

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER 4

In this chapter the apostle goes on to exhort to an holy life and conversation, and to the several duties of religion, and to suffer cheerfully for the sake of Christ. From the consideration of Christ's sufferings, he exhorts the saints to arm themselves with the same mind, and cease from sin, and live no longer to the lusts of men, but to the will of God, ([1 Peter 4:1,2](#)) the reason, or argument engaging to it, is taken from the past time of life, in which they walked in all manner of sin, and which ought to suffice, though they should be spoken evil of by wicked men, for not continuing therein, ([1 Peter 4:3,4](#)) and to fortify their minds against such abuses, the apostle takes notice of the general judgment, when such persons must give an account for their evil speaking to the Judge of quick and dead; and that though those to whom the Gospel is preached, and embrace it, suffer death for it, being judged of men in their bodies, yet they live to God in their souls, ([1 Peter 4:5,6](#)) and seeing the end of all things is near, he exhorts to various things, as to sobriety, watchfulness unto prayer, and especially to fervent charity, since that covers a multitude of sins, ([1 Peter 4:7,8](#)) and to hospitality, without grudging, and to a communication of all good things, as faithful stewards of them, ([1 Peter 4:9,10](#)) and particularly to the dispensation of the Gospel, according to the word of God; and to a ministration to the poor, according to a man's ability, with a view to the glory of God, by Christ, ([1 Peter 4:11](#)) and next, the apostle proceeds to comfort the saints under reproaches and persecutions, and to instruct them how to behave under such circumstances; as that they should not think such things strange, though grievous, since they were for the trial of their graces, ([1 Peter 4:12](#)) but should rather rejoice, since they were partakers of the sufferings of Christ now, and should share in his glory when revealed, which would make them exceeding glad, ([1 Peter 4:13](#)) yea, inasmuch as it was for the name of Christ they suffered reproach, they ought to reckon themselves happy persons; since the glorious Spirit of God rested on them, and since the issue of it was, the glorifying of God by them, though he was evil spoken of by those that reproached them, ([1 Peter 4:14](#)) indeed, they ought not

to suffer as persons guilty of capital crimes; should they, they would have reason to be ashamed, but not since they suffered as Christians; but, on the contrary, should give glory to God for it, who had done them so much honour as to call them to it, (~~4045~~1 Peter 4:15,16), and to reconcile their minds to sufferings, he observes, that the time was come, that afflictions should begin with the people of God, on account of which, the righteous are scarcely saved, though certainly; and that, therefore, sad must be the state of the disobedient and ungodly, even of their wicked persecutors, (~~4047~~1 Peter 4:17,18) wherefore, upon the whole, seeing it was the will of God they should suffer, they ought to suffer patiently, and, in well doing, commit the care of their souls to their faithful Creator, (~~4049~~1 Peter 4:19).

Ver. 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh.* etc.]

The apostle having finished his digression concerning Christ's preaching in the ministry of Noah, to men whose spirits were now in prison, and concerning the salvation of Noah's family in the ark, by water, and concerning its antitype, baptism, its nature and effect, returns to the sufferings of Christ he had before made mention of; and argues from thence to holiness of life, and patience in sufferings, after this manner; seeing then Christ, the eternal Son of God, the Lord of glory, the holy and Just One, suffered such indignities, reproaches, and persecutions from men, the wrath of God, the curses of the law, and death itself; and that not for himself, nor for angels, but for men, and those not all men, otherwise his death, with respect to some, must be in vain; but for a particular number of men, in distinction from others, described in the beginning of this epistle, as elect, according to the foreknowledge of God; and these sufferings he endured in the room and stead of those persons, in the days of his flesh, while here on earth, and in his human nature, both soul and body, and was crucified through the weakness of his flesh, and for the sins of our flesh, and which he bore in his own:

arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; that was in Christ; as he suffered for you, do ye likewise suffer for him, in his cause, for righteousness sake, for the sake of him and his Gospel; and bear all reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions on his account, willingly and cheerfully, with meekness and patience, as he did, and with the same view; not indeed to make satisfaction for sin, which was his principal design, but that being dead unto sin, you might live unto righteousness. The apostle speaks to the saints, in this exhortation, as to soldiers, and who had many

enemies to engage with, and therefore should put on their armour, and be in a readiness to meet any attack upon them:

for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin: meaning either Christ, who having suffered in human nature for the sins of his people, whereby he has made satisfaction for them, is now clear of them; the sins that were imputed to him being took and bore away, finished and made an end of, and he justified from them, and freed from all the effects of them, and punishment for them, as from all the infirmities of human nature, from mortality and death: or the person that has suffered in and with Christ, his head and representative, which is all one as if he had suffered himself, in person; by virtue of which his sin ceases, and he ceases from being chargeable with it, as if he had never sinned; which is the case of every criminal, when he has suffered the penalty of the law for his crime: or else the person that is dead to sin, by virtue of the death of Christ, and, in imitation of it, who has been baptized into Christ's death, and planted in the likeness of it; whose old man is crucified with Christ, and he is dead with him; who has crucified the affections with the lusts, and through the Spirit has mortified the deeds of the body; which way the generality of interpreters go: such a man has ceased from sin; not from the being and indwelling of it in him; nor from the burden of it on him; nor from a continual war with it in him; nor from slips and falls by it, and into it; no, nor from it in the most solemn and religious services; but as from the guilt of it, and obligation to punishment by it, through the death of Christ; so from the servitude and dominion of it, through the power of divine grace, in consequence of Christ's death: or rather, the believer that suffers death in his body, for the sake of Christ, such an one immediately ceases from the very being of sin, and all commission of it; he becomes at once perfectly pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and a noble argument this is to meet death without fear, and to suffer it cheerfully and willingly, since the consequence of this will be an entire freedom from sin, than which nothing can be more desirable by a believer: to this agrees the Syriac version, which renders the words thus: "for whoever is dead in his body hath ceased from all sins"; but the Arabic version more fully confirms this sense, and is the best version of the text, and is this; "be ye armed with this (same) thought, that (not for) he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin"; that is, fortify your minds against all the fears of sufferings, and of death, for the sake of Christ, with this single thought; that he that has suffered martyrdom for Christ, in his body, or has suffered

death for his sake, or dies in the Lord, is free from sin, and so from sorrow, and is the most happy person imaginable; so that this last clause is not a reason of the former, but points out, and is explanative of what that same mind or thought is Christians should arm themselves with, against the fears of death; and it is the best piece of armour for this service, a saint can make use of.

