by Christians. This is not communicating that all people of faith in Christ have mystically had a transference of DNA to become descendants of Abraham through the line of Isaac. Rather it is an identification of being an intimate beneficiary of the faith of which Abraham is a historic patriarch – not a “founder” but a father like figure within the plan of God’s redemption worked out through a people of promise. Not all of Abraham’s natural descendants (even of the line of Isaac and Jacob) are children of promise, but those who have submitted in salvific faith to Messiah (Jesus Christ). So also, not all who are identified as Abraham’s children are of the covenant nation Israel, but are a people who have been grafted into the blessings and benefits of Israel’s redemption. This is why so many call Abraham, Father Abraham. However, here women of faith are being directed to see Sarah as a mother like figure. Not an adoptive ideal like mother figure, but a woman who was faithful and pleasing to God and whose company women who mimic her faithfulness will be identified. This is a call to follow her exemplary model of fulfilling the unique and high calling that God has given to believing wives.

Peter plainly has esteemed and called upon the believers to do good (2:15,20, 3:17). It appears that the “good” that identifies a woman with Sarah would be expressing a like inner adornment being worked out in a biblical submission to their husband.

The other element to this is to not have a fear of man, but of God. Not fearing man in the context of submission or otherwise but fearing God.

¹¹ Schreiner, Pg. 156

In almost all areas of life and service to God there is the potential for fear to find opportunity, but in this calling for wives to submit to their husbands there are unique elements that could produce fear, but such potential fear must be mortified by confidence in God.

It is likely that a significant element of a believing wife's potential fear was, and continues to be, two-fold:

Righteous submission puts one into a very vulnerable place – particularly if the one you are submitting to has no regard to the Lord. Even if submission finds its limit at overt disobedience to God there is an extraordinary range of challenges and pains that precede that threshold. That can be frightening and requires an absolute confidence in God who gives grace, ability, and ultimately joy in obeying what he calls his children to do.

In Peter's context a woman who did not align herself with her husband's religion was scandalous and could have severe consequences. Today, women, in most western cultures, have a high level of autonomy and there are not the same familial or cultural expectations. However, in many contexts this still functionally remains the same – a believing wife proves to be an embarrassment or shame to her husband (leaving a false religion, a cult, or even forsaking secular humanism in general). Differing on common religious conclusions is plain enough – Jesus will always offend deficient competitors to his rightful throne. However, there is also potential for great offense for a secular humanist too... because the false god and patterns of worship that are assaulted in this case are the persons themselves (and unregenerate husbands often do not like this).

Finally, though it may come as a surprise to many Peter, in his contemporary historical/cultural context, was not being especially counter cultural. Even the secular Roman world often valued a woman seeing her inner person more valuable than her outer person. This is often expressed today too – exhortations for women to see themselves as inwardly beautiful. However, while it is a grace that on some level even the secular world can appreciate the value of inner adornment it is always in conflict with their pride and lusting for outward adornment and the inner adornment will always ultimately be selfish and deficient outside of genuine faith. What Peter was calling believing women to was not simply a better version of their culture, but to a life uniquely pleasing to God and of untold benefit to her husband and others.

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Further Reflection and Application

Wayne Grudem published his commentary on 1 Peter in 1988. Three years later Grudem and John Piper co-authored “Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood.” Gender roles and their relation to one another is a subject that has always been applicable, but that is very much a discussed and disputed subject in contemporary culture around the world. Take a few minutes to consider and then engage with what Grudem states here and its fidelity to the Scriptures.

“The attractiveness of a wife’s submissive behaviour even to an unbelieving husband suggests that God has inscribed the rightness and beauty of role distinctions in marriage on the hearts of all mankind. Such role distinctions include male leadership or headship in the family and female acceptance of and responsiveness to that leadership.”¹²

What are some of the reasons a believing wife might struggle with submission even though it is plainly commanded in the Scriptures? How might you counsel or encourage such a person?

In view of the potential struggles that can come with submitting to someone (especially an unbeliever), how does having a perspective that one is first and ultimately submitting to Christ help?

How does inward adornment practically work itself out? Is there a necessary conflict with external adornment, and if not, then what might a healthy balance look like in your cultural context?

¹² Grudem, Pg. 139

II. Husbands are to be faithful stewards of their wives' submission (3:7)

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Peter again transitions with, *ὁμοίως* or likewise, demonstrating a new emphasis while keeping continuity. This time, while he continues to address biblical submission, he is not addressing the one who is submitting (as has been the pattern). Here, the one who is being *submitted to* receives instructions, namely husbands in relation to their wives. While the wife submits to the husband, he is providing a context, as a believer, in which she can maximize both her joy and success in her role. This is accomplished by his living with her in an understanding way. This stems from a proper recognition that, just as the two have different *roles* by design, *they* are also designed differently, though equal in Christ. This works itself out with husbands recognizing and caring for their wives by showing them honor or proper esteem as the weaker vessel who are joint heirs with them in Christ. Whereas Peter framed the wife's prospective context as one of being married to an unbeliever (and potentially winning him with her conduct), for the husband he framed the prospective context as his being married to a believer (and honoring her as a joint heir in Christ). Because of this positional difference of the wife being in Christ, and because of the role difference (the husband being head of his home), there is also the warning that failure to heed this charge could and will obstruct the husband's fellowship with God through prayer.

It appears that whereas the Lord takes pleasure in a wife's righteous inner adornment, he also takes displeasure in a husband's failure to exercise his headship properly, which should include his properly recognizing the differences between husbands/wives, men/women, and/or her shared status as a redeemed child of God. Therefore it is imperative for husbands to grasp the weightiness of that to which they have been called in living with one's wife in an understanding way.

Understanding here is *γνῶσις*, commonly translated “knowledge” or as the NASB and ESV choose here, “understanding way.” This means, having a working and proper knowledge of both how God has designed women in general and one's wife in particular.

The believing husband is to know and be considerate of one's wife's spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. This is fundamentally good leadership, good shepherding, and it should have its most complete and perfect expression in the most intimate of natural relationships. Husbands must know and consequently properly care for their wives.

This is, again, not diminishing a proper valuation of women. By God's design they are "weaker vessels," providing a context and opportunity for husbands to demonstrate God's goodness and sufficiency to their wives through their providing, protecting, and righteously esteeming of them. If Peter intended to diminish the role and esteeming of women (and wives in particular), he would not have commanded husbands to have reasonable insight/understanding in honoring and esteeming their wives.

John MacArthur stated, "Though not submitting to his wife as a leader, a believing husband must submit to the loving duty of being sensitive to the needs, fears, and feelings of his wife. In other words, a Christian husband needs to subordinate his needs to hers, whether she is a Christian or not. Peter specifically notes consideration, chivalry, and companionship."¹³ In view of this, husbands must always be stewarding their strength to their wife's advantage and care.

Grudem sees the "knowledge" that husbands are to have here as generously broad in scope and application – he should intentionally and comprehensively know his wife and in such maximize that in ways that properly honor or esteem her (privately and publicly).¹⁴

Now, an important element of the context here is the relationship in which this service is framed. By "heirs of the grace of life," it appears that Peter is communicating that the wife is also a believer in this context. However, some argue that "the grace of life" is speaking to marriage and not salvation – this leaving open the parallel role of the believing husband ministering to his unbelieving wife. This does not diminish or take away the fact that believing men and believing women are equal and co-heirs in Christ (Galatians 3:28¹⁵). It only broadens the first expression of application (to marriage in general without regard to the spouse's standing in Christ).

¹³ The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV. Word Bibles, 1997. (Hereafter: MacArthur Study Bible), Pg.1944

¹⁴ Grudem, Pgs142-143

¹⁵ "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28 ^{ESV}

MacArthur is one who understands “the grace of life” as being an expression of the marital relationship and not salvation. This conclusion impacts his understanding on a husband’s prayers being obstructed as he argues that the obstruction is the prayers for his wife’s salvation and that his conduct could compromise the effectiveness of those prayers.¹⁶

MacArthur’s conclusion on the obstructed prayer warning appears to be primarily a natural consequence or a practical danger. However, it would appear that Peter is speaking more firmly than this and is communicating that there is divine displeasure when a husband fails in his charge.¹⁷

When Peter speaks of hindered prayers it is severe language. The warning is that this man’s prayers will be “hindered” – the term translated “hindered” here is ἐκκόπτω and of its ten other uses in the New Testament it is only once not translated as some form of “cutting off” and in the one other exception it was more a stylistic word choice with which “cut off” would have worked too. Even if “hindered” is the best way to express this as the ESV, NASB, NET, and KJV have translated it – there still should be a proper appreciation for the severity of this warning. Even “hindering” prayer is a striking warning... and elevates both the subject and the possible offense to it, namely the wife and her treatment.

It is plain that the Lord “hears” different individuals’ prayers differently in various contexts. An example of this is that the righteous man’s prayers are distinguished as uniquely effective/powerful per James’ statement, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” James 5:16 ^{ESV} By contrast, here is the man whose prayers are obstructed from a relational compromise with the Lord that is rooted in the husband’s relational compromise with his wife.

It appears that Peter sees this as no small offense - wives have a high expectation in their responsibilities, but husbands clearly do too as their very prayers are in the balance. This serves to further esteem the value of the wife/woman before the Lord.

This is the only context in which Peter speaks to husbands or men directly, and it is a call for them to honor and esteem their wives, but the husband’s charge comes with a warning that failing to do so is an expression of compromising proper fellowship with God (who esteems their wives) and obstructing their prayers.

¹⁶ MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 1944

¹⁷ MacArthur’s conclusion does not inherently imply that this too does not apply, but it certainly does not require it either. Further, because of the first conclusion, it would appear to be almost forced to see it both ways in view of his conclusion.

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

What are some reflections on the fact that wives are to bring themselves under the authority of their husbands, who will in turn be required to give an account for their leading and care of their families in general, and wives in particular?

What are some daily expressions and then larger more sweeping expressions of a husband living with his wife in an understanding way? How broadly might this differ in various marriages and why?

How does a husband living with his wife in an understanding way free and empower her to greater joyful obedience?

The Lord clearly finds displeasure with a husband failing to honor/respect that he and his wife have differing roles, as reflected in his prayers being obstructed. What does the severity of this consequence communicate and how might it provoke greater faithfulness from men?

III. Relational instructions to all of the beloved for a life pleasing to the Lord (3:8- 12)

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.”

Positive relational instructions – binding elements (unity, sympathy, love, tenderness, humility). (3:8)

Peter begins this next section with τέλος or “finally,” expressing a clear conclusion to the thematic discussion of biblical submission that was carried from chapter two and into three as it came to a climatic finish with the context of marriage. The attention of his exhortations and commands have overtly broadened here as “all of you” captures more than servants, wives, and husbands, but all believers.

Peter now provides five elements that were to mark the whole church body: Unity of mind/harmony.

Sympathy.

Brotherly love.

Tender hearts/kindhearted.

Humble mind.

