

KERUX COMMENTARIES

1 PETER

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A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching

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1 Peter: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE TO THE SERIES

Since words were first uttered, people have struggled to understand one another and to know the main meaning in any verbal exchange.

The answer to what God is talking about must be understood in every context and generation; that is why Kerux (KAY-rukes) emphasizes text-based truths and bridges from the context of the original hearers and readers to the twenty-first-century world. Kerux values the message of the text, thus its name taken from the Greek *kērux*, a messenger or herald who announced the proclamations of a ruler or magistrate.

Biblical authors trumpeted all kinds of important messages in very specific situations, but a big biblical idea, grasped in its original setting and place, can transcend time. This specific, big biblical idea taken from the biblical passage embodies a single concept that transcends time and bridges the gap between the author's contemporary context and the reader's world. How do the prophets perceive the writings of Moses? How does the writer of Hebrews make sense of the Old Testament? How does Clement in his second epistle, which may be the earliest sermon known outside the New Testament, adapt verses from Isaiah and also ones from the Gospels? Or what about Luther's bold use of Romans 1:17? How does Jonathan Edwards allude to Genesis 19? Who can forget Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and his appropriation of Amos 5:24: "No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until 'justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream'"? How does a preacher in your local church today apply the words of Hosea in a meaningful and life-transforming way?

WHAT IS PRIME IN GOD'S MIND, AND HOW IS THAT EXPRESSED TO A GIVEN GENERATION IN THE UNITS OF THOUGHT THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE?

Answering those questions is what Kerux authors do. Based on the popular "big idea" preaching model, Kerux commentaries uniquely combine the insights of experienced Bible exegetes (trained in interpretation) and homileticians (trained in preaching). Their collaboration provides for every Bible book:

- A detailed introduction and outline
- A summary of all preaching sections with their primary exegetical, theological, and preaching ideas
- Preaching pointers that join the original context with the contemporary one
- Insights from the Hebrew and Greek text
- A thorough exposition of the text
- Sidebars of pertinent information for further background
- Appropriate charts and photographs
- A theological focus to passages

Publisher's Preface to the Series

- A contemporary big idea for every preaching unit
- Present-day meaning, validity, and application of a main idea
- Creative presentations for each primary idea
- Key questions about the text for study groups

Many thanks to Jim Weaver, Kregel's former acquisitions editor, who conceived of this commentary series and further developed it with the team of Jeffrey D. Arthurs, Robert B. Chisholm, David M. Howard Jr., Darrel L. Bock, Roy E. Ciampa, and Michael J. Wilkins. We also recognize with gratitude the significant contributions of Dennis Hillman, Fred Mabie, Paul Hillman, Herbert W. Bateman IV, and Shawn Vander Lugt who have been instrumental in the development of the series. Finally, gratitude is extended to the two authors for each Kerux volume; the outside reviewers, editors, and proofreaders; and Kregel staff who suggested numerous improvements.

—*Kregel Publications*

EXEGETICAL AUTHOR'S PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*For Peter & Elizabeth Rew,
elect-exiles who have suffered much and loved more*

I am thankful for many who made this work possible. First, I thank Dr. Albin Huss, my seminary professor, who taught me to dig deeply into the Word. The model of block diagramming he taught me has been essential to my life work. Second, I thank my PhD advisor Dr. Radu Gheorghiuță, who required me to memorize the text of 1 Peter. (I only wish I would have taken him up on his challenge to memorize it in Greek!) His further labor of helping me refine my dissertation on the use of Jesus's words in 1 Peter gave me a foundation for writing this volume. Third, I wish to thank my employer, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, which granted encouragement and time to complete this project. Fourth, I want to thank Bryan Murawski, the preaching author of this volume. As all who read this volume will see, he models what a pastor-theologian should be. Finally, I thank God for the opportunity to comment on his life-giving Word. May my feeble words magnify his.

—Timothy E. Miller
Allen Park, MI

PREACHING AUTHOR'S PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*For Janice,
an imperishable beauty with a gentle and quiet spirit,
precious in God's sight and mine (1 Peter 3:4)*

I am grateful for Tim Miller and the folks at Kregel for inviting me to contribute to this project. As a pastor and preacher, I have often struggled to find the balance between academic/exegetical resources and homiletical/practical books during sermon prep. I hope the reader will find this series well balanced between the two.