Ver. 2. *That he no longer should live*, etc.] The Arabic version reads, “that ye no longer should live”. This expresses the end of being armed with the above thought, that a suffering saint after death is clear of sin; and the use that is to be made of it in the present time of life, and the remainder of it, that such a person who so thinks, and is thus guarded and fortified against the fears of death, should no more, or any longer live,

the rest of [his] time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God: the phrase, “his time in the flesh”, means the present time of life, in the body, and is the same with those phrases, in the days of his flesh, to abide in the flesh, and be at home in the body; and the words of the text suppose the former part of this time to have been spent in sinful lusts and pleasures, as the former part of the time of God's elect, even that before conversion, is; and that the remaining part of it, be it longer or shorter, ought to be spent otherwise: “not to the lusts of men”; of wicked and unregenerate men, unconverted Gentiles; which they are addicted to, immersed in, and serve; and which they are desirous others should live in; and which are sometimes called divers worldly and fleshly lusts; and are foolish, and hurtful, and deceitful, and drown men in perdition, and therefore not to be lived unto: “but to the will of God”; revealed in his word, and which is good, acceptable, and perfect; one part of which is sanctification, holiness of heart, life, and conversation, as also patient suffering all reproach, injury, and persecution, for the sake of the Gospel; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, to study to exercise a conscience void of offence towards God and men, and to suffer patiently for his name's sake, is to live to the will of God; and nothing more strongly should engage to this than the consideration of a sinless life after death; (see ~~GENE~~ 2 Peter 3:11,13,14). The lusts of men, and the will of God, being opposed to each other, shows that the nature of man is sadly corrupted, and is opposite to God; and that the will of man is depraved, and that the desires of it are not to that which is good, but are contrary to the will of God.

Ver. 3. *For the time past of our life may suffice us*, etc.] The word “our” is left out in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions. The Arabic version reads, “the time of your past life”; and to the same purpose the Ethiopic version; and which seems to be the more agreeable reading, since it can hardly be thought that the apostle would put himself among the Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, who had walked with them in their unregeneracy, in all the sins hereafter mentioned, and best agrees with the following verse:

to have wrought the will of the Gentiles; or “when ye wrought”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions;

when we walked, or “were walking in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries”. These converted persons, in the past time of their life, before conversion, “walked” in sin; which denotes a series and course of sinning, a persisting and progress in it, with delight and pleasure, promising themselves security and impunity: the particular sins they walked in are reducible to these three heads, unchastity, intemperance, and idolatry:

in lasciviousness, lusts; which belong to the head of uncleanness, and take in all kinds of it; as fornication, adultery, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts:

excess of wine, revellings, banquetings; which refer to intemperance of every sort, by eating or drinking: as gluttony, drunkenness, surfeitings, and all luxurious feasts and entertainments, attended with riotings, revellings, and obscene songs; and which are here mentioned in the Syriac and Arabic versions, and which lead to lasciviousness, and every unclean lust:

and abominable idolatries; which some understand of worshipping of angels; but they seem rather to intend the idolatries the Jews were led into by the feasts of the Gentiles, either at their own houses, or in the idol's temple; by which means they were gradually brought to idolatry, and to all the wickedness and abominations committed by them at such times: and it is easy to observe, that the two former, uncleanness and intemperance, often lead men into idolatry; (see ^{<12316>}Exodus 32:6 ^{<0201>}Numbers 25:1,2). Now when they walked in these things, they “wrought the will of the Gentiles”; they did the things which the sinners of the Gentiles, the worst of men, that knew not God, took pleasure in, and what they would have others do; and therefore, since the past time of their life had been spent in

such a way, it was sufficient, and more than sufficient; (see ³⁴⁰⁶Ezekiel 44:6), for no time is allowable for sin; and therefore it became them for the future, and in the remaining part of life, to behave in another manner; not to do the will of the Gentiles, but the will of God; to which that grace of God obliged them, that had made a difference between what they were themselves formerly, and themselves now, and between themselves, and others.

Ver. 4. *Wherein they think it strange*, etc.] Here the apostle points out what the saints must expect from the men of the world, by living a different life; and he chooses to mention it, to prevent discouragements, and that they might not be uneasy and distressed when they observed it; as that they would wonder at the change in their conversations, and look on it as something unusual, new, and unheard of, and treat them as strangers, yea, as enemies, on account of it:

that you run not with them into the same excess of riot; to their luxurious entertainments, their Bacchanalian feasts, and that profusion of lasciviousness, luxury, intemperance, and wickedness of all sorts, which, with so much eagerness of mind, and bodily haste, they rushed into; being amazed that they should not have the same taste for these things as before, and as themselves now had; and wondering how it was possible for them to abstain from them, and what that should be that should give them a different cast of mind, and turn of action:

speaking evil of you; and so the Syriac and Arabic versions supply “you” as we do; but in the Greek text it is only, “speaking evil of, or blaspheming”; God, Christ, religion, the Gospel, and the truths of it, and all good men; hating them because different from them, and because their lives reprove and condemn them; charging them with incivility, unsociableness, preciseness, and hypocrisy.

Ver. 5. *Who shall give account to him*, etc.] “To God himself”, as the Syriac version reads; of all their blasphemies, and hard speeches spoken by them against God, Christ, the Gospel, and good men, and receive their just punishment. This the apostle says, to calm the minds of God's people, and make them to sit easy under all censures, reproaches, and calumnies, and not think of avenging themselves, but commit themselves to him that will judge righteously; even to him,

that is ready to judge the quick and the dead; that is, all men, such as will be found alive when he comes, and those that have died before, who will then be raised from the dead, to receive their judgment; and by whom is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all judgment is committed; and who is ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead, and will judge both at his appearing and kingdom; yea, the day is appointed when this judgment will proceed by him, and he is at the door; so that he may be truly said to be ready for it, as he is every way equal to it, and will finish it with righteousness.