These elements appear to frame a more complete foundation of life in Christ and not just a means of enduring suffering well or responding well, but by their nature they will produce these results too. They are pressing believers to be like Christ... like the man that Peter walked with for three years of public ministry and whom Peter knew as his friend – Jesus, who Peter watched live and suffer righteously. These are characteristics he exemplified and desired of his disciples and continues to desire now.

The charges listed here in verse eight would find their primary application within the church (though there is a general expression of these to the greater community too). Regarding these five elements, Thomas Schreiner demonstrated a possible chiastic element to the list:

A) Harmony

B) Sympathy

C) Brotherly Love

B') Compassion

A') Humility

This would put Harmony/Humility in a parallel relationship to one another, Sympathy and Compassion in a parallel relationship to one another, and *Brotherly Love as the central/primary element*, which itself informs the other elements.¹⁸

While it is difficult to be definitive on whether or not Peter employed a chiasm here (which would not be an uncommon literary tool), it is wholly reasonable to see these relationships, particularly as they are centered on a mutual affection for one another.

Unity of Mind/Harmony & A Humble Mind/Humility

Having unity of mind is not to be oversimplified so as to communicate that everyone thinks exactly alike or comes to the exact same conclusions by the exact same means. Nowhere in the Scriptures is such a pattern modeled or prescribed. What is modeled and prescribed are things such as pluralities in leadership (first with the Disciples/Apostles and then with Elders and with Deacons).

There is a complimentary nature to limited differences that unity binds together, and unity of mind is an expression of common conclusion leading to common action, affection, and goals.

This unity was of preeminent value to the Lord for his church and a clear point of emphasis in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

¹⁸ Schreiner, Pgs. 163-164

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” Philippians 2:1-2 ^{ESV}

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus....” Philippians 2:5 ^{ESV}

“Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.” Philippians 3:15 ^{ESV}

Unity, centered on truth, is imperative to the health and witness of the church. It is also a means of corporate endurance amidst suffering.

Unity, is complimented and strengthened through the critical presence of humility, which produces a gracious deference to others and a righteous assault on the individual having to have things their way.

Paul plainly saw the relationship of unity and humility as can be observed when re-examining Philippians 2:1-2,5 in its more complete unit as 2:1-5.

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus....” Philippians 2:1-5 ^{ESV}

Sympathy & Tender Hearted/Compassion

One of the most natural pairings is that of sympathy or compassion. Having an acute awareness and tenderness for the expressed pain and struggle of others. This is expressed so clearly in 1 Corinthians 12, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” 1 Corinthians 12:26 ^{ESV}

Brotherly Love

Whether Schreiner is accurate in his observation of a potential chiastic structure in the list or not, it is plainly apparent that the central/binding element to this list is brotherly love. A mutual affection for one another naturally produces: unity, sympathy, tender hearts, and humility. This also returns one to the command in chapter one.

A redeemed people love one another and this love demonstrates itself in relationship and conduct.

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God....” 1 Peter 1:22-23 ^{ESV}

Next, Peter continues to express how they can exemplify Christ by what they are not to do followed by a righteous alternative.

Not repaying evil for evil.

Not repaying reviling for reviling.

By contrast, bless.

In a context of actual or potential suffering, it is reasonable to inquire if there is ever a time to “react” in a like manner to the offender’s actions?

The answer is no. Not if one is entrusting themselves to a righteous judge... his retribution is coming in due time, and if Christ can demonstrate patience in his trials and suffering (which were infinitely unjust), then those in Christ must learn to so confidently persevere in their trials and suffering too.

It must be remembered that it is the Lord who will dutifully repay men for their actions, and it is the believer who until such a time is called to bless:

“For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.” Matthew 16:27 ^{ESV}

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.” Romans 2:6-8 ^{ESV}

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:14-21 ^{ESV}

"See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone."

1 Thessalonians 5:15 ^{ESV}

Not repaying evil for evil should be a naturally concluded position for the believer, as we are to have no part in evil (that which is the antithesis to good and right).

Peter is plainly not permitting retaliation, which is utterly distinct from justice. The legal paradigm of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was not retaliation, but a just response to an offense (the punishment reasonably fitting the crime). Therefore, it is never acceptable to return sin (evil or reviling) for sin (evil or reviling). What makes this challenging is that one has to have confidence that justice will prevail, which may or may not be experienced in this temporal life, but is wholly guaranteed by the Lord. That is why Jesus was pleased to entrust himself to the just/righteous judge as expressed in chapter two: "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." 1 Peter 2:23 ^{ESV}

It is with a proper confidence in God and his perfect justice that one is now freed to bless – to be a deliberate and proactive source of good and a means of grace for others (deserved or not). Further, this is an element of the believer's calling by God – an element of one's redemption working itself out and properly expressing itself in this time of sojourning and in so doing reflecting and testifying to their Lord too.

Finally, the result of this obedience itself yields a blessing – so whereas believers are called to not retaliate evil for evil or reviling for reviling, they are to bless and in turn are themselves blessed. So, from God's vantage point for his children, it is bless and be blessed.

The chief/best way to bless one's enemies or oppressors is to plead for their salvation and seek their best even in this temporal life. Their debts and offenses will then have been satisfied in full through the atoning work of the Son, which was the chief expression of unjust suffering yielding undeserved blessing.

“For ‘Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’”

Securing the Lord’s good pleasure and blessing by one’s conduct (3:10-12).¹⁹

This call to bless in response to suffering is affirmed by Psalm 34, which Peter is citing. In David’s Psalm, blessing is expressed in loving life and seeing good days because the Lord is actively attentive toward the righteous.

Contextually, David was writing from the vantage point of unjust suffering and magnificent deliverance as his confidence and joy were in God.

The blessing of God would appear to be reflected in a happier and more fulfilling life that is ultimately satisfied that it is a life attended to by God. Further, while this would appear to be emphasizing the temporal life more than it does an eschatological hope, one needs to recognize that believers certainly have a future hope, but also live in a very present reality, and there is no loss with enjoying God’s blessing in both (present and future) inasmuch as this is possible. Or as MacArthur states, this is how Peter demonstrates one can enjoy this temporal life even amidst a hostile environment.²⁰

The elements that would obstruct blessing are first verbal offenses, which are ultimately a reflection one’s heart: tongues and lips. Therefore, there is a forsaking of evil, almost even a put off and put on (forsaking evil and doing good).

Put Off: Keeping one’s tongue from evil (3:10).

Put Off: Keeping one’s lips from deceit (3:10).

Put Off: Turning away from evil (3:11).

Put On: Doing good (3:11).

Put On: Seeking/pursuing peace (3:11).

¹⁹ For a more complete treatment of Psalm 34 see Appendix A.

²⁰ MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 1945

Knowing David's psalm, Peter's readers are reminded that the Lord is plainly attentive to the righteous (those who are actively seeking to walk in a manner pleasing to God). By contrast, he opposes the wicked (those willfully delighting in evil).

Note here the anthropomorphic language David used (God is spirit and does not have these physical elements of man, but using them in a picture expresses the actual relationship in such a way that man can more clearly understand/relate to it).

Eyes on the righteous – he sees and knows their circumstances and faithfulness.

Ears open to the prayers of the righteous – he hears his people (now he clearly sees and hears all things, but there is an acute attention to the hearing of his people's prayers).

Face turned away (from those who do evil) – appears to express the overt refusal to know the advantages and blessings of the righteous – not seeing or hearing.

Note that whereas poor conduct within the family structure can compromise one's prayers (3:7), the Lord is stated to be attentive to the righteous man's prayers. By contrast, the face of the Lord (eyes and ears) are against those who do evil.

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general note-taking. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Further Reflection and Application

Peter provides five elements that were to mark the whole church body: unity of mind/harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, tender hearts/kindhearted, and a humble mind. How did these (or could these have) look in your life this week – particularly as you engaged various members of the church body?

Which of these items do you need to give more intentional attention to, and how does your present relationship with these elements reflect their centerpiece: brotherly love for other believers?

It was stated, “There is a complimentary nature to limited differences that unity binds together, and unity of mind is an expression of common conclusion leading to common action, affection, and goals.” How much commonality should there be within a healthy fellowship, and how can you help cultivate unity in the midst of reasonable differences (in theology and practice)?

How does confidence in God’s righteous judgment in his own perfect timing enable you to bless others, particularly offenders? How does Jesus’ own example inform your thoughts on this matter?

How are you pursuing the greatest blessing you can offer an offender through making the gospel known to them? Are there strategic opportunities to speak truth that you have been uniquely provided because you bore up well under trial/suffering?

What are some practical expressions of Peter’s shared put off/put on exhortations?

Put Off: Keeping one’s tongue from evil (3:10).

Put Off: Keeping one’s lips from deceit (3:10).

Put Off: Turning away from evil (3:11).

Put On: Doing good (3:11).

Put On: Seeking/pursuing peace (3:11).

IV. Special instructions on properly understanding and responding to unjust suffering (3:13-17)

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.”

Aware that there is not to be retaliation, but confidence in God who sees and hears, it is reasonable to ask, as Peter does, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

At face value it would almost appear that Peter is setting his readers up for an emphatic “no one!” but such is not the case... though in principle it is true because all are subordinate to God who is attentive to the righteous. However, the Lord does allow suffering and even harm for reasons that are superior to that moment.

So, is Peter asking a rhetorical question here? The very nature of believers suffering seems to plainly indicate that there are innumerable persons who would seek their harm for being zealous for what is good. Further, it is plainly established that God's people have known affliction since they have had a corporate identity – Israel from the time of their sojourning in Egypt, Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry, and the Church from its earliest days after its inauguration at Pentecost.

Jesus discussed this in his upper room discourse when he disclosed his imminent departure and the sending of the helper, the Holy Spirit, John 14-16, culminating with, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 ^{ESV}

Schreiner argues that this is a “no harm” situation in the largest of pictures – that ultimately no one can harm someone who is “zealous for what is good” because they are in Christ and have hope of future glory.²¹ He then goes on to further develop this by addressing the present reality of suffering/harm in comparison to the future relief/reward. “...Peter did not suggest that sufferings are rare. Suffering stalks the believer until this present evil age comes to an end.”²² He also went on to draw a comparison with Romans 8:31, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”²³

²¹ Schreiner, Pg. 169

²² Schreiner, Pg. 170

²³ Schreiner, Pg. 170 (Romans 8:31 ^{ESV})

Bringing a slight variation on this, Grudem argues that the normal pattern is that someone who is seeking to do good is not unnecessarily harmed... a reflection of common grace expressed through the restraining conscience.²⁴

Edmund Clowney makes a thematic connection to both Romans 8 and Psalm 56:²⁵

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31 ^{ESV}

“In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?” Psalm 56:4 ^{ESV}

Clowney further affirms that suffering is not the opposite of blessing.²⁶

It is again argued that the harm here is in view of eternity as the believer is guaranteed an inheritance:

That has been provided through a new birth to a living hope caused by the Father and made effectual through the resurrection of the Son (1:3).

That is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for the adopted children (1:4).