The members and regular attenders of Bethany Bible Church have been exceptionally helpful as I taught through 1 Peter in preparation for this commentary. They provided plenty of encouragement and challenging questions that strengthened every chapter of this commentary. Friend and colleague Gary Schnittjer gave me helpful advice and wise direction at a key point in this project. I am also grateful for the partnership in ministry with pastors Aaron Walters and Garrett Nimmo, who in many ways walked with me through the message of 1 Peter in the trials and sufferings we endured together in ministry as I worked on this commentary. My wife Janice helped provide feedback in many key areas as well. I thank the Lord for her wisdom, support, and friendship every day.

Preaching is a holy task, a high calling, as it undertakes to proclaim, explain, and apply the very words of God. The effectiveness of preaching directly correlates to its rootedness in Scripture. As such, I have striven to allow as many analogies, illustrations, and examples as possible to flow from Peter's text. Where Peter offers an image or metaphor rooted in everyday life, I attempt to allow that image or metaphor to motivate the creative applications and presentation of the sermon. In this way, the actual text of Scripture remains the highlight of the sermon.

I pray that the teacher and preacher will be able to benefit from the many exegetical insights here, and adapt the homiletical suggestions for his or her proper context. This, I hope, will lead to biblical, engaging, and relevant sermons, for the edification of the church, for the glory of God.

—Bryan Murawski
Belleville, MI

OVERVIEW OF ALL PREACHING PASSAGES

1 Peter 1:1–2

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote to elect-exiles, who had become elect-exiles by the work of the triune God, whose first member chose them, second member sanctified them, and third member offered the sacrifice necessary that made their new identity possible.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers in Jesus have a new identity as elect-exiles, eternally chosen by the Father, judicially sanctified by the Spirit, and graciously welcomed by means of the work of the Son.

PREACHING IDEA

The Born-Again Identity: The Triune God Transforms Our Identities from Lost Sinners to Elect Exiles.

PREACHING POINTERS

The first epistle of Peter opens with theological precision built on a Trinitarian foundation. Peter writes to a Gentile audience dispersed throughout Asia Minor and Galatia. They were spiritual exiles, temporary residents of earth. Though they shared no home or singular house of worship anymore, they united through a common identity. Peter's readers were among the elect, chosen by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to multiply God's grace throughout the world.

Hardly more exciting news could begin a letter! Modern readers recognize that God counts us, too, among elect-exiles. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each had a role in our salvation, transforming our identities and giving us mission and purpose. We share the same identity as Peter's readers. We exist as exiles, dispersed throughout the world, far greater than the reaches of Galatia and Asia. Yet we unite as the elect in a faith founded in the foreknowledge of the Father, sanctified in the Holy Spirit, and purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. The Trinity played a significant role in the lives of the first-century readers and continues to play a significant role in the lives of twenty-first-century Christians.

1 Peter 1:3–9

EXEGETICAL IDEA

God the Father was to be praised for granting new birth, for this new birth provided a living hope, guaranteed a secure inheritance, and produced rejoicing despite present trial.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers should praise God the Father for the gift of the new birth, which provides a living hope, a secure inheritance, and a reason to rejoice despite trials.

PREACHING IDEA

The Born-Again Supremacy: Faithful Living Results in Supreme Rewards.

PREACHING POINTERS

The first-century church underwent heavy persecution as God's kingdom began its spread throughout the world. Persecuted believers couldn't help but ask themselves, "Is it worth it? Is this suffering worth the pain?"

Peter called the church to a future perspective, firmly rooted in the present hope of their salvation. Only by looking beyond their current trials could the early church see the reason for their pain. Believers have been born again to a living hope. God stores up for them an unfading inheritance far greater than anything they could accumulate in this life. Faithful perseverance through persecution results in praise and glory and honor when Christ returns. This gives reason to rejoice despite trials.

The twenty-first-century preacher must call the church to a similar focus. Though we may not all experience the same heat of persecution that the first-century church did, we have the same supreme hope and calling in our salvation. Faithful living results in glorious rewards. The modern believer must look beyond the here and now and realize that life is best lived for the future. This puts whatever trials or tribulations the church currently experiences into proper focus. By calling the church to look forward to the day of reward, believers have a sharper perspective on how to live today.

1 Peter 1:10–12

EXEGETICAL IDEA

The readers were to be envied, for they were experiencing the salvation accomplished by the suffering and glorification of Christ, which was predicted by the Old Testament prophets and was of great interest to the angelic beings.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Church-age believers are privileged to know the fullness of the gospel, which the prophets desired to know, and the angels have great interest in.