Ver. 6. *For, for this cause was the Gospel preached also*, etc.] Not for what goes before, because Christ was ready to judge quick and dead; and because wicked men must give an account to him, and therefore the Gospel is preached to them also, that they may be left without excuse; but for what follows, and which does not so much design the reason of the preaching of it, as the event consequential upon it. By the Gospel is meant the good news of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Christ, and salvation by him: and includes all the doctrines of grace, as of pardon, righteousness, and eternal life; and by its being “preached” is meant the publishing of it openly, freely, and boldly, with faithfulness and consistence: the persons to whom it was preached are

to them that are dead; not in a figurative sense, dead in trespasses and sins; though this is the case of all mankind, and of God's elect, in a state of nature, whether Jews or Gentiles; and the Gospel is preached to such, as it is ordered to be preached to all nations, to every creature, and is the means of quickening dead sinners; and this follows upon it, that such as receive it are judged and condemned by men, and live spiritually here, according to the will of God, and an eternal life hereafter; but the word “dead” is used in the same sense as in the preceding verse, where it manifestly signifies such who had been alive, but were now dead in a natural sense, whom Christ would judge as well as those that will be found alive when he comes; wherefore the Gospel has been preached also to them that are already dead, as well as to those who are now alive. And by these are meant, not the dead, whose souls are in hell, for to them, there, the Gospel never was, nor never will be preached, nor they saved, as Origen, and his followers, have vainly thought: nor the deceased patriarchs, before the coming of Christ, whose souls, by the Papists, are said to be in “Limbus”, whither Christ, they say, went upon his death, and preached to them, and delivered them; but these never were in any such place, but in peace and rest; nor did

Christ, in his human soul, descend thither, but went to paradise: nor the dead in general, before the apostle's writing of this epistle; for though the Gospel had been preached from the beginning, from the fall of Adam, to certain persons, and at certain periods of time, yet not to all the individuals of mankind who were then dead, especially in the Gentile world; nor the Old Testament saints in general, who were now dead, though they had the Gospel preached to them in types and figures, in promises and prophecies; nor the men in the times of Noah, to whom the Gospel was preached by him, and who, some of them, as supposed, though they were judged and punished in their bodies in the view of men, being drowned in the waters of the flood, yet repenting and believing, upon Noah's preaching to them, they live in their spirits in eternal life, according to the free mercy and grace of God; but though the Gospel was preached to them, yet they remained disobedient to it, even all of them, but Noah's family, for anything that appears; and are styled the world of the ungodly, and are now spirits in the prison of hell, and therefore cannot be said to live according to God in the Spirit: but such are intended, to whom the Gospel had been preached, and to whom it had been effectual unto salvation; who had received it in the love of it, had sincerely professed it, and had suffered for it even death itself; such are designed who had suffered in the flesh, or were dead in their bodies, (~~and~~ 1 Peter 4:1) who either were dead in the Lord, or especially had suffered death for his sake, as Stephen and others: and this, with what follows, is mentioned with a general view to encourage the saints to patient suffering for Christ; to fortify them against the ill opinion and judgment the world have formed of them; and to assure them, that Christ will judge his people, both quick and dead, and avenge their cause, since the Gospel has been preached to one as well as to another, and attended with the same power: the effect and consequence of which is,

that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; meaning, either that such persons that receive and profess the Gospel, and suffer for it, are judged according to the judgment of men that are in the flesh, in an unregenerate estate, that is, carnal men, to be a strange and unaccountable sort of people, as in (~~and~~ 1 Peter 4:4) to receive such a strange set of notions, so strenuously to contend for them, and so constantly to abide by them, and to debar themselves of so many pleasures of life, and expose themselves to so much reproach and shame, to such dangers, and even to death itself: while they are judged to be by these men enthusiasts, madmen and fools; and at other times to be knaves and villains, hypocrites and

deceivers; and this is the common effect of the Gospel being preached and coming with power to any; (see ~~404B~~ 1 Corinthians 4:3) or the sense is, that such persons, according to men, or in their apprehensions, are judged of God, or have the judgments of God inflicted on them in their flesh, in their bodies, for some sins of theirs; and therefore they suffer what they do in the flesh, vengeance pursuing them; being ignorant that when they are judged, as they reckon it, they are only chastened by the Lord in a fatherly way, that they might not be eternally condemned with the world, (~~413B~~ 1 Corinthians 11:32) or else to complete the sense, for all may be taken into it, these persons, who were formerly alive, but now dead, and had embraced and professed the Gospel preached to them, were judged and condemned, and put to death in the flesh, according to the will of wicked men, and which was all that they were capable of;

but though this was their case, though they were thus judged, censured, and condemned, yet

live according to God in the Spirit; while they were here on earth, the Gospel preached to them had such an effect upon them, as to cause them to live spiritually, to live by faith on Christ, to live a life of holiness from him, and communion with him, and to live according to the will of God, in righteousness and true holiness; and now, though dead in their bodies, they live in their spirits or souls an eternal life of comfort, peace, pleasure, and happiness with God, according to his eternal purpose, unchangeable covenant, promise, grace, and love.