Further, Peter appears to answer/address his own hypothetical reality from the prior verse. Should suffering or harm come for righteousness' sake, they are blessed. It appears as though he leaves open the possibility that someone could be faithful to the Lord, but not actually suffer, but *should* they suffer, well there is blessing in this.

Regarding this, it is proper to consider whether or not Jesus expects all believers in all times and in all contexts to suffer persecution? It would not appear so... and it does not appear to have been the experience of many faithful men and women in many present contexts. But when they do... they are blessed.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:10-12 ^{ESV}

²⁴ Grudem, Pg. 151

²⁵ The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 1 Peter; Edmund Clowney; Inter Varsity Press, 1988; (Hereafter: Clowney), Pg. 144

²⁶ Clowney, Pg. 144

At this time it might be wise to wrestle through an apparent dichotomy... are Peter and Paul in conflict? No, but there is a tension to be worked through here.

Helpful insight is provided by the NET Bible where it states, "The Greek construction here implies that such suffering was not the norm, even though it could happen, and in fact may well have happened to some of its readers (cf. 4:4, 12-19)."²⁷

Further, the way Peter expressed the possibility/probability of suffering here almost appears less emphatic than Paul in 2 Timothy, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will be* persecuted." 2 Timothy 3:12 ^{ESV}

Peter says "if" and Paul appears to have no room for "if" with his "all."

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake...." 1 Peter 3:14 ^{ESV} those terms together... "ἅλλ' εἰ" "but if" appear to plainly qualify that Peter does not anticipate that all believers at all times in all circumstances will suffer for righteousness' sake.

Schreiner argues that the verbal form of "suffer" here has led many to the wrong conclusion that suffering is simply a remote possibility for believers. He concludes that this is expressing that suffering is not necessarily a constant experience, but a constant threat.²⁸ He further argues that this suffering is qualified by it being not a general/broad expression of suffering, but a suffering on account of righteous obedience.²⁹ This would appear to introduce the possibility that the matter is one of scope and expression and not possibility. So, one would have to wrestle through what might the scope and expression of suffering look like in the life of a given believer – recognizing with this too that it is not always a realized threat, but an active threat nevertheless when pursuing a life of righteousness in an obstinate and unbelieving world.

Another element that needs to be a part of this conversation is that Peter was continuing what he has first addressed in 3:9, returning to the blessed disposition of the righteous while also framing the discussion in the "even if" language, the language of confident resolve in God and his greater work and his greater reward.

²⁷ NET Bible, 1 Peter 3:14, Note 20

²⁸ Schreiner, Pg. 171

²⁹ Schreiner, Pg. 171

While there is plenty to be wrestled through here, it is clear that Peter is expressing that it is still less probable that one will suffer for righteousness, though it plainly does happen, and when it does there is blessing, just as Jesus taught him.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:10-12 ^{ESV}

Rather than fearing the wrongdoer/oppressor, the believer is to esteem and honor Christ and be prepared to articulate one's hope in a faithful manner (3:14-15)

"Have no fear of them, nor be troubled...."

A natural temptation in the context of suffering is to fear, but Peter states that this is not the disposition of a righteous sufferer: they are not to fear or be troubled by their offender(s).

It is stated here not to be troubled because of these offenders and their conduct... do not be inwardly distressed – likely an expression of anxiety as one's full confidence in God appears to be challenged and their joyful surety is assaulted.

Peter was not speaking from a purely ideological vantage point, but as a man changed by the resurrected Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. He had extraordinary fear before and it was a fear that would have secured its grip on any common man... but he is transformed to a magnificently bold declarer of the good news of Jesus Christ as modeled throughout the book of Acts.

Regarding this, Clowney makes a helpful observation for 3:14, noting that Peter had exchanged the fear of man for the fear of God... and is able to provide personal testimony of no longer having a fear of his opponents and not being rattled or troubled by them. This contrast is put on such striking display when it is recalled that Peter provided a rapidly escalating denial of Jesus when confronted in the courtyard outside of the Sanhedrin, but later was personally called before that same ruling body and boldly engaged them with truth and refused their call for him to stop declaring the truths of Christ.³⁰

³⁰ Clowney, Pgs. 145-146

"Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, 'This man also was with him.' But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.' And a little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not.' And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed." Luke 22:56-60 ^{ESV}

"On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high- priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:5-13 ^{ESV}

So, the command is clear and the personal testimony of Peter in this regard is uniquely impactful. But all who are in Christ should again remember Jesus' words and consider why any would choose to be troubled, undone in fear, severely agitated, or distressed when Jesus promises peace.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." John 14:27 ^{ESV}

In view of: Jesus' promised peace, the fact that this suffering is temporal in its impact, and confidence that this suffering produces God's blessing, there is no place to fear the unbeliever/offender and no reasons to be troubled.

"...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...."

In contrast to the natural response of being fearful or troubled, Peter directs his readers to respond with the unique supernatural strength provided in Christ to both endure hardship and faithfully proclaim the excellencies and sufficiency of Christ. As a foundational element, they are to be properly calibrated: esteeming Christ, honoring Christ the Lord as holy (perfectly/righteously setting apart

Jesus Christ), and remembering that the Lord is their chief authority, even amidst the temporal authorities that are either participating in or not stopping their suffering.

What is interesting regarding this statement is that it is consistently the believers that have been and are being sanctified, but here it is a call to set apart Christ in your hearts. In a context of potential fear and anxiety in suffering, set Christ apart in your hearts and be prepared to articulate your hope.

To sanctify Christ in one's heart, to honor Christ the Lord as holy, is to worshipfully esteem him as gloriously set apart in his person, words, and works. In your hearts... in your inner and true man – honor, sanctify, set apart Christ in distinction and honor and holiness.

It is also important to recognize that this is not a matter of providing Christ a unique or new positional advantage in his relationship with you – Peter is plainly only exhorting them to affirm in their disposition, thoughts, and actions that which is already true. Christ is Lord whether this is presently acknowledged or not. However, submissively affirming this as a child of God calibrates one to a proper disposition of righteous obedience and perseverance in an otherwise fearful and challenging context. In acknowledging Christ as Lord one is also recognizing that anything they might be fearful of is also under his lordship.

“...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect....”

The call to a prepared defense is a call to be able to articulate the fundamental elements of the gospel – consistent with what would be expected of one being baptized as they publicly affirm their understanding. It is not necessarily a defense designed to refute a range of assaults on one's faith, but a clear articulation of one's hope. It is a *proactive* rather than *reactive* defense. This is among the reasons that it is wiser for the believer to spend their primary strength and time investing in knowing and cherishing their redemption in Christ over against the nuances of the most current expression of counterfeit gospels and deviant religions.

It is interesting that this hope is inquired about by those who are not believers – there is a distinction in the believer's life that promotes this question. A most magnificent display of this was provided by Paul both on the public square and before governing officials.

Paul in Athens, Acts 17:16-34

Paul before King Agrippa and Festus, Acts 26:1-29

Again, the believer is called to always be prepared to express their hope, which has provided them the means to righteously suffer – a completely foreign experience to this world and one which the world has no natural capacity to understand; so being prepared to express the nature, content, and source of their blessed hope is a unique ministry to this world amidst their own sufferings/trials.

Hope, Gospel Hope

As in much of the New Testament, so also in 1 Peter, hope appears to be gospel centered and such is the nature of what is expressed to others:

1 Peter 1:3, God the Father has caused us to be born again to a living hope through Christ's resurrection.

1 Peter 1:21, hope in the finished work of Christ (death, burial, and resurrection).

Apologetic Attitude/Disposition: Gentleness & Respect

The qualifying element to the ready defense of one's hope is that it is to be done with gentleness and respect.

The Christ exemplifying apologetic is not an antagonistic defense or even an argument, but a response to the challenge.

Paul is again helpful here not only in example, but in establishing God's expectations for leadership within the church.

"Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money." 1 Timothy 3:2-3 ^{ESV}

"Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:23-26 ^{ESV}

Respect is a word well recognized within the larger study of 1 Peter. It is φόβος, which is translated somewhere on the spectrum of fear and respect. It has already been established in the context of biblical submission that it is God who is to be feared and man that is to be respected (recognizing that there is no lack of respect in one's righteous fear of God). Peter has already stated in this same general context (3:14) that believers are to have no fear of those who would produce suffering into their lives on account of their righteous conduct.

Finally, executing one's apologetic with gentleness and respect is a pure expression of being right. Peter means right, not in the sense of superior insight or knowledge, but right as a good steward and proclaimer of God's truths. To pollute this high calling with pride is among other things a great tragedy. "It has been said that the corruption of the best is the worst; certainly no pride is more offensive than pride in being trophies of grace."³¹

"...having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

Peter goes on to provide a further context in which the defense of one's hope is to be expressed: having a good conscience - this appears to be in relation to how the opponent is engaged: gently and with respect.

A good conscience is when one's own inner man, who knows one's thoughts, one's intentions, and one's unobserved acts, does not condemn them... where there is a sincere and active pursuit of righteousness and ready/quick repentance when there is failure. By contrast, there is shame for those who willfully assault/oppress such an upright person against whom no legitimate accusation stands.

A good conscience guards and governs one's actions – producing good conduct/behavior that can be sustained amidst slandering and reviling (in part by demonstrating Christ's sufficiency and your view to a future reckoning 2:12, and in part by silencing the foolish people 2:15 and in not doing the same as them 3:9).

"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." 1 Peter 2:12 ^{ESV}

³¹ Clowney, Pg. 151

“For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.”

1 Peter 2:15 ^{ESV}

“Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:9 ^{ESV}

Having a good conscience was important to Paul in his instructions to Timothy too.

“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

1 Timothy 1:5 ^{ESV}

“This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.” 1 Timothy 1:18-19 ^{ESV}

Peter's Use of Isaiah 8

“...do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But
The LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.
Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”

Isaiah 8:12-13 ^{ESV}

“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your
hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being
prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you
for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with
gentleness and respect....” 1 Peter 3:14-15 ^{ESV}

Peter appears to be drawing from Isaiah 8:12-13 in 1 Peter 3:14-15 with both his word choices and in some contextual parallels, which demonstrates the enduring qualities to the principles expressed in each of these different historical contexts. In Isaiah 8 there was an impending Assyrian invasion which produced no small measure of fear, or confidence being challenged, and calls to submitting one's mind/heart to truth. In 1 Peter 3 there is not the looming presence of a hostile nation, but the oppression and ever-present threat of trials and persecution from any number of expressions from an unbelieving world. In view of this, Peter takes up Isaiah's charge to Israel and expresses it to the Church:

Not fearing those to whom fear is not due.

Not being troubled by those who are not sovereign.

Setting apart and righteously esteeming the only one worthy of such distinction.

Articulating this most peculiar and magnificent hope to those who know no such hope.

One might also remember that this is not the first time that Peter has plainly referenced Isaiah 8, “And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling....” Isaiah 8:14 ^{ESV} “...a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” 1 Peter 2:6 ^{ESV} These references speak to the rejected and esteemed Son of Man (like references made by Jesus too). So, it is interesting that Peter is again drawing from that same portion of Isaiah – before in the form of explaining and rebuking the unbelievers and here as an exhortation to perseverance and faithfulness.