PREACHING IDEA

The Born-Again Legacy: A Long Legacy of Prophets and Angels Magnifies the Mysteries of the Gospel.

PREACHING POINTERS

Suffering does not often feel like a privileged position. Peter's readers likely did not feel that they lived in a time of privilege or entitlement, especially as Christians in an increasingly

Overview of All Preaching Passages

anti-Christian society. Persecution plagued the church, threatening to scare believers away from their newfound faith. Believers suffered physically through imprisonment, beatings, displacement, and death.

Today, we might feel like we enjoy a variety of privileges for various reasons: we live in a period of unparalleled technological advancement; we benefit from a wealth of riches and luxury and comfort in our modern temperature-controlled mansions; diseases that would have been deadly just a few centuries ago can now be cured at the cost of a few dollars. The world is smaller than ever before, and we feel better off for it.

The preacher can show the church that these so-called privileges pale in comparison to the privileges of living on this side of the cross. Believers experience the fullness of the gospel, something both angels and prophets longed to comprehend for many millennia. To preach this passage is to preach the greatest privilege in the history of humanity, far eclipsing the glories of technology, comfort, travel, or earthly riches!

1 Peter 1:13–21

EXEGETICAL IDEA

In light of their new birth, Peter's readers had to set their hope fully on the coming of Christ, reject their old way of life by modeling God's holiness, and live in reverent fear, knowing God's impartial judgment and the overwhelming cost of their redemption.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers must hope in Christ's coming, reflect the Father's holiness, and live in reverent fear.

PREACHING IDEA

Like Father, Like Sons: Be Holy, as God Is Holy.

PREACHING POINTERS

The first few paragraphs of Peter's letter focused on the "born-again identity" of the readers. Now, Peter transitions to tell his readers how they should expect to live in light of that new identity.

This passage offers the preacher the first passage packed with application in 1 Peter. Previous passages primarily built theological groundwork, laying the way for the imperatives to follow. Here, Peter launches into several commands, urging his readers to set their hope on God's grace, to be holy as God is holy, and to live in reverent fear. Then, in an explosive theological climax, he highlights the revelation of the gospel.

The passage may be the most exciting yet! Packed with clear commands and a ready-made gospel message in the text, few pericopes in the New Testament offer a clearer path to preach than this one. Peter stirs our hearts with his message, challenging believers to live in light of their identity as born-again Christians and to act according to the character of their holy Father.

1 Peter 1:22–25

EXEGETICAL IDEA

After hearing the living and abiding Word of God, Peter's readers responded in obedience to the truth and received the new birth, which worked in them a sincere brotherly love that they must earnestly exercise toward one another.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Those who have experienced the new birth have been obedient to the truth of the Word of God, and they must now exercise the love natural to the new birth.

PREACHING IDEA

People Perish, but God's Word Persists!

PREACHING POINTERS

Nobody likes to think about how short life really is. Eighty years comes and goes too fast for our comfort. As children, death is hardly a thought. Toys and video games and movies distract from the harsh realities awaiting us in life. Teenagers hardly give their choices a second thought, living out their years in high school with reckless abandon, seemingly ignorant of any real consequences to their actions. College students fare no better, amping up the bad decision-making of their teenage years now that they are untethered from their parents' watch. Even young adults and early married couples rarely consider mortality, being too young, too healthy, and too in love to allow such thoughts to cross their minds. It isn't usually until middle age hits and our bodies begin to sag and slow down that our impermanence sinks in.

Peter knew the truth of this reality, as did the prophets before him. Peter's readers faced persecution and difficult trials. Peter has pointed them to the blessed hope of their salvation. They have been born again in Christ and now have a new calling and a means of facing their persecutors. But those facing the pressure of persecution may have felt like life as they know it was slipping away. In the first century, persecution often meant the loss of commerce and public rapport—and many times even imprisonment, bodily harm, or death. This caused many believers to consider their options. But Peter directs his readers' attention away from the transitory nature of life and roots their focus in the unfading Word of God. First Peter 1:22–25 calls readers to root their confidence not in their own longevity of life but in the enduring Word of God. Being born again means we become imperishable, though not in our earthly bodies. This gospel gives hope and encouragement through the difficulties of life. The preacher has opportunity to address the most common fear known to humankind: the fear of death. It impacts 100 percent of us, and therefore this passage is one of the most relevant in the entire epistle.

1 Peter 2:1–3

EXEGETICAL IDEA

As newborn babes, Peter's readers were commanded to long after the milk that causes them to grow up into salvation, while avoiding activities that are incompatible with their new life.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Those given new birth through the Word must continue to desire that Word, thereby growing into salvation while also avoiding actions incompatible with the Word's teaching.