Ver. 7. *But the end of all things is at hand*, etc.] With respect to particular persons, the end of life, and which is the end of all things in this world to a man, is near at hand; which is but as an hand's breadth, passes away like a tale that is told, and is but as a vapour which appears for a while, and then vanishes away. Or this may be said with regard to the Jews, the end of their church and civil state was near at hand, of their sacrifices, temple, city, and nation; or with respect to the whole universe, to the scheme and fashion of this world, which will soon be gone, though the substance will abide; when the heavens shall pass away, and the earth and all therein will be burnt up; when there will be an end of all the purposes and promises of God respecting the present state of things concerning his church and people, and of the judgments of God upon his enemies here; when the man of sin will be destroyed, and the wickedness of the wicked will be come to an end, and the sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions of the saints, will be no

more; and when will be an end put to the present dispensation of things; there will be an end of the ministry of the word, and of the administration of ordinances; time will be no more, and the final state of both good and bad men will take place: this may be said to be at hand in the apostle's time, though so long ago, because that was the last time, and the last dispensation of things; and whereas they knew not the exact time when it would be, they frequently spoke of it as near, in order to stir up the saints to the more diligent discharge of duty, and fervent exercise of grace, as here:

be ye therefore sober, or “temperate”, as the Arabic version renders it; and so is opposed to intemperance in eating and drinking, which is an abuse of the creatures of Gods, and unfits a man for the duties of religion; when Satan easily gets an advantage, and is often the cause of other sins, and is frequently dissuaded from, for the same reason as here; (see ^{<4073>}1 Corinthians 7:31 ^{<42134>}Luke 21:34,35) or chaste, as the Syriac version; and so is opposed to immodesty in words, actions, or apparel, in which sense sobriety is used in (^{<54109>}1 Timothy 2:9) or “prudent”, as the Vulgate Latin version; and is opposed to all self-conceit and vanity of mind, and imprudence in conduct and conversation; (see ^{<51118>}Romans 12:3) and to all immoderate care of the world, which has the same effect upon the soul as surfeiting and drunkenness on the body: it hinders the soul in the service of God, chokes the word, and makes it unprofitable, and runs men into many sins, snares, and temptations; and the consideration of the end of all things being at hand should draw off from it. It may also signify soundness of mind and judgment in the doctrines of faith, which are words of truth and soberness; and the rather this may be exhorted to, since towards the close of time there will be little of the doctrine of faith in the earth, and men will not be able to endure sound doctrine: it follows,

and watch unto prayer; watch all opportunities of praying, or of attendance on that ordinance, both in private and in public; watch and observe both your present wants, and present mercies, that ye may know what to pray for, and what to return thanks for; and that you have a due reverence of the divine Majesty, in whose presence you are entering. The Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions render it, “watch”, or “be awake in prayers”; be careful that you lift up your hearts with your hands to God; that you pray for such things as are agreeable to the revealed will of God; that you pray in faith, and lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting; and watch for the Spirit of God to enlarge your hearts in prayer, and to assist you both as to the

matter and manner of praying. And persons should also watch after prayer for a return of it; and that they do not depend upon the duty performed; and that they are not negligent to return thanks for the mercy prayed for, when received. Very rightly does the apostle join the above exhortation with this, since a man that is not sober is neither fit to watch nor pray; and a drunken man, according to the Jewish canons, might not pray^{f86}:

“one that is a drinker, or in drink, let him not pray, or if he prays, his prayer is deprecations; a drunken man, let him not pray, and if he prays his prayer is blasphemies.”

Or, as it is elsewhere^{f87} expressed,

“let not a drunken man pray, because he has no intention; and if he prays, his prayer is an abomination, therefore let him return and, pray when he is clear of his drunkenness: let no one in drink pray, and if he prays, his prayer is prayer (unless the word *hlypt* should rather be rendered “folly”, as it may); who is a drunken man? he that cannot speak before a king; a man in drink can speak before a king, and not be confounded; even though he drinks but a fourth part, or a quarter of wine, let him not pray until his wine is departed from him.”

Ver. 8. *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves*, etc.] Not but that charity, or love, is to be exercised towards all men, even towards enemies, but more especially towards the saints, and that under such a consideration in which it cannot be exercised towards others; namely, as their brethren in Christ, and as belonging to him, as the children of God, as redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit; and these not only such as are of the same nation, and belong to the same particular church and community, or of the same denomination, but all the saints everywhere, whether Jews or Gentiles, or of whatsoever name, and in whatsoever state and condition: and this love ought to be mutual and reciprocal, and to be warm and fervent, and not lukewarm and indifferent, as it too often is; and should be constant, “continued”, and “perpetual”, as the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions here read: and this the apostle exhorts to above all things else; since outward sobriety, and watchings, and prayer, and all other duties, are nothing without this; this is the sum and substance of the law, and the fulfilling of it; and without this a mere

knowledge of the Gospel, and a profession of it, are in vain, and therefore in the first place to be attended to. And especially for the following reason,

for charity shall cover the multitude of sins; referring to (²⁰⁰²Proverbs 10:12) not a man's own sins, but the sins of others; and not from the sight of God, for from that only the blood and righteousness of Christ cover sins, even all the sins, the whole multitude of the sins of God's elect; but from the sight of men, both of those against whom they are committed, and others; since charity, or true love, thinks no ill, but puts the best constructions upon the words and actions of fellow Christians, and does not take them up, and improve and exaggerate them, but lets them lie buried in oblivion: it takes no notice of injuries, offences, and affronts, but overlooks them, bears with them, and forgives them, so that they are never raked up, and seen any more; which prevents much scandal, strife, and trouble. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, read, “covereth”, as in (²⁰⁰²Proverbs 10:12).