“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”

This appears to be directly continuing the primary narrative last expressed earlier in the passage, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.” 1 Peter 3:14 ^{ESV} Being blessed is already a magnificent advantage and benefit (being happy/satisfied in God), but as to emphasize this further, Peter states that the role of suffering for doing good is superior to punitive suffering.

At this time it is reasonable to muse over the nature of this world that such a narrative would be necessary. What a broken world that one suffers for doing good! Not just disliked... but made to suffer. This draws out the well-established trinity of enemies articulated in the Scriptures: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Individually and/or as units they produce suffering that can only make sense in that they are ultimately subordinate and wholly accountable to the just and righteous Judge.

Further, it would appear that suffering can take effectively the same form for various reasons, but the matter of attention is the source/cause of suffering, namely doing good rather than doing evil. It is always a possibility that people (usually most) suffer for doing evil. This is not the course of suffering with which the believer wants to be identified.

John introduces this contrast even more directly, “Beloved do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.” 3 John 11 ^{ESV}

As stated before, in 3:14, so it appears to be here that Peter does not presume suffering by all peoples in all times and in all circumstances: “...if that should be God’s will....” 1 Peter 3:17 ^{ESV} The, “if” appears to communicate that it is not always God’s plan or desire for some believers to suffer for doing good. Regarding this, MacArthur brought out a comforting fact... that when one does suffer for

doing good then it is in accordance to God's will for them³² – suffering has not escaped God's will; it is God's will.

This was similarly spoken to in 2:20, enduring while suffering for doing good is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

Once more it is important to affirm that the plain testimony of the Scriptures is that it is God's will that his beloved suffer as they are disciples of the suffering Son and putting his glory on display in a world that is in absolute rebellion against him. This is not some strange thing... it is what Jesus plainly prepared his disciples for and the theater of their demonstration of Christ's sufficiency.

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." John 15:18-22 ^{ESV}

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Matthew 10:34-39 ^{ESV}

³² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1Peter; John MacArthur Jr; Moody Publishers, 2004; (Hereafter: MacArthur Commentary), Pg. 200

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

Edmund Clowney stated that suffering is not the opposite of blessing.³³ What do you think he meant by this, and is he correct?

Peter plainly states the possibility, not necessarily the probability, of suffering. What might suffering for righteousness' sake look like in your life (family, work, general social engagements, etc.)?

Peter plainly exchanged his fear of man for a righteous fear of God. What might this exchange look like in your life?

Think about and interact with the statement provided on apologetics: "The call to a prepared defense is a call to be able to articulate the fundamental elements of the gospel – consistent with what would be expected of one being baptized as they publicly affirm their understanding. It is not necessarily a defense designed to refute a range of assaults on one's faith, but a clear articulation of one's hope. It is a *proactive* rather than *reactive* defense. This is among the reasons that it is wiser for the believer to spend their primary strength and time investing in knowing and cherishing their redemption in Christ over against the nuances of the most current expression of counterfeit gospels and deviant religions."

How is it possible for believers to have no fear of those who would produce suffering into their lives on account of their righteous conduct?

The conscience operates within the restricted economy of how and with what it has been informed – what are you doing to produce and strengthen a good conscience?

It was stated that MacArthur brought out a comforting fact... that when one does suffer for doing good, then it is in accordance with God's will for them³⁴ – suffering has not escaped God's will; it is God's will. How is this a comforting fact, and how might it impact your counseling and coming alongside someone amidst their own suffering for righteousness' sake?

How does your suffering put Christ's sufficiency on display?

³³ Clowney, Pg. 144

³⁴ MacArthur Commentary, Pg. 200

V. The example and redemptive work of Christ's suffering (3:18-22)

A Uniquely Challenging Section

It is hoped that as a whole this body of work has been treated as a Study Guide and not a primary resource. There are only so many things that can be accomplished in this format and final resolution on all details will not be one of them – particularly with the concluding portion of 1 Peter 3. Here the student of the Scriptures will find unique challenges. Of this section Martin Luther famously stated, “...a wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.” However, one cannot uphold the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture and abandon efforts to struggle with the text with a high degree of confidence that they can be on some level understood.

A problem on the other side of the spectrum with these challenging verses are two grave errors that have been observed in the handling of these and like passages:

- 1) Forfeiting the responsibility and privilege of wrestling with hard/challenging texts.
- 2) Making the obscure clearly say something (to your doctrinal preferences) that it does not appear to naturally contribute.³⁵

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...”

Christ Suffered or Christ Died

A textual matter that is helpful to address here is that there are translation differences in this portion of the text as many versions state, “Christ suffered” while some, including the NASB95 state, “Christ also died.” Both are accurate in terms of truth communicated and those that state that “Christ suffered” still include in the same verse that Jesus was put to death in the flesh (there is no effort to distort full-truths with partial truths). This is a matter of textual variation with the source materials available and scholarship differs on the best choice. The NET Bible addresses this in their translation notes (included here by way of a footnote).³⁶

³⁵ The most disheartening demonstrations of this were arguments for pedobaptism and believer's baptism from a text that does not appear to clearly contribute to either position. One position is plainly developed in the Scriptures, believer's baptism, but neither appear to have an overt positional stronghold here.

³⁶ NET Bible, Translation Note (1 Peter 3:18, Note 31). The variants here are legion (B. M. Metzger produces eight variants in a nice layout of the evidence [TCGNT 622]). Most of these variants involve pronouns, prepositions, or word order changes, but the major problem involves whether Christ

Christ's Redemptive Suffering for Sins

While Christ experienced a range of sufferings in his first coming, for the payment and penalty of sins he ultimately suffered once in the yielding of his life as a propitiatory sacrifice.

Christ did not replicate this redemptive suffering and neither will his people – the suffering that the children of God experience is the rebellion of this world whose insatiable appetite for sin puts them in direct conflict with the good that those in Christ would pursue in their lives and the lives of others.

Christ suffering for sin was perfect and complete, therefore:

There was no reason or need for duplication of action.

There is no means or rationale that his people can or should suffer for the redemption of anyone, including themselves (they could not, they cannot, and they need not).

The nature of Christ's suffering was both perfect and unique – he was/is the only perfectly righteous one and therefore the only sufficient atoning sacrifice. Paul expresses this with a unique clarity in 2 Corinthians 5, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21 ^{ESV}

The nature of Christ's culminating suffering was to reconcile his people to the Father. This is what was being communicated by "bring us to God" as God is inapproachable for sinners.

Jesus' suffering, the righteous/just for the unrighteous/unjust categorically shifted those in Christ from the common category of all men unrighteous/unjust to the exclusive category that he rightfully held, the righteous/just.

"suffered" (ἐπάθεν, *epathen*) or "died" (ἀπέθανεν, *apethanen*). The witnesses that read ἀπέθανεν are P κ A C Ψ 0285 33 614 630 945 1241 1505 1739; the witnesses that read ἐπάθεν are B L P 81 M. Although the external evidence slightly favors ἀπέθανεν, such may be a secondary reading. Intrinsically, ἐπάθεν both fits the context better, especially the verbal link between v. 17 and v. 18 (note in particular the introductory causal ὅτι [*hoti*, "because"] and the emphatic καὶ [*kai*, "also"]), and fits the author's style (1 Peter never uses ἀποθνῆσκω [*apothnēskō*], but uses πάσχω [*paschō*] 11 other times, more than any other NT book). However, scribes would most likely realize this, and might conform the verb in v. 18 to the author's typical usage. It may be argued, however, that scribes tended to alter the text in light of more common NT idioms, and did not have as much sensitivity to the literary features in the immediate context. In this instance, it may not be insignificant that the NT collocates ἀποθνῆσκω with ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*, "sin") seven other times, though only once (1 Cor 15:3) with a meaning similar to what would be demanded here, but collocates πάσχω with ἁμαρτία in only one other place, 1 Pet 4:1, where the meaning also detours from what is seen here. All in all, a decision is difficult, but ἐπάθεν is to be preferred slightly.

Put to death in the flesh and live in the spirit

The nature of Christ's perfect sacrifice for sins included his natural/physical person being put to death for three days. It would plainly appear that this is exactly what Peter is expressing here by stating, "put to death in the flesh." But what is the nature of this contrast with "made alive in the spirit" – a seemingly simple element, but one of substantial consequence in understanding what is more plainly the challenging portion of the book (3:19-21).

The natural reading of 3:18 would be the death and resurrection of Jesus as it is in several other places:

"...who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Romans 4:25 ^{ESV}

"Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." Romans 8:34 ^{ESV}

"For to this end Christ died and lived again...." Romans 14:9 ^{ESV}

"For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again...." 1 Thessalonians 4:14 ^{ESV}

What makes the natural reading challenging are both grammatical elements and the immediately following verse, "...in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison...." 1 Peter 3:19 ^{ESV} But if this is the pattern (death/resurrection) that Peter is expressing then the grammar/syntax has a reasonable range to address this and it significantly impacts the exposition of that which follows (regarding when the proclaiming occurred and therefore to who the proclaiming was made and finally as to what was proclaimed).

A significant element to the argument that begins in 3:18 and will go on to inform the verses that follow it come from how to understand the last clause:

"being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" 1 Peter 3:18 ^{ESV}

"having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" 1 Peter 3:18 ^{NASB}

"by being put to death in the flesh but by being made alive in the spirit" 1 Peter 3:18 ^{NET}

"He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit" 1 Peter 3:18 ^{NIV}

“being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” 1 Peter 3:18 ^{KJV}

“He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” 1 Peter 3:18 ^{CSB}

The two phrases regarding death/flesh and life/spirit are in parallel with one another and both nouns are in the same grammatical case (dative), which is why the majority of the Bible translations keep their respective translation in parallel too. The KJV and CSB chose to break the parallel as it was concluded to not sufficiently communicate the theology of the words. However, it may be that the syntax needs to be better resolved to maintain both the parallel and the best theology.

In agreement with this pattern Schreiner argues that the two nouns (flesh and spirit – both in the dative case) are used differently, Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.³⁷ Ultimately communicating a physical death and a physical resurrection.

Grudem agrees with the grammatical principle, but notes that there would be no clear indication that the same grammatical structure is being applied two different ways while parallel to one another in the same sentence. Therefore, he sees this as put to death in *the physical realm* and made alive in *the spiritual realm* (qualifying that this is where the Spirit of God operates). It is a different way to come to the same conclusion.³⁸ However, it may also contribute to his coming to a differing conclusion regarding the nature, time, and audience of this proclamation – a less overt resurrection connection.

Finally, it cannot be put to death in the flesh while his spirit continued living... as it is plainly stated, “made alive in the spirit.” You cannot make alive that which is already alive. This is among the strengths of the conclusion that this was Christ’s resurrection being referenced and not a preincarnate Christophany or the Spirit of God preaching through an Old Testament prophet.