PREACHING IDEA

Born-again Believers Crave Pure Spiritual Milk.

PREACHING POINTERS

Peter's commands to the church in 2:1–3 come in two parts: a negative prohibition and a positive proscription. Negatively, the church must strip away five specific sins: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. On the positive side, the church must feast on the pure nutrition of God's Word. This all assumes that believers in the church are truly born again.

For pastors looking to give their congregation a feast, 1 Peter 2:1–3 provides the perfect two-course meal. The first plate: "Avoid these sins!" And the second: "Eat this instead!" Too often sermons end up unbalanced—a lot of yelling at sin with very little grace, or urgent imperatives to "Avoid this sin!" without a proper balance of "Here's what to focus on instead." If preached correctly, congregants will leave feeling well fed and knowing how to feed themselves in the future.

1 Peter 2:4–10

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter indicated that his readers were in a privileged and honorable position, for they were priests who were being built into a spiritual house as a result of their divinely appointed acceptance of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers are chosen to be priests and are included in God's building program, for all those who recognize that Jesus is the cornerstone are granted the glorious benefits of being the people of God.

PREACHING IDEA

From Sinners to Stones, from Pagans to Priests: God's People Enjoy a Privileged Position.

PREACHING POINTERS

Imagine the surprise Peter's readers must have felt hearing words previously reserved for Old Testament Israelites now applied to them: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (2:9). Labels that once exclusively described the Jewish people, Peter now uses to describe even *Gentile* Christians! Through a skillful use of Old Testament quotations and allusions, Peter links believers with Jesus, showing strong continuity in God's program from one dispensation to another.

Today we can likewise join in these identifying characteristics. Christianity has no shortage of different denominations and labels that separate: Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Charismatic, and so on. Even bigger denominations divide into further subcategories:

Southern Baptist, Freewill Baptist, American Baptist, and more. But Peter brings true believers together using metaphors that capture a common unity, built upon the foundation of Christ and his work. Preachers have the chance to use both Old and New Testaments in one sermon to help Christians understand their heritage and their common identity.

1 Peter 2:11–12

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter urged the exiled readers to abstain from sinful desires and to act honorably, with the hope that their accusers would see their good deeds and glorify God.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Elect-exiles are to reject sin and live honorably before unbelievers, with the hope that their opponents would see and repent.

PREACHING IDEA

The Gospel Vocalized Is Ineffective without the Gospel Visualized.

PREACHING POINTERS

Building on the born-again identity of his persecuted audience, Peter provided another way for the believers to think of themselves: sojourners and exiles. This renewed focus on their identity should transform the way they interact with their culture. No longer should they be controlled by the passionate lusts that once characterized them. Now, their spiritual identity elevates their moral behavior to the extent that the pagan culture will take notice. Peter urged them to live in such a way that even their worst enemies would have no cause to speak ill of them.

Today, believers face the challenge of living a moral life amid an immoral society. It is much easier to blend into a secular workplace than to stick out against it. Business success often comes at the cost of integrity and honor. If believers think of themselves primarily as lawyers, farmers, construction workers, or teachers, then it becomes much easier to sacrifice godliness at the altar of corporate success. But this passage challenges believers to see themselves as exiles and sojourners, and to use opportunities where their morality clashes with the culture to share the gospel in both word and deed.

1 Peter 2:13–17

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter commanded the readers to submit to human authorities, live as freed slaves, and honor all people.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers, as freed slaves of God, must submit to human authorities and honor all people.

PREACHING IDEA

Freely Live as Slaves to God-Ordained Authority Figures.

PREACHING POINTERS

It must have been difficult for believers in Peter's day to humbly submit themselves to the governing authorities. Nero ran the empire. His policies and anti-Christian agenda had potential to cause serious frustration to well-meaning believers looking to serve Christ in their newly established faith. Never before had the governing authorities taken such a proactive role in persecuting the church. It was never so dangerous to be a Christian.

Today's governing leaders pale in comparison to Nero's reign of terror. Believers sometimes get frustrated with government policies that seem to push against Christian values, but what we experience (at least in America) is far less severe than what the believers in Peter's day endured.

This should not diminish the reality of our persecution, especially when plenty of signs point to persecution continuing to ramp up, not diminish. Rather, if Peter's words to first-century believers encouraged humble submission to governing authorities, how much more should they impact twenty-first-century believers?