Ver. 9. *Use hospitality*, etc.] Or, “be lovers of strangers”, as the phrase may be rendered, and as it is in the Syriac version; that is, such as are of a distant country, or come from afar, and are unknown by face, especially good men, that are obliged to remove from their native country for the sake of religion, or by one providence or another; and these are to be loved: and love is to be shown them, both negatively, by not vexing them, and making them uneasy in body or mind; by not oppressing them by violence and injustice, and making any exorbitant demands upon them; or by not perverting judgment with respect to them; and positively, by directing, counselling, and advising them, and if need be, by giving them food, and raiment, and lodging: and it is what men have been led to by the very light of nature, as in the instances of Jethro the Midianite towards Moses, and the inhabitants of Melita with Publius, the chief man of the island, towards the Apostle Paul and his company; and is what God enjoined the Israelites by divers laws, since they had been strangers in the land of Egypt; and various are the exhortations to it in the New Testament; and some, by the practice of it, have entertained angels unawares, as Abraham, and Lot; and even Christ himself, as the two disciples travelling to Emmaus; and is what is highly regarded and commended by Christ, and the contrary is resented by him; and therefore it ought to be used and practised frequently; saints should inure themselves to it, be given to it, pursue and follow hard after it; (see Gill on “⁶¹²³Romans 12:13”), (see Gill on “³⁸¹²Hebrews 13:2”). The apostle adds here, one to another; which

clause is left out in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions; the reason of which may be, because the authors of these versions might think this not so consistent with the duty exhorted to, since the objects of it are strangers; but it should be observed, that so were these persons the apostle writes to; (see ~~1~~ 1 Peter 1:1), they were scattered about, and lived in different countries, and were strangers to one another, and therefore the clause is pertinent enough; and the sense is, that as they were in foreign countries, and at a distance one from another, whenever by any providence they were brought where each other were, that they would be hospitable to one another: and that

without grudging: food, raiment, and lodging, or what they want, whether direction or advice, thinking it no trouble to give them either; or without murmurings, as it may be rendered, as if they were burdensome, and they were too chargeable to them, and their stay too long; and without complaints of them, finding fault, and picking quarrels with them, and laying charges against them, in order to get rid of them. This is one branch of charity before recommended.

Ver. 10. *As every man hath received the gift*, etc.] That is, from God, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions add. This is a general rule laid down by the apostle, according to which, distribution of every kind, whether in things temporal or spiritual, is to be made, even according to the nature, quality, and quantity of the gift received: the greatest gift God bestows on men, next to himself, Son, and Spirit, and received by them in this life, is special grace; which God gives of his sovereign will and pleasure, liberally, abundantly, without the deserts of men, or conditions to be performed by them; of this kind are faith, repentance, hope, and love: the next to this is the ministerial gift, or what qualifies men for the work of the ministry; which is not anything in nature, or what is acquired by art and industry, but is a gift of grace, which is bestowed on some in a higher, on others in a lower degree: and besides these, there are the gifts of nature and providence, as human wisdom, and the knowledge of things natural and civil, riches and wealth, and the various good things of life; for there is nothing a man has in nature and in grace but what is a gift to him, and what he has received: and according to the measure of the gift received, be it what it will, the exhortation is,

even so minister the same one to another; or to, and among yourselves; to your neighbours or companions, as the Syriac, version renders it; if the gift

be special grace though that itself cannot be imparted from one to another, yet the knowledge of it may; and it becomes such who have an experience of the grace of God upon their hearts to make it known, both to particular friends in private conversation, and to the church of God in public, for the use and edification of others, and the glory of God's grace: if the gift be a ministerial one, whether it be greater or less, for it is not in all alike, it is not to be wrapped up in a napkin, and hid in the earth, or to lie neglected, but to be stirred up, and used for the benefit of the souls of men: and if it is a temporal one, the good things of this life, according to the measure of them, that a man has, he is to minister to the supply of the poor; and as God has prospered him, he is to distribute to the necessities of others; as men freely receive, be it what it will, they should freely minister it, according to the nature and measure of it:

as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; for they are but stewards of whatsoever gifts they have; and therefore, if they would approve themselves good stewards, they should minister the same in proportion to their reception of them. Manifold and various are the graces of the Spirit of God, and the rich experiences communicated to men, which are not only for themselves, but for the good of others also: gifts for public usefulness are different one from another; one man has one gift, and another has another; or the same gift is not alike in all, in some greater, and in others less; and all are but stewards: they are accountable for them, and the use of them, to their great Lord and master: and various are the doctrines of the grace of God; of the grace of the Father in election, in the everlasting covenant, in the mission of his Son, in the free justification of sinners by his righteousness, in the free and full pardon of all their sins, in the adoption of any into his family, and in the gift of eternal life; and of the Son of God, in engaging as the surety of his people from everlasting, in assuming their nature in time, in obeying, suffering, and dying in their room and stead; and of the Spirit of God in regeneration and sanctification; and of all these mysteries of grace the ministers of the Gospel are stewards; and it is required of them that they be faithful. Temporal good things are given to men, not for their own use only, but for others; and they are but stewards of them; the original proprietor is God, and to him they must give an account of their stewardship, and how they have used and disposed of the manifold gifts which God of his goodness has put into their hands; so that this last clause contains a reason or argument enforcing the above rule.

Ver. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*, etc.] This is an application of the above general rule to a particular case, the public ministry of the word, for that is here meant: “if any man speak”; not in any manner, or on any subject; not in a private way, or about things natural and civil; but in public, and concerning divine things: “let him speak”: this is rightly supplied in our translation; and in which it is supported and confirmed by the Syriac and Arabic versions, who both supply the same way: “as the oracles of God”; by which are meant the writings of the Old Testament, the sacred Scriptures; (see ~~εξου~~ Romans 3:2) so called, because they come from God, are breathed and spoken by him, and contain his mind and will, and are authoritative and infallible; and according to these he is to speak who speaks in public on divine subjects, both as to the matter and manner of his speech: the matter of it must be agreeably to the divinely inspired word of God, must be fetched out of it, and confirmed by it; and he is to speak every thing that is in it, and keep back nothing, but declare the whole counsel of God, and only what is in it, without mixing his own chaff, or the doctrines of men with it; and it should be spoken in a manner agreeably to it, not as the word of man, but as the word of God; and not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words of the Holy Ghost; and with all boldness, for so the Gospel ought to be spoken; and with all certainty and assurance, constantly affirming the things of it, for nothing is more sure than they are; and with all openness, plainness, and freedom, making truth manifest, laying it plain and open before men, as it ought to be; and that with all reverence and godly fear, which becomes both speaker and hearer. The apostle next proceeds to mention another case, to which the above rule is applicable;