³⁷ Schreiner, Pg. 184

³⁸ Grudem, Pg.156

“...in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.”

This portion of the passage is strongly disputed by faithful expositors but there is a conclusion that Peter expects his readers to reach and it is the responsibility of all faithful Bible students to pursue Peter’s intended conclusion to the best of their respective ability.

The elements of the historical backdrop are common between the positions and will be briefly considered here.

The offense(s) of the recipients of the preaching appears to have been specifically in the general time of the ark’s construction.

The ark, built by Noah, is stated to have been the means by which eight, and only eight, persons were brought safely through water.

God’s patience consistently was framed as an opportunity to repent and a time of compounding of judgment... not something to be scorned or disregarded:

God’s patience is not to be presumed upon... it is an opportunity for repentance. “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” Romans 2:4 ESV

God’s patience is manifested even in his righteous judgment of unrepentant sinners. “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction....” Romans 9:22 ESV

The patience of God should be counted as salvation. “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him....” 2 Peter 3:15 ESV

These are some of the general elements of the historical/theological context. Next the two primary positions will be examined, but not with equal treatment. This is not to communicate that there is a lack of reasonable support for both, but to provide respectful exposure to the one and a more complete exposure of the other which is viewed as the more likely conclusion.

Position One: Noah Preaching by the Spirit of God

As stated above, conclusions with 3:18 directly impact conclusions for 3:19. To this end Roger Raymer argues that 3:18 should be “made alive *by* the Spirit” – which is a perfectly acceptable option with the grammar and possibly the context. This then sets one up for 3:19 where Raymer goes on to argue that it was by this same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, that Noah preached to his generation during the time of the ark’s construction. Because of their unbelief, they perished in their sins and though *physically* drowned, their *spirits* are in prison and awaiting final judgment.³⁹

A problem with this, as drawn out by MacArthur, is that there is no definite article with “spirit,” thereby lessening the likelihood that it is a reference to the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

Grudem also argues for Christ preaching through Noah, in the spiritual realm, and he concludes that the references to these subjects presently being imprisoned is just that – speaking to their present condition, not the timing of the proclamation. Further, Grudem argues that there were implicit calls to repentance and that no such call is extended to angels.⁴¹ However, this call to repentance is an inference from the historical backdrop of Noah (though that may not be how he is being referenced).

Further, an argument against the other primary position, Jesus declaring victory over the demons, was that the emphasis of the context of both Genesis and 1 Peter was placed on human disobedience and not demonic activity. Most plainly, the offenders/persecutors of 1 Peter were natural people and not demons.⁴² This does not appear to be a problem though... unless Peter intended his reference to the Genesis text to be an overt parallel with his reader’s context. If, however, Peter was providing the contextual foundation for developing an expression of Christ’s victory, then this does not appear to be a problem.

³⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament; John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; 1 Peter: Roger M. Raymer; David C Cook, 1983; (Hereafter: Raymer), Pg.851

⁴⁰ MacArthur Commentary, Pg. 208

⁴¹ Grudem, Pg. 159

⁴² The Expositors’s Bible Commentary, Revised Edition; J. Daryl Charles & Tom Thatcher; 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude; Zondervan, 2006 - Kindle Edition; (Hereafter Charles & Thatcher), Kindle Edition, No Page Numbers Provided (2800-2900 Location Range)

Position Two: The Resurrected Christ Declares Victory

The other primary position essentially states that the resurrected Christ proclaimed victory over those demons who were under bondage because of their unique offenses preceding and contributing to the worldwide judgment experienced at the flood. This position does not lend support to Christ descending into hell and making a general declaration of victory between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. This is an event that followed the resurrection.

MacArthur states that this was a preaching of Jesus' own victory to demons – declaring that though his physical person was dead for three days, he was still triumphant over sin, Satan, and death.⁴³ Continuing with this argument, MacArthur stated that there were some demons who, because of the severity of their offenses, were permanently bound... noting that their great offenses were during the days of Noah and that they were heinous and even impacted the lack of repentance outside of Noah's family.⁴⁴

“When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.’ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.” Genesis 6:1-4 ^{ESV}

Note that there appears to be some sort of wicked deviation that is occurring between “the sons of God” and people (sexual in nature as it relates to union in marriage and the bearing of children). It is understood that these “sons of God” were angels (fallen angels/demons) and that they were possessing men so as to have these relationships in which there was procreation. The profundity of this wickedness was absolutely unique and terrible as the demons “left their posts” – crossing lines of what would be tolerated.

⁴³ MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 1945

⁴⁴ MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 1946

“The sons of God” being equated with angels finds support through their usages in Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 and in the direct contrast that this title has with “man” and “daughters of man” in Genesis 6:1,2,4.

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.” Job 1:6 ^{ESV}

“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.” Job 2:1 ^{ESV}

“...when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” Job 38:7 ^{ESV}

“When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.”

Genesis 6:1-2 ^{ESV}

“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.” Genesis 6:4 ^{ESV}

It is concluded that the “sons of God” in this context were demons who were uniquely egregious in their offenses – sexual offenses with people. There is a strong argument from this developed from the overlap of thematic terms and contexts:

“And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly....” 2 Peter 2:2-6 ^{ESV}

Note that the context is that of sexual offenses, the judgment is of a sect of angels who offended, these angels are placed under a special incarceration until judgment, and there is a contextual reference to the judgment of the flood.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Now, in fairness, this is immediately followed by a reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, which could just be indicating a sweeping timeline of various expressions of severe judgment. However, the pairing, timing, and proximity do appear to lend some measure of potential credibility to the argument (this two time pairing of these events in both First and Second Peter).

Further support is found in the book of Jude.

“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” Jude 6-7 ^{ESV}

Note that here the condemned angels left their proper boundaries, they are under bondage until their judgment, and the context appears to be one of sexual offenses.

One additional reference to victory, particularly over the evil spirits is provided in Colossians 2.

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” Colossians 2:15 ^{ESV}

D. Edmond Hiebert further explains that “the spirits in prison” (3:19) portion of the verse is in a grammatical position which, “...most naturally implies that it was as imprisoned spirits that Christ preached to them.”⁴⁶

This is a very important observation because it also informs timing and circumstances which are critical to properly framing the context – this, if an accurate deduction off of regular grammatical patterns, eliminates the proposition that it was the Spirit of God preaching through Noah to the unbelieving witnesses.

Again, timing (3:20). These offenders formerly disobeyed and the timeframe was in proximity to the time of Noah, and like the unique offenders and severity of judgment expressed with Sodom and Gomorrah, they became enduring examples and expressions of unique moments of offense and judgment. “...the term describes them as notorious examples of those who reject God’s Word and warning.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ 1 Peter; D. Edmond Hiebert; Moody Press, 1992; (Hereafter: Hiebert), Pg. 242 (in the attributive position of the prepositional phrase)

⁴⁷ Hiebert, Pg. 244

Hiebert provided another very helpful observation regarding the term ζωοποιέω (made alive, 3:18) which was used to articulate resurrection as also demonstrated in the following passages:⁴⁸

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.”
John 5:21 ^{ESV}

“...as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’ – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” Romans 4:17 ^{ESV}

“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 ^{ESV}

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:22 ^{ESV}

“you foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.” 1 Corinthians 15:36 ^{ESV}

Once again, understanding that the context is Christ’s resurrection establishes when, which informs who, which informs what, regarding the proclaimed message.

Finally, Schreiner again unpacks the weaknesses of the Spirit preaching through Noah, by way of summary: Christ would not have gone anywhere, spirits naturally and consistently refer to spirits and not people, and there is no equivalent reference to post-mortem incarceration for people (some angels are said to be imprisoned until their judgment).⁴⁹

Further, with the conclusion that it is, “put to death in the flesh and made alive *by* the Spirit,” Schreiner argues that this proclamation to the specially perverse demons would have occurred post-resurrection and not necessarily before while Jesus’ body lay in the grave.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Hiebert, Pg. 239

⁴⁹ Schreiner, Pgs. 186-187

⁵⁰ Schreiner, Pg. 189

Ultimately this triumphant declaration is looking forward to Christ's triumphant exultation. A conclusion displayed by way of a possible symmetrical parallel in this passage:⁵¹

A) He was put to death in the body.

B) He was made alive by the Spirit.

A') He descended and preached to the spirits.

B') He ascended and rules over the spirits.

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ....”

In using the term “baptism” Peter was not referring to the ordinance of baptism, but to a figurative expression communicating immersion into union with Christ.⁵²

There is an overt connection with the thought thread from the preceding picture of Noah with the magnificent image of water. Being cleansed – submersed and complete cleansing, not physically, but spiritually through petitioning God because/through Christ's resurrection.

The image of “baptism” or submersion in water is one of complete cleansing and this is what is accomplished in Christ through one humbly crying out to him (faith in the finished work of Christ).

Similar uses of baptism are expressed by Paul in both Romans and Colossians.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Romans 6:3-5 ^{ESV}

“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” Colossians 2:11-12 ^{ESV}

⁵¹ Charles & Thatcher, Kindle Edition, No Page Numbers Provided (2800-2900 Location Range)

⁵² MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 1946

With this in view “salvation” or “being brought to safety” was overtly correlated with Noah and his family’s experience. The correlation expressing similar qualities but not necessarily complete equality of details or experience. This is important to understand so that one is not looking for detailed correlations, but like principles. So, with this in view here are some overt parallels:

3:20, Noah and his family were brought “safely” (διασώζω) “through” (διὰ) water.

3:21, Baptism now “saves” (σώζω) you as an appeal to God for a good conscience “through” (διὰ) the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁵³

Saved σώζω Through διὰ

John 3:17, *salvation through* the Son.

John 10:9, *salvation through* the Son.

Acts 15:11, *salvation through* the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 5:9, *salvation* from the wrath of God *through* the Son.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, being *saved through* the preached word that is believed.

Ephesians 2:8, *saved through* faith.

Titus 3:5, *salvation through* the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 7:25, *salvation* for those who draw near to God the Father *through* the Son.

Finally, regarding the connection between baptism and the salvation of Noah’s family, it must be understood that there is no lack of complexities here. Several decisions have to be made from the grammar, syntax, and context in general. Those are common factors of the translation and exegesis process, but more challenging here. Among the challenges is the antecedent to “this” in the statement “which corresponds to this” – the “this” here is likely either the water or a reference to the whole of the deliverance of Noah and his family in the ark.⁵⁴

⁵³ Peter has made it unequivocally clear that salvation is exclusively through the finished work of the Son: born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:3).

⁵⁴ Hiebert, Pgs. 246-247

Further, it appears plain enough that there is a point of relation, or like reference or similar pattern, between Noah and his family and the Christian's salvation in Christ and its accompanying baptism. There is plainly a deliverance, a salvation, from the righteous judgment of God – delivered by the mercy and good pleasure of God and quite literally passing from the old to the new. How much more this is to be unpacked is not clear. Maybe Peter intended to keep the matter that plain and more peculiar emphasis is placed on it than other portions of the text, which could themselves be mined for further speculation and details. This is not to advocate lazy exposition, but having observed a generous range of "ideas" and "firm conclusions" rooted in theological conjecture by some and diligent mastery of grammar, syntax, and exposition by others, it is not wholly clear that much more can be firmly concluded. However, all will give an account for their stewardship of the text and if more is to be seen, then it must be laboriously sought. At present, this is what can be offered.