1 Peter 2:18–21

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter commanded slaves to be subject to their masters, even those who caused them unjust suffering, for in doing so they receive commendation from God as they follow the steps of Jesus.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers should graciously endure sovereignly permitted unjust suffering, knowing that they are commended by God as they follow the steps of Jesus.

PREACHING IDEA

Being a Slave of Christ Means Submitting to Human Masters.

PREACHING POINTERS

Peter directly speaks to those in one of the most difficult situations imaginable: slaves suffering under a cruel master. How does a believer act as a born-again child of God while enduring unjust punishment as a slave? Instead of encouraging the believer to seek asylum or to attain freedom, his advice is to endure the sorrows while doing good. This aligns the believer's life with the unjust punishment Christ suffered, and has a sanctifying effect on the believer.

Most people today cannot directly identify with Peter's context. Though the sex-slave trade is growing in many parts of the world, the vast majority of people do not understand what it means to be held captive and forced to obey the will of another human being. But Peter's words still have relevance to the twenty-first-century Christian. Peter's point has more to do with living amid injustice than living amid slavery, and there is plenty of injustice going around. Believers can be encouraged to follow the footsteps of Jesus and endure suffering for the sake of maintaining a proper Christian testimony.

1 Peter 2:22–25

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Jesus, in his suffering on the cross, displayed a perfect model of innocent suffering as he took the sin of the elect readers, so that they, free from sin, would follow him and live righteously.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Jesus's suffering on the cross has freed believers from sin and gives them opportunity to live for righteousness.

PREACHING IDEA

Jesus's Sinless Death Leads to Life for Sinners.

PREACHING POINTERS

Transitioning from commands given to slaves, Peter provides his first-century audience the perfect example of suffering for righteousness's sake. He gives the ultimate motivation to endure persecution or unjust treatment: Jesus endured the cross, bearing sin on his body in order to provide opportunity to live righteously. No greater example can be found than the example of Jesus and the gospel.

Followers of Christ today must recognize the foundation of the cross and the gospel in order to have proper motivation for obedience. Even most believers attempt to avoid any kind of suffering at any cost. When the opposing team insults us, we repay like with like and insult back. When a coworker threatens us, we look for opportunity to bring them down. But this is not the Jesus way. This passage motivates believers to imitate Jesus, even in how we respond to suffering.

1 Peter 3:1–7

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter instructed wives to submit to their husbands and display an inward beauty that attracts unbelieving husbands, that is honorable in God's sight, and that follows the example of prior godly saints; and Peter instructed husbands to live with their wives knowledgeably, honoring them as coheirs in the gift of life.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Wives must follow the lead of their husbands, focusing on inward beauty, while husbands must live with their wives knowledgeably, honoring them as coheirs in the gift of life.

PREACHING IDEA

There's No Place Like Home . . . When Wives and Husbands Enjoy Their Proper Roles.

PREACHING POINTERS

Households of Peter's day typically upheld clear distinctions between husband and wife, child and parent, slave and free. This is true of both believing and unbelieving households.

Overview of All Preaching Passages

Social norms controlled much of what went on in the home and how husbands and wives interacted with each other. Peter speaks to these distinctions, upholding some of them and subverting others, in order to help the Christian husband and wife live out their God-given roles in the home.

Today's society has broken down many of these cultural distinctions, especially in the Western world. No longer can it be assumed that the husband is the head of the household or that the wife stays home and keeps house while the husband works for a living. Peter's commands speak to moderns just as he did to people in his day. The biblical truths he shares are timeless in their values and transcend culture in a way that help believers in the home, whether they share the bedroom with a Christian spouse or not. The preacher will find in this passage opportunity to speak biblical truth to families of all designs.

1 Peter 3:8–12

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter commanded his readers to cultivate positive social values and pursue righteousness, while rejecting detrimental social responses and turning from evil, so that they would acquire the blessing of loving life and seeing good days.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers may acquire blessing by cultivating righteousness and rejecting unrighteousness.

PREACHING IDEA

God "Likes" True Social Networking.

PREACHING POINTERS

The pressure of persecution forces believers to determine their allegiance. When the heat is turned up, the church could either fracture in discord or unite stronger than ever. Peter's readers were facing the stress of persecution, which potentially could destroy their relationships with each other or cause bitterness and anger at the unbelieving world attacking them. But Peter challenged his readers to humble themselves and unite. He urged them to respond to evil with love, and by doing so to live out the call of the gospel in the midst of the hostile world around them.