if any man minister, [let him do it] as of the ability which God giveth; that is, if any man minister in temporal things to the supply of the poor; if a private man, and in a private way, let him do it in proportion to his ability, as God has prospered him in the world; or if an officer of the church, a deacon; and which seems to be the sense, for so the word used signifies, **διακονει**, if any man perform the office, or act the part of a deacon, let him do it according to what God, in his providence, has put into his hands; that is, of the church's stock, which he should minister with simplicity and cheerfulness. A like division of church offices into public preaching of the word, and ministering to the wants of the poor, is here made, as in (~~εστιν~~ Romans 12:6-8). The end of all this is,

that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; or by all means, as the Arabic version renders it; by all ways and methods proper; for the glory of God should be the principal view in every action of life: hence the Syriac version adds to the phrase, “in all things”, for the sake of explanation, “which ye do”; by sobriety, by prayer, by watching unto it; by exercising fervent charity, and using hospitality one to another; by ministering the gift as it is received; by the public ministration of the word; and by supplying the wants of the poor, whether in a personal or in a church way: or in all gifts, whether private or public, temporal or spiritual; since they all come from God, and men are accountable to him for them; and therefore should be used so as to glorify him by them, and give him the glory of them; and not glory in them, as if not received from him: or in all the members of the church, whether officers, as pastors and deacons, or private Christians; all should so behave in their respective stations, as God may have glory: “through Jesus Christ”: through whom all grace is communicated, by whom all gifts are bestowed, and by virtue of grace and strength received from him every good work is performed to the glory of God:

to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever; meaning either to God the Father, from whom every good gift comes; who is the God of all grace, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things; and therefore the praise and glory of all belongs to him; and who has the dominion over all creatures and things, and has the disposal of all in nature, providence, and grace: or to Jesus Christ, out of whose fulness manifold grace, grace for grace, is received; and who having ascended on high, has received gifts for men, and gives them to them, and so is worthy of all praise; and who, as God, has the kingdom of nature and providence equally with the Father, and, as Mediator, the kingdom of grace, the government of the church; and whose dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth; and of whose kingdom there will be no end.

Amen; so let it be, so shall it be.

Ver. 12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial*, etc.] By which may be meant either the destruction of Jerusalem, which was at hand, and of which the apostle may be thought to give the Jews he writes to notice of before hand; that they might be prepared for it, and not be overwhelmed with consternation and amazement when they should hear of it; who, though in other countries, must be affected with it, and would be a

trying dispensation to them: or else the afflictions and persecutions which daily come upon them, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel; signified by “fire” or “burning”, because grievous to the flesh, and gave great uneasiness, distress, and pain to it; and because of the fury of men, and the violence and fierceness of their rage, expressed thereby; as also because the people of God under them are sometimes ready to conceive that the wrath of God is poured out, like fire, upon them. But the apostle would not have these saints entertain any such thoughts, and therefore he calls them “beloved”; that is, of God, as they were notwithstanding all the fiery trials and afflictions which were brought upon them; or he means, that they were beloved by him, and dear unto him, and other saints, though they were ill treated and reproached by the world: the Syriac and Arabic versions read, “my beloved”; and the Ethiopic version, “our brethren”: and the apostle exhorts them not to look upon their afflictions that either did or should attend them as strange and uncommon things; since afflictions, of whatsoever kind, are not things of chance, and do not rise up out of the dust, but are by the appointment, and according to the will of God; and are also the common lot of the people of God in all ages, from the beginning of the world, the same afflictions are accomplished in others; yea, Christ himself endured the same hatred, reproach, and contradiction of sinners, against himself; and they are what he has given his people reason to expect, having told them of them before hand, that they might not be offended at them; and as they lay in his way to glory, it need not seem strange that the saints also should, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom. Moreover, this fiery dispensation, be it what it will, was not to destroy them, but to try them, and that for their good, profit, and advantage; just as gold and silver are tried in the fire, and lose their dross, and become purer and brighter:

which is to try you; afflictions try the graces of the saints; as their faith in Christ, which becomes thereby much more precious than of gold that perisheth; and their love to him, by which it appears that no tribulation can separate them from it, nor many waters and floods of afflictions drown it; and their hope of eternal life, which grows more lively and strong, and is as an anchor, sure and steadfast, amidst the greatest storms. These try a man's profession of religion, whether it is took up on good principles, and without sinister views; since, if it is not, when persecution, because of the word, comes, he is offended and gone; and likewise what a man's principles are, whether worth suffering for or not; and whether they will bear him up,

and he abide by them, when called to suffer for them; and therefore, since such ends are answered by fiery trials, they should not be looked upon as strange and unusual things: as though some strange thing happened unto you; which was never known and heard of before; and as if useless, and of no service, and as foreign to the characters, cases, and circumstances of the saints in this world. The apostle in this verse returns to his former argument, to animate and encourage the saints in suffering afflictions patiently for righteousness sake.

Ver. 13. *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings,* etc.] Not of his personal sufferings; though they were partakers of the benefits and blessings which come through them, and result from them, such as justification, peace, and pardon, and which are matter and ground of rejoicing; but of the sufferings of his body, the church, which is mystically himself; and are called his, because of the union between him and his people, and the sympathy he bears to them, and because they are endured for the sake of him and his Gospel, and conform the saints, and make them like unto him; and therefore suffering saints should rejoice in this, that their sufferings are accounted by Christ as his own, who in all their afflictions is afflicted; and that they are honoured to suffer for his name's sake, and are hereby made like unto him:

that when his glory shall be revealed; the glory of his divine nature, as the only begotten Son of God, in which he will come and appear at the last day; and which, though incommunicable, will be more manifest to all men, and especially to the saints, who will know more of him, as the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and when the glory of his office, as Mediator, will be more conspicuous, and shall be beheld by all that the Father has given to him; and also the glory of his human nature, which is now crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God; and likewise the glory which he has in his hands for his people, even eternal glory and happiness: this is now, in a great measure, unseen, but it will then be revealed, both to the saints and in them; they will appear with Christ in glory, and have a glory both upon their souls and bodies. As they suffer with him, and for his sake, they will be glorified with him, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's glory, and in the glory of his holy angels: the consideration of which, as it must greatly encourage to suffer for his sake, so must be matter of great joy; as follows:

ye may be glad also with exceeding joy; a joy unspeakable, and full of glory, being made partakers of the glory of Christ, either in beholding, or in possessing it.