Appeal for a Good Conscience

A good conscience is ultimately one informed by and in submission to God's truth.

More broadly speaking, one's conscience inwardly affirms or condemns someone's actions but is itself limited by its source material for what is good and bad. One appealing to God for a good conscience has had their conscience informed by the Scriptures. They recognize their personal guilt and lack of ability to redeem themselves. Therefore, they cry out to God in repentance and faith. They know God alone can reconcile someone to himself through the finished work of the Son demonstrated in its finality through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, a good conscience is only secured by salvific faith in the resurrected Son of God, a faith expressed as it humbly petitions God. This can be plainly seen as Peter employs the same language here, in 3:21, as he did in 1:3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...."

1 Peter 1:3 ^{ESV} Peter used the same language to express the effectual benefit of spiritual rebirth to a living hope "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."

Born again to a living hope.

An appeal to God for a good conscience (clear of sin's guilt).

This is explicitly affirmed by the author of Hebrews who communicated that Christ's finished work perfects the conscience of the worshiper.

"According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation." Hebrews 9:9-10 ^{ESV}

"For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."
Hebrews 9:13-14 ^{ESV}

"...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:22 ^{ESV}

"...who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

Peter appears to complete his expression of the hope of the resurrection by affirming that as the resurrected Lord, Jesus, is in an authoritative/elevated position:

Physical person – not in the grave, not even on earth, ascended to heaven.

Physical person – elevated to the place of honor and authority at the right hand of God.

Authoritative person – angels, authorities, and powers are subjected to him

"...and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

Ephesians 1:19-23 ^{ESV}

It appears that Peter is laying out Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (3:18,21) and now Christ's esteeming/glory (3:22).⁵⁵

One of the most consistent expressions of the esteemed Son of Man is that he takes his place at the right hand of God, a place of unique authority. This is the place assumed by Jesus following his ascension.

"I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken." "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:8,11 ^{ESV}

"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" "The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath." Psalm 110:1,5 ^{ESV}

"Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.'" Matthew 26:64 ^{ESV}

"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." Acts 2:32-33 ^{ESV}

"The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:30-31 ^{ESV}

"But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'" Acts 7:55-56 ^{ESV}

"Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." Romans 8:34 ^{ESV}

"...and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." Ephesians 1:19-21 ^{ESV}

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1 ^{ESV}

⁵⁵ Christ full esteeming/glory being more completely expressed/realized at this return.

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

Hebrews 1:3-4 ^{ESV}

“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven....” Hebrews 8:1 ^{ESV}

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God....”

Hebrews 10:12 ^{ESV}

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2 ^{ESV}

Finally, after speaking to submission in a variety of contexts: believers in general being subject to overseeing authorities (2:13), servants subject to their masters (2:18), wives subject to their husbands (3:1,5), Peter now brings all things, angels, authorities and powers under the righteous subjection of the resurrected and esteemed Christ who has ascended to the Father’s right hand (3:22). This is a subjection that should produce unparalleled encouragement to those who find themselves suffering for righteousness’ sake... to those who have grown weary. He who promises peace is who rules all things.

“And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Matthew 28:18 ^{ESV}

“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church....” Ephesians 1:22 ^{ESV}

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11 ^{ESV}

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

Colossians 2:15 ^{ESV}

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...” 1 Peter 3:18 ^{ESV}

This is Peter’s equivalent to Paul’s concise articulation of the gospel in 2 Corinthians 5, “For our sake he made him sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 ^{ESV}

How would you winsomely share/express the hope of the gospel using these two passages?

It was stated, “The image of ‘baptism’ or submersion in water is one of complete cleansing, and this is what is accomplished in Christ through one humbly crying out to him (faith in the finished work of Christ).” How does this more completely round out your appreciation and understanding of salvation and the ordinance of baptism, which while it is not in direct reference here, is certainly the result of this “complete cleansing”?

How does Christ’s triumphant proclamation of victory over these especially heinous demons encourage someone to worshipfully persevere in a context of temporal suffering?

Reflect and interact with the final statement of this section: “After speaking to submission in a variety of contexts: believers in general being subject to overseeing authorities (2:13), servants subject to their masters (2:18), wives subject to their husbands (3:1,5), Peter now brings all things, angels, authorities and powers under the righteous subjection of the resurrected and esteemed Christ who has ascended to the Father’s right hand (3:22). This is a subjection that should produce unparalleled encouragement to those who find themselves suffering for righteousness’ sake... to those who have grown weary. He who promises peace is who rules all things.”

1 Peter 3 Study Guide

Appendix: A Reexamination of Psalm 34⁵⁶

1 Peter and Psalm 34

The Apostle Peter was a student of the Old Testament Scriptures and drew from them richly as he wrote 1 Peter – not just seeing them as helpful source material to make a point, but truth that informed his theology, thinking, and life. One such passage that we have observed Peter give significant attention to was Isaiah 53 at the conclusion of 1 Peter 2 where he develops the exemplarily and effectual work of Christ's suffering. Another passage that Peter drew from was Psalm 34. We observe his allusion to the psalm and a quotation of it in chapters two and three.

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." 1 Peter 2:2-3 ^{ESV}

"For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'" 1 Peter 3:10-12 ^{ESV}

What is striking about Peter's use of Psalm 34 is that like Peter's letter it is framed in a dual context of suffering and confident worship in God. Peter's overt drawing from the psalm also gives one insight into his theological framework. He himself read and meditated upon David's own testimony of God's sufficient and good care while also providing clear instruction and counsel for living well while in the midst of unjust suffering in this temporal life. Therefore, it is hoped that a re-examination of Psalm 34 will draw out a fresh appreciation of its truths and provide richer insight into Peter's use of it in the context of his own letter, particularly as we see its place in the forthcoming study of 1 Peter 3.

Introduction to Psalm 34

In Psalm 34, David testifies of his need and experience of deliverance, and he does not do so with bravado, but with brokenness and praise. He shows us what it looks like to be so terrified that you act like a madman and yet the fear that you are chiefly submitting to is not the immediate circumstance, person, or self, but The LORD. David demonstrates that there are greater alternatives within the frequently observed reactions of fight, flight, or fall apart – there is also faith to cry out with full confidence of deliverance and a full heart of praise. Affliction is inevitable, but we give praise to God that for the righteous, deliverance is even more sure.

Psalm 34 Header/Introduction

Psalm 34's Header or Introduction provides a very precise insight into the historical context in which the psalm is written and/or based off of by way of David's experience(s). As referenced we know that this is a psalm of King David and that the occasion was between his initial anointing and his being established on

⁵⁶ Originally prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School (January 2016) and revised during a more complete study of 1 Peter (June 2019). ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

the throne, a very tumultuous and dangerous time for David. More precisely we know that the exact occasion was when David feigned madness before Abimelech while a fugitive from Saul. The Header or Introduction even addresses that David was driven out from Gath with the larger context being that David so conducted himself because he was "much afraid" of Achish the king of Gath. Now, a brief sidebar is in order to address the reference to "Abimelech" in Psalm 34's Header and "Achish" in the historic account. John MacArthur provides some historical insight by clarifying that "Abimelech" was a dynastic name, not a personal name.⁵⁷ Therefore it is reasonably deducted that it was Achish of the house or dynasty of Abimelech.

Now, it is only fair to directly address one other matter by way of historical context, namely that it is stated that David was "much afraid." I do not think that David being much afraid diminishes his standing before The LORD or authority to speak about trusting The LORD for the following reasons:

- 1) David was actively and personally fleeing for his life - this was not a hypothetical exercise; he was only steps away from having his life violently taken on multiple occasions.
- 2) The LORD was preserving him, but he was preserving David through a run for his life.
- 3) Needing provisions, including a sword/weapon, David was able to secure the sword of Goliath of Gath with which he removed Goliath's head from his body and now... he is in Gath with a reputation of being a superior warrior in combat with the Philistines. David had reason for concern.

Finally, by way of Header or Introduction we recognize that David was successful in his artificial demonstration of insanity and was afforded the opportunity to flee without being detained or killed.

Broader Contextual Background

Now, there is a certain expectation that when the reader engages the aforementioned Header or Introduction to Psalm 34 that they are aware of the breadth of the historical context that provided a foundation to this event as well as the event itself. If for no other reason than a refresher as we address various elements and sections of this psalm, I am going to provide this background by way of a summary and I want you to pay particular attention to what I consider a juxtaposed fear between Saul and David, which in no small measure explains both the individual men and this psalm. It is my conclusion that Saul knew fear, but it was an insufficient one – namely a fear of man that prevailed over his fear of The LORD. David on the other hand had no shortage of a reasonable fear of man, but this fear was subordinate to his greater fear, his fear of The LORD, which governed his heart, mind, and conduct.

Philistines

When the Ark of the Covenant had been lost in battle to the Philistines it was first retained in Ashdod, but on account of immediate judgment it was transferred to different cities and it went from Ashdod to Gath where the people were also afflicted with tumors. 1 Samuel 5

There was both knowledge and recollection by the Philistines regarding what The LORD did in Egypt for Israel.

⁵⁷ MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 771

The backdrop to Saul's being anointed King of Israel included The LORD telling Samuel that he would anoint Saul prince over his people. "He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines."

1 Samuel 9:16 ^{ESV}. Note that while contesting with the Philistines was nothing new to the historical context, the context of the anointing of Israel's king was delivering them from the Philistines. David later became the anointed king and while fleeing for his life here was put in an extremely vulnerable position with his nation's nemesis (The Philistines), to who he had done great harm in general if not personally.

Saul's Undoing, Fear.

A critical element of Saul's undoing and why he was not given an everlasting kingdom over Israel forever: he feared the people when he should have feared God.

In 1 Samuel 13:8-14 we observe the following:

Saul waited on Samuel, but when he did not arrive the people began scattering so Saul took it on himself to offer the burnt offerings.

"When I saw that the people were scattering from me...." 1 Samuel 13:11 ^{ESV}

"And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you.'" 1 Samuel 13:13 ^{ESV}

1 Samuel 15:1-35 we observe the following:

Saul was charged by The LORD through Samuel to defeat the Amalekites and to kill them all as well as all of their cattle. Saul did not do this, but he spared their king and the best of their cattle.

Saul was directly confronted by Samuel and after attempting to push back and hold his ground - justifying and excusing his actions - he was severely rebuked again. After this he finally conceded his guilt and articulated the folly of his motivation for his offense, "Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.'" 1 Samuel 15:24 ^{ESV}

David, God's Man

After The LORD rejects Saul as king, Samuel is sent to anoint Israel's new king, David. 1 Samuel 16 Note that Samuel articulates being afraid of Saul getting news of this and The LORD provides a "cover" for him that he can share without having to share all of his business. So, The LORD appears to be operating in conjunction with a very real fear that ultimately he could have annulled, but he was pleased to have his people operate with fear while submitting to a greater fear of him. These circumstances afforded a context to exercise their greater fear in The LORD rather than man. This is not frightening; it is encouraging because it is a proper view of fear.

David was selected by The LORD to be the king of Israel. "And the LORD said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.'" 1 Samuel 16:12 ^{ESV}

Saul calls David into his personal service on account of the Spirit of The LORD leaving him and being replaced by a harmful spirit. "And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer." 1 Samuel 16:21 ^{ESV}

David, The Warrior

David defeated Goliath of Gath. 1 Samuel 17

Goliath defied the ranks of Israel and sought to provoke them to a personal fight. "When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid." 1 Samuel 17:11 ^{ESV}

Saul and Israel's fear led to a military paralysis for forty days. "All the men of Israel, when they saw [Goliath of Gath], fled from him and were much afraid." 1 Samuel 17:24 ^{ESV}

David's response, "Let no man's heart fail because of [Goliath of Gath]. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:32 ^{ESV}

David literally ran to battle Goliath of Gath. David killed Goliath with a sling and stone. David took Goliath's sword and beheaded him.

After David killed Goliath of Gath, Israel pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron. "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron." 1 Samuel 17:50-52 ^{ESV}

David developed a reputation for his victory over the Philistines and the women were singing, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." 1 Samuel 18:7 This is directly referenced when David was later at Gath when running for his life. "And the servants of Achish said to him, 'Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?" 1 Samuel 21:11 ^{ESV} This was also the context that began fueling Saul's furious and murderous jealousy of David... "And Saul eyed David from that day on." 1 Samuel 18:9 ^{ESV}

Saul's Fear of David

Saul sought to murder David as he was afraid of him because The LORD was with him.... The first incident included Saul attempting to pin David to the wall with his spear.

Saul grew in his fear of David. "Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually." 1 Samuel 18:29 ^{ESV}

When Jonathan petitioned on David's behalf to Saul he again made reference to his defeating of Goliath of Gath. 1 Samuel 19

Saul was temporarily reconciled with David, but again attempted to pin David to the wall with his spear. David then had to flee from his own house before Saul could get to him. 1 Samuel 19

When David was discussing with Jonathan his fugitive status from Saul he stated, "...as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death." 1 Samuel 20:3 ^{ESV}

Jonathan confirmed that Saul still sought David's death and he warned his dear friend, and David fled brokenhearted.

David and Gath

David on the run as a fugitive of Saul went to Nob where he met with Ahimelech the priest and received bread for his men and a weapon for himself, namely the sword of Goliath of Gath. Note that David is taking into possession the very sword he took off the dead body of Goliath and used to cut the giant's head off with after he killed him in the Valley of Elah. Regretfully this exchange with Ahimelech was framed in a lie by David that he was on an urgent and secret mission by Saul. 1 Samuel 21

From Nob David fled to Achish the king of Gath (the historical context of Psalm 34). He was identified and called out by Achish's servants and out of fear David feigned insanity. "And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard." 1 Samuel 21:12-13. ^{ESV}

David fled from Gath and hid in a cave where he received other fugitives. 1 Samuel 22

34:1-3 Praising The LORD

Summary

David transitions from his own personal praise and thanksgiving to The LORD to extending an invitation for the faithful to join him in this high privilege for which we were created.

34:1

It is striking when one has taken the time to properly examine the historical context of David fleeing for his innocent life and effectively running into a nasty corner (arriving at Gath of the Philistines with his reputation of being a magnificent vanquisher of Philistines including their former champion whose sword he has just appropriated) and having narrowly escaped, his reflection/response was that through this and at all times he will bless The LORD and his praise will continually be in his mouth.

"The praise of God is continual, God-centered, and the product of a grateful heart. This is the kind of an offering the Lord will not reject."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Psalms, Volume 5. Willem A. VanGemeren. Zondervan, 2008 (Hereafter: VanGemeren). Pg.324

34:2

While the term for boast used in this verse most frequently communicates the idea of praise in its use throughout the Old Testament it also has another potential usage in more limited applications. It can be expressed so strongly that it can communicate ecstasy such as its use in 1 Samuel 21:13 (our historical context) where David was feigning madness, he pretended to be "insane" (same word). Now here David applies that same impassioned word to his soul's disposition of blessing and praising The LORD. Further, note that this term is also used in 2 Samuel 22:4 and Psalm 18:3 where the delivered David testifies, "I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be *praised*...."⁵⁹

While offering extraordinary praise David calls on the humble to hear and be glad. The humble would have counted men such as Moses in their number, men that were exceptionally useful in their honest self-evaluation (Numbers 12:3). It is also such persons whom Jesus tells us will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). Further, this was a company that David has found himself, too. One could only imagine the degree of humility David experienced when drooling down his beard and marking on the wall in hopes of persuading another that he was unworthy of further consideration. But, it was even in this disposition of humiliating humility that David entrusted himself to The LORD and blessed him.

34:3

The LORD acts on behalf of his own great name, character, or reputation, but always welcomes those who would participate in this chief stewardship of creation.

Note that an element of exalting The LORD's name is also found in his continued care and redemption of Israel. "For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself." 1 Samuel 12:22 ^{ESV}

There is a transition here from the first person testimony to a third person invitation. David is stating, "I am actively engaged in worshiping The LORD, join me and we will worship him together."

"The purpose of praise is not to make God's people feel good but to acknowledge in a communal way the greatness of our God."⁶⁰

34:4-7 Personal Testimony of David

Summary

David testifies of The LORD's saving deliverance of him and all who would fear The LORD.

34:4

It is striking that David, who was being sought himself, sought another, namely The LORD. The fugitive that was sought, himself sought or inquired of The LORD, and as David was a Psalm One man, he was

⁵⁹ Psalm 18:3 ^{ESV}

⁶⁰ VanGemeren, Pg.324

answered and delivered/rescued. David was delivered from his fears which were both real and poignant, and The LORD was pleased to deliver his beloved from these fears.

As established, the context was that David was a wrongful fugitive that was hardly a step away from capture and/or death - having to beg for bread, feign madness, and flee to a cave - all of this even though he was the anointed king of Israel, the Covenant People of Promise.

Based off of the immediate historical context established by the Header/Introduction to the psalm it would appear that among other incidents and details David was addressing his having been delivered from the Philistines in Gath as he was identified as their vanquishing nemesis. David presumably cried out to The LORD and made the strategically savvy move of acting like a madman - incredibly practical while trusting The LORD, and then properly recognizing the credit due The LORD.

We see that in contexts of legitimate and reasonable fear David still feared the LORD more and therefore was compelled to seek The LORD, to cry out to him. Ultimately even in acting as a madman David was still doing better than Saul as his greater fear was The LORD who answered him and delivered him from his fears.

34:5

In this midst of such affliction David was finding exceptional joy and satisfaction. This at the least serves as a passive rebuke on our response to challenges to our peculiarly comfortable contexts.

It is striking that this faithful man with drool running down his beard could testify that "...their faces shall never be ashamed." We are pressed to think through our perspectives and expectations... and to recognize the value in brokenness and humility – in such there is no shame.

34:6

David is identifying himself as a poor man, not impoverished in terms of fiscal welfare (that has been addressed before with marrying the king's daughter, but would not be the matter now).

David was demonstrating the disposition of being "poor in spirit" which is among the striking elements that is so plainly present and so quickly overlooked. It is a frightening reality that we have seen with others before and that we are not immune to overlook ourselves if we fail to give The LORD his due attention through his word.

The LORD heard him... what a magnificent experience. The LORD hears his Psalm 1 man. David who was in a world of trouble testifies to being saved from all his troubles.

"As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life out of every *adversity*...." 2 Samuel 4:9 ^{ESV}

"So this is a psalm for *poor* men – and poor women too. It is a psalm for all who are alone or destitute – for you, if you have nothing at all or are not even sure that you will live long. It is for people who find

themselves at the absolute low point in life, which is where David was.... It is for you when everything seems against you."⁶¹

34:7

Note that the language used here for the Angel of The LORD is the exact language applied to The LORD himself: fear and deliver. This is because, as demonstrated below, this is a reference to The LORD.

The Angel of The LORD encamps around those who fear him. David recognized that the Angel of The LORD was with him as a deliverer, unlike Abner who was encamped with King Saul and who failed to keep proper watch over the king in his rest and is rebuked by David (1 Samuel 26).

Angel of The LORD = The LORD

Genesis 16:10 "The angel of the LORD also said to her, 'I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.'" That's a message that an angel can share, but that only God can guarantee in the first person.

Genesis 22:11-12 "But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.'" Abraham did not withhold his son from the Angel of The LORD.

Genesis 22:15-18 "And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, 'By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.'" A statement indistinguishable from it coming from "The LORD" without the Theophany title of "Angel of The LORD."

Exodus 3:2-6 "And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." The LORD, The God of the Patriarchs.

Judges 2:1-2 "Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?'" The LORD who brought delivered Israel from Egypt and made covenant with them.

⁶¹ An Expositional Commentary: Psalms, Volume 1. James Montgomery Boice. Baker Books, 1994. Pg.293

Fear = Fear

Fear needs to be understood as more than just a *disposition of reverence or respect* and be allowed to contextually include an active and natural fear which is properly applied to the magnificent and terrifyingly awesome and good LORD of glory. It is strange to me that we would diminish the fear of The LORD to exclusively communicating respect. The LORD would demand more than respect as his very presence will undo all if he did not choose to graciously sustain.

34:8-14 Instructions In The LORD From David Summary

David provides instructions for wise and faithful living that is first and foremost rooted in the fear of The LORD and manifests itself in practical living seen through speech, forsaking evil, and seeking good. Effectively David provides a microcosm of the Proverbs in the Psalms.

34:8

In 34:3 David extended an invitation to the beloved to join him in worshiping The LORD and here he calls them to wise and faithful living by first exhorting them to taste and see or richly experience his good God!

Note that in calling others to heed this wise and faithful living, David first directs them to the blessed/happy/fully satisfied disposition one enjoys in taking refuge in The LORD. A particularly poignant picture from a fugitive who knows the solace and comfort of refuge and that its chief application is in his Lord.

Blessed: Happy or fully satisfied, the disposition and privilege of the Psalm One man (Psalm 1:1).

34:9

David was calling those who were holy to The LORD (saints) to fear The LORD and that those who do fear The LORD have no lack.

David here, again, speaks with the experiential authority of one who has both feared The LORD and has not suffered lack. But note that David's provision was not detached from creativity and diligently labor in addition to gracious provision. The fear of The LORD compels action.