Ver. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ*, etc.] For being called by his name; for bearing the name of Christians; for believing in him, and professing him; and for the sake of his Gospel, which is sometimes called his name, (^{<4095>}Acts 9:15) not that the apostle makes any doubt of this, for nothing is more certain than that the saints shall be reproached, and all manner of evil spoken of them falsely for Christ's name sake; but he supposes it, and takes it for granted, that they are, and will be reproached, and yet pronounces them blessed persons:

happy are ye; some supply it, “shall ye be”, as the Vulgate Latin version; that is, in the other world, because the kingdom of heaven, the crown of life and glory, belongs to such persons; they will be happy at death, in judgment, and to all eternity: others, with our translators, supply, “are ye”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions; for such are happy now in themselves, being both comfortable in their frames, and honourable in their persons and characters, however uncomfortable, miserable, and dishonourable they may appear to the men of the world:

for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you; alluding to (^{<2310>}Isaiah 11:2) that is, the glorious Spirit of God, as the Syriac version renders it; who is glorious in himself, in the perfections of his nature, being possessed of the same glorious divine essence with the Father and Son; and in his works both of nature, being equally concerned with the other Persons in the Godhead in the works of creation and providence, and also of grace, especially the latter; and in all his gifts and graces with which he adorns the saints, and makes them glorious: and his resting on them denotes his inhabitation in them, and his abiding with them, and remaining in them; and which appears by the comfort they enjoy in their souls amidst all the reproaches and revilings of men, and by the strength which they have to bear up under and endure shame and persecution for the sake of Christ; and which casts an honour upon them, and makes them both glorious and cheerful. The Jews have a saying^{f88}, that the Holy Ghost does not dwell on any, but on him that has a cheerful heart:

on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified: on the part of the revilers, the person, office, work, and grace, the operations and influences of the Spirit are blasphemed and ridiculed; the power of the

Spirit, with which the saints speak, the experiences of grace they express, the comforts of the Spirit they declare that they enjoy under suffering circumstances, as well as their courage, patience, and cheerfulness he gives them, are generally bantered by persecutors; and indeed all the reproaches they cast upon the people of God fall upon the Spirit of God, by whom they are animated and influenced: but on the part of the sufferers he is glorified; inasmuch as they continue to bear a testimony to his grace, depend upon his strength, and ascribe all their comfort and gracious experience unto him. This clause is wanting in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, but is in all Beza's Greek copies, excepting one; and is also in the Arabic version.

Ver. 15. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer*, etc.] The punishment for murder was death by the law of God, (^{<0006>}Genesis 9:6)

or as a thief; whose fine or mulct, according to the Jewish law, was a fivefold or fourfold restitution, according to the nature of the thing that was stolen, (^{<0221>}Exodus 22:1)

or as an evildoer; a breaker of any of the laws of God or men, which are of a moral nature, and for the good of civil society:

or as a busybody in other men's matters; "or as a bishop in another man's diocese"; that concerns himself in things he has nothing to do with, and neglects his own affairs, and lives in idleness, and upon the spoil of others; or takes upon him to manage, direct, order, and command other men's servants, or persons that do not belong to him, to do his business, or whatsoever he pleases. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, "a desirer of other's goods"; and the Ethiopic version, "a covetous desirer of other's things"; and so is led on by an insatiable thirst for them, to obtain them in an evil way, either by secret fraud, or open violence and oppression. To suffer in any such cases is scandalous and dishonourable, and unbecoming the character of a Christian. This last clause is left out in the Syriac version.

Ver. 16. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian*, etc.] Because he is one, and professes himself to be one. This name was first given to the disciples at Antioch, either by themselves, or by the Gentiles; however, it being agreeable to them, was retained; it is only mentioned here, and in (^{<4126>}Acts 11:26 26:28),

let him not be ashamed; neither of Christ, and his Gospel, for which he suffers, nor of the name he bears, nor of the punishment he endures,

however ignominious and shameful it may be among men; but let him, as his Lord and master did, endure the cross, and despise the shame, (~~HEB~~ Hebrews 12:2)

but let him glorify God on this behalf: that he bestows this gift upon him to suffer for Christ, as well as to believe in him; and that he does him so much honour to call him to such service, and to strengthen him in it, so as to take it joyfully, and endure it patiently and cheerfully. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and also the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, instead of “in this behalf”, read “in this name”; that is, of a Christian.

Ver. 17. *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God,* etc.] By the house of God is either meant the temple at Jerusalem, which is often so called, because it was built for God, and where were the symbol of his presence, and his worship; and now the time was come, or at hand, that God would begin at his sanctuary, and leave this house desolate, and not one stone should be left upon another, as Christ had foretold: or else the church of God, which is frequently called the house of God, because it is of his building, where he dwells, and grants his gracious presence, and which he beautifies, fills, repairs, and defends; and so may design believers in Christ, those that are of the household and family of God: and by judgment is meant, not punishment for sin, strictly speaking, because Christ has endured this in the room and stead of his church and people, and therefore in justice cannot be inflicted on them; but afflictions and persecutions, and which are fatherly chastisements, and different from God's judgment on the world, and condemnation with it; (see ~~1COR~~ 1 Corinthians 11:32) and these may be said to “begin” with them, because it is only in this life the saints have their afflictions; and which are in love to them, and therefore are early brought upon them to try them, and purge them, and make them partakers of his holiness: besides, wicked men are often made use of as instruments, by which God chastises his people; upon which account they are reserved till last, to be the objects of his vengeance, when they have filled up the measure of their sins; and then what is begun in love at the house of God, will end in wrath and severe punishment on them: and whereas it is said, “the time” is come, or at hand, it may be observed, that as God has his set time to favour his Zion, so likewise to chastise her; all his people's times are in his hand, as of comfort, so of temptation, affliction, and persecution. The first times of Christianity, or of the preaching of the Gospel, were times of trouble and distress; for as it