Fearing The LORD

Fearing The LORD was lightly addressed above in 34:7, however as it has a clear emphasis in this concentrated portion of the Psalm I will give it additional attention in hopes of helping clarify the poignancy of this important subject. Fearing The LORD is addressed in David's Personal Testimony Section (34:7) and then three times in David's Instructional Section (34:9, 34:9, and 34:11), and he uses three separate words for 'fear'. This sidebar will only be a citing of the uses of the "fear" terms in these passages as used elsewhere in the Psalms. To be both comprehensive and fair in presentation of argument I have provided all the references in Psalms that use these various words for fear, but I have underlined the ones that make the clearest and most obvious cases for a fear that demands more just reverential respect.

Psalms 2:11 "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

Psalms 3:6 "I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me...."

Psalms 5:7 "But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you."

Psalms 15:4 "...who honors those who fear the LORD...."

Psalms 19:9 "...the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever...."

Psalms 22:23 "You who fear the LORD, praise him!"

Psalms 22:25 "...my vows I will perform before those who fear him."

Psalms 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...."

Psalms 25:12 "Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose."

Psalms 25:14 "The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him...."

Psalms 27:1 "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

Psalms 27:3 "Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear...."

Psalms 31:19 "Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you..."

Psalms 33:8 "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!"

Psalms 33:18 "Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him...."

Psalms 40:3 "Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD."

Psalms 45:4 "In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your hand teach your awesome deeds!"

Psalms 46:2 "There we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea...."

Psalms 47:2 "For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth."

Psalms 49:5 "Why should I fear in times of trouble...."

Psalms 49:16 "Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases."

Psalms 52:6 "The righteous shall see and fear...."

Psalms 55:5 "Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me."

Psalms 55:19 "God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, because they do not change and do not fear God."

Psalms 56:3 "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."

Psalms 56:4 "In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?"

Psalms 56:11 "In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Psalms 60:4 "You have set up a banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow."

Psalms 61:5 "For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name."

Psalms 64:4 "...shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear."

Psalms 64:9 "Then all mankind fears; they tell what God has brought about and ponder what he has done."

Psalms 65:5 "By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness...."

Psalms 65:8 "...those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs."

Psalms 66:3 "Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds!'"

Psalms 66:5 "Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man."

Psalms 66:16 "Come and hear, all you who fear God...."

Psalms 67:7 "God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!"

Psalms 68:35 "Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel - he is the one who gives power and strength...."

Psalms 72:5 "May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!"

Psalms 76:7 "But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?"

Psalms 76:8 "From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still...."

Psalms 76:12 "...who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth."

Psalms 85:9 "Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him...."

Psalms 86:11 "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name."

Psalms 89:6-7 "For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?"

Psalms 90:11 "Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?"

Psalms 91:5 "You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day...."

Psalms 96:4 "For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods."

Psalms 99:3 "Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he!"

Psalms 102:15 "Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory."

Psalms 103:11 "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him...."

Psalms 103:13 "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him."

Psalms 103:17 "But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him...."

Psalms 106:21-22 "They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea."

Psalms 111:5 "He provides food for those who fear; he remembers his covenant forever."

Psalms 111:9 "He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name!"

Psalms 111:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding."

Psalms 112:1 "Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!"

Psalms 112:7 "He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD."

Psalms 112:8 "His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries."

Psalms 115:11 "You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield."

Psalms 115:13 "...he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great."

Psalms 118:4 "Let those who fear the LORD say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.'"

Psalms 118:6 "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Psalms 119:38 "Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared."

Psalms 119:63 "I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts."

Psalms 119:74 "Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word."

Psalms 119:79 "Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies."

Psalms 119:120 "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments."

Psalms 128:1 "Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!"

Psalms 128:4 "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD."

Psalms 130:4 "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."

Psalms 135:20 "You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!"

Psalms 139:14 "I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Psalms 145:6 "They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness."

Psalms 145:19 "He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them."

Psalms 147:11 "...but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love."

This sufficiency of provision, rooted in the fear of The LORD, is further developed in the following verse, too.

34:10

This appears to be a unique illustration to reinforce the preceding statement, a relationship between seeking and fearing. What makes the illustration unique to me is that there is not a like picture in this psalm so it makes this picture interesting and its truth more poignant to me.

David has expanded his own testimony to others. If they too would seek they would not lack any good thing. Those who seek, who join the company of the pursuing David, who was answered and delivered, can expect that they will lack no good thing.

34:11-14

Israel was to be a witnessing bearing nation to the nations, but also to themselves. There is a clear pattern of commands and expectations that the Law be taught, meditated upon, written, etc. and an element of this was teaching the people of God to fear The LORD as David is doing here. "Assemble the

people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of the law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the that you are going over the Jordan to possess." Deuteronomy 31:12-13

The foundation of the fear of the LORD is established and from there he transitions to an almost Proverbs like subsection:

Who would desire life, love many days, and desire to see good? (34:12)

He then yields both practical directives. (34:13-14)

Guard/Maintain/Preserve your tongue/language from evil or that which is contrary to the things of The LORD. Guard/Maintain/Preserve your lips from expressing that which would intentionally mislead - directing away from truth rather than to it. David was calling those who would hear to preserve the integrity of their utterances and direct them to their chief design and good - speak truth and speak it truthfully.

There was literally an admonition to watch your mouth, to watch your language - keep them from that which would dishonor/displease The LORD.

Turn away/aside from evil, remove it, depart from evil (that which one's tongue/language is to be kept from too...) and by contrast seek and pursue peace.

In this "Proverbs" style teaching David asks a question that sets up his next articulation of expectations. However, would it not be more of an actual question to inquire, "What man is there who does not desire life and does not love many days, that he may not see good?" Because as stated in psalm, the answer would be everyone desires these things.... So as one who desires life and many days, obey with your mouth, your language, and your words.

David goes on to provide very straight forward expectations: turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

34:15-22 Character Testimony. The LORD a Just Redeemer

Summary

The LORD has actively postured himself to act on behalf of his beloved, to hear them and redeem them from their affliction. The LORD has also postured himself toward those who would do evil, to answer their offense and stand as a just Lord when their affliction consumes them.

34:15-16

The eyes of The LORD are toward the ones that keep their tongue from evil, keep their lips from deceit, turn away from evil and do good, and who seek and pursues peace.

From the natural anatomical language of man (tongue and lips) to anthropomorphic language for The LORD (eyes, ears, and face). (34:15-16) The LORD is postured ready for his people and actively against those who oppose him. The eyes of The LORD are toward the righteous, those who would seek to do right, to walk well, to be obedient, to fundamentally be a Psalm One man.

The ears of The LORD are toward the cry of the righteous (this cry consistently being one of deliverance). They cry and he hears.

Note here that there is a clear dynamic to the relationship of the righteous and The LORD. The righteous is not, as we will soon see, without affliction or struggle or hardship, but he is also not without voice, and when he cries out The LORD listens. There is an expectation for the righteous to cry just as there is an expectation that The LORD has postured himself to hear and respond.

In contrast to the care for the righteous is the opposing of the wicked. The LORD's face is against those who do evil and he is going to definitively separate their posterity from what remains of them in their absence - they will be no more and their memory will be removed from the earth.

Eyes, Ears, and now the Face of The LORD - it opposes those who do evil (see 34:13-14) - note that there has already been an admonition to keep one's tongue and one's actions away from evil.

The LORD cuts memory of them off of the earth. This is in direct contrast to 34:12 and the man who desires life and loves many days as here it is the one who does evil and will consequently be cut off - such is the outcome of the righteous and the wicked.

Some men in these biblical/historical accounts had a longer perspective than we tend to have regarding the affairs of men and they righted wrongs at the end of their lives... but David appears to have a more complete perspective, recognizing with confidence that The LORD will indeed deal with these offenders in a way that even his posterity cannot.

34:17

Statement: when the righteous cry for help, The LORD hears and delivers (eyes fixed and ears attentive - postured to receive and respond to his own).

We have observed that The LORD responds to the righteous man and we can define the righteous man with elements from several Psalms and with the foundational elements established in Psalm 1. Continuing with the image of the readied posture of The LORD and the dual expectation of crying out and being delivered (it is expected that the righteous will cry out and it is known that The LORD will answer and deliver them). For David these are not truths secured by the experience and inspiration of another, but his own experience of deliverance/rescuing that David had (34:4,6) and it is the common pattern of action by The LORD that the righteous can expect when they cry out to him he will deliver. Further, David recognizes that these experiences are not a unique blessing to him alone, but are a reflection of the Good Shepherd's conduct toward his beloved.

34:18

Note the tender affection that The LORD has for brokenhearted and crushed in spirit as demonstrated not only in his saving them, but his proximity to them. He is near them.

Brokenhearted

Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart...." Psalm 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

Crushed in Spirit

"For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite.'" Isaiah 57:15 ^{ESV}

34:19

Note that the righteous suffer, it is not that they are immune from affliction, but that their delivery is sure.

The deliverance/rescuing that David experienced (34:4) is the common pattern of action by The LORD that the righteous can expect when experiencing afflictions. See 34:17. Note the nature of these afflictions as addressed in the Psalm itself:

Psalm 34:13 "Keep your tongue from *evil* and your lips from speaking deceit"

Psalm 34:14 "Turn away from *evil* and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

Psalm 34:16 "The face of the LORD is against those who do *evil*, to cut off the memory of them from the earth."

Psalm 34:19 "Many are the *afflictions* of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."

Psalm 34:21 "*Affliction* will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned."

What we observe: keep from speaking evil, turn away from evil and do good, and the severe response The LORD has toward those who do evil. But, the reality is that evil/affliction will be an element of what the faithful will have to contend with too - repulsing from within and contending from without. However, this contending has a sure victory of deliverance from The LORD.

Those who need to be fearful of affliction are those who find solace in its company as it will slay them and their condemnation will be made sure.

34:20

"The protection of 'bones' (v.20) is a metaphor for the Lord's care for his own."⁶²

The quintessential righteous man... The Son of David is he of whom it can be most accurately stated to have been perfectly kept in the context of his greatest affliction, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken." Psalm 34:20 (John 19:36).

⁶² VanGemeren, Pgs.327-328

34:21-22

Affliction will slay the wicked - this in direct contrast with the deliverance experienced by the righteous. The LORD is just and he is good to his beloved and while there is room for inquiry as to the nature of certain struggle and matters to be wrestled through the end of the dialogue does not end with "why," but that The LORD is just and he is good to his beloved. Further, there is a larger view to struggle as it applies to the wicked too. Affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

None of the beloved, of the holy servants, will be condemned. This is in contrast to the haters of righteousness. These groups are being directly contrasted as their fates are mirror opposites.

The LORD is a Redeemer and we already know that the one who takes refuge in him is blessed (34:8), but they are also ransomed and will not be condemned - delivered by affliction and not consumed by it.

Conclusion

David has demonstrated that one's praise to God does not find its exclusive application in the victory song, but also in the terror of battle, even in its moments of greatest danger and despair. This is not unlike what we observe in Acts when the Apostles Peter and John were celebrating when suffering for Christ's name. It was not simply a matter of perspective and reality; it is the marriage of perspective with the chief of realities. Peter intimately knew this and beckons his own readers to know this too.