was necessary the Gospel should be confirmed by signs and wonders, so that it should be tried and proved by the sufferings of the saints for it: and the phrase also suggests, that these sufferings and afflictions were but for a time, and even as it were for a moment, for a little while; and is a reason why the saints should glorify God, as these words imply, being introduced with the causal particle, “for”; that they have their sufferings now, and not with the wicked in the world to come, which will have no end:

and if [it] first begin at us; either us Jews, for Peter, and those he writes to, were such; or us Christians, who believe in Christ, have embraced his Gospel, and profess his name:

what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? of which God is the author, and which contains things relating to him; as the grace of God, the righteousness of God, peace with him, pardon from him, justification before him, and acceptance with him; and which he commits to men, and qualifies them for preaching it, and succeeds the ministry of it; and it being his Gospel, as it makes it the more valuable in itself, so it is to be had in the greatest reverence and esteem; and the greater is the sin of such who despise and reject it, as did the unbelieving Jews, who seem chiefly designed, here; it was first preached to them, but they disbelieved the doctrines of it, and submitted not to its ordinances, and rejected Christ, the Saviour, the sum and substance of it; and put it away from them, judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life: and what shall the end of such be? in this world wrath came upon them to the uttermost, ruin upon their nation, city, and temple; and in the world to come everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and eternal vengeance in flames of fire. The Jews have various phrases, and frequent expressions in their writings, which resemble these, and serve to illustrate them. When Noah told the old world of the flood, and called upon them to repent, they are represented as saying to him ^{f89},

“where does punishment begin? **hytyb ʾm**, “at the house” of that man does it “begin?” when Methuselah died, they said unto him, does not punishment begin at the house of that man?”

and elsewhere ^{f90}, says R. Jonathan,

“punishment does not come into the world, but in the time that the wicked are in the world; and it does not begin (i.e. at them) **hl j t μyqydxh ʾm al a**, but it begins at the righteous;”

and again ^{f91}

“when God executes judgment on the righteous, he is praised; for if he executes this on them, how much more on the ungodly?”

(see ^{2301b}Isaiah 10:11,12 ^{2429b}Jeremiah 25:29 49:12 ^{2696b}Ezekiel 19:6).

Ver. 18. *And if the righteous scarcely be saved*, etc.] Reference is had to (^{2113b}Proverbs 11:31) where in the Septuagint version are the same words as here: the “righteous” are such, not who are so in their own opinion, or merely in the esteem of others, nor on account of their vility, morality, and external righteousness before men, or by the deeds of the law; but who are made righteous by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them: and such are “scarcely saved”; not as if they were but in part saved, for they are completely saved; Christ has wrought out and finished a complete salvation for them; and they are saved from all enemies, and everything that might hurt them; from sin, Satan, the law, the world, hell, and death; and they are completely justified, and have all their sins pardoned, and shall be perfectly saved: nor as if their salvation was doubtful; for though they are scarcely, yet certainly saved; for they are chosen to salvation, and Christ has obtained it for them, and they have the application of it already made to them by the blessed Spirit; and being justified, or made righteous persons, nothing is more certain than that they shall be glorified: but they are said to be “scarcely” saved, because of the difficulty of it, both with respect to Christ, who met with difficulties in working out their salvation; by reason of the strictness of divine justice, and the demands of the righteous law, which would make no abatement; the sins of his people he had to bear, and make atonement for; the many enemies he had to grapple with, and the accursed death of the cross, he had to undergo; though they were such he was able to surmount, and did: and especially with respect to the saints themselves; for though their salvation is certain and complete, being finished by Christ, yet their enjoyment of it is attended with many difficulties; by reason of the corruptions of nature, a law in their members warring against the law of their minds; the frequent temptations of Satan, who seeks to devour them, and their wrestlings with principalities and powers, which are above their match; and also by reason of various afflictions and persecutions, and many tribulations, which make their way to eternal life a strait way, and through which they must enter into the kingdom of heaven: and if this be their case, as it is,

where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? the profane sinner, the Christless, impenitent, unbelieving, and unregenerate man; otherwise all men are sinners, in themselves; but here it means such as are destitute of the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, and the justifying righteousness of Christ, and that live and die in their sins: where shall such appear? not in the congregation of the righteous; nor at the right hand of Christ; nor in heaven, into which no defiled sinner shall enter; nor even on earth, among and under the rocks and mountains, which will not be able to hide them from the face of the Judge, and his wrath, when he shall come; but at Christ's left hand, and in hell, and among the devils and damned there.

Ver. 19. *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God,* etc.]

This is the conclusion made from the foregoing premises; that seeing the state and condition of the saints in this world, at worst, and which is but for a time, is infinitely preferable to the dreadful state and condition of disobedient persons, ungodly men, and sinners, and which will endure to all eternity; they should not think strange of their sufferings, or complain of them, but patiently endure them; and especially when they consider that these are not the effects of chance, or merely owing to the malice and wickedness of men, or to any second cause only; but they are the will of God, are by his appointment, under his direction, and by his order, and for their good, and his own glory; and therefore it becomes them to

commit the keeping of their souls [to him], in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator: and which is not only their duty, but their privilege: and the sense is, that when they are called to suffer for Christ, they should commit their cause to God, who, as he is the Creator, is the Governor of the universe, and will judge righteously; and when they are even called to lay down their lives for his sake, they shall not lose them; though their bodies are killed, they may and should commit their souls, when departing from their bodies, into the hands of God; as Stephen, the first martyr, committed his into the hands of Christ, in imitation of him; where he that made them, as he is able to keep them, will faithfully preserve them in happiness and glory, till the resurrection morn, when their bodies shall be raised and reunited to them: and this is to be performed, in “well doing”; for which they suffer, and in which they should continue to the last; not rendering evil for evil, but blessing; and in imitation of Christ, and his servant Stephen, pray for their worst enemies, and wish them all the good, and do them all the acts of kindness that lie in their power.