Likewise, believers today face trials and temptations from many angles. Internally, many churches are fractured over mundane issues like tertiary doctrine or opinions on how to run a ministry. In our dog-eat-dog world, many believers have taken the worldly approach to trade insult with insult instead of returning love for evil. Those who desire to see good days search for them through self-help books and internet blogs instead of through God's Word.

Peter's words point to a better way of life. Through 1 Peter 3:8–12, preachers can address issues like church unity, responding to a hostile world, and pursuing the right kinds of goals in life. The passage speaks to various relationships, both in and outside the church, and orients the believer to live out the gospel in a Christlike manner.

1 Peter 3:13–17

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter encouraged the readers that if God willed their righteous suffering, they must consider themselves blessed, fear God above all else, and be prepared for evangelistic opportunities.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers who suffer for righteousness must consider themselves blessed, fear God above all else, and be prepared for evangelistic opportunities.

PREACHING IDEA

Turn Periods of Persecution into Opportunities for Evangelism.

PREACHING POINTERS

Peter's readers knew suffering. Nero reigned terror on Christians, feeding them to wild beasts, lighting them on fire, crucifying them. Many of Peter's readers likely knew believers who suffered death—some friends, some family. Suffering for righteousness's sake was a reality for these Christians and in 1 Peter 3:13–17, Peter speaks directly to the persecuted church. How should one facing death on a daily basis love his persecutors? What perspective should such Christians have on their sufferings and trials?

Most believers in the Western world do not know such persecution. Some have had the unpleasant experience of losing a job because of their outspoken faith, or perhaps getting sued because of their business's moral stance. Very few believers face torture and death and only some have experienced suffering truly for doing what is good. But even if modern readers have not experienced persecution to the extent of Peter's original audience, the time is coming (Matt. 24:9; John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12) and this text prepares Christians for such unpleasanties.

Even more than that, it puts suffering and apologetic witnessing in the correct theological perspective. Most people desire immediate escape when undergoing pressure, but Peter's view is that it should not cause us fear, trouble, or even spiritual harm. In fact, with the right perspective, believers can turn times of persecution into opportunities for evangelism.

1 Peter 3:18–22

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter encouraged the suffering readers by pointing to the example of Christ, who suffered for a noble cause and was publicly vindicated.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Suffering believers are to be encouraged by the example of Christ, who suffered for a noble cause and was publicly vindicated.

PREACHING IDEA

Christ's Vindication over Suffering Motivates a Christian's Victory over Sin.

PREACHING POINTERS

What motivates a believer to overcome suffering? Peter's readers must have wrestled with that very question. Why continue in the Christian faith if it only produced increased persecution and torment from maniacal dictators like Nero? When doing the right thing only gets you punished more severely, why do the right thing? Peter challenged his readers to consider Christ's example. Jesus suffered, died, and rose victorious over sin and death. His victory and perseverance through suffering motivates a Christian's victory through similar trials.

This holds true for modern Christians just as much as for those in Peter's day. Though 1 Peter 3:18–22 has more than its fair share of theological conundrums, it offers a clear path to application for believers. The preacher can encourage the church to suffer through the toughest of trials, seeing how Jesus did so first and now reigns victoriously. The passage has a bit of everything: a clear gospel message, challenging theology, and a motivating message.

1 Peter 4:1–6

EXEGETICAL IDEA

Peter commanded the readers to prepare to suffer for righteousness, knowing that such suffering is evidence of their cessation from sin, their obedience to the will of God, and their positive outcome in the future judgment.

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Believers must prepare to suffer for righteousness, knowing that such suffering is evidence of their cessation from sin, their obedience to the will of God, and their positive outcome in the future judgment.

PREACHING IDEA

Believers Must Arm Themselves to Suffer While Abstaining from Sin.

PREACHING POINTERS

Living righteously has consequences, both pleasant and unpleasant. Peter's readers learned quickly that sometimes living out the Christian life drew attention in all the wrong ways. Not only did they suffer persecution from Nero, but abstaining from the social connections of their life before Christ brought fallout as well. Believers found themselves maligned and suffering over their choices to cease from sin.

Christians today feel the same heat of persecution from colleagues and family members who don't understand their new lifestyle. Abstaining from alcohol leads the believer to incur great ridicule from his old drinking buddies. Abstaining from sex before marriage brings plenty of mockery from a woman's sorority sisters. Openly sharing the faith brings outright persecution and even shunning from certain family members. Christians face suffering for living like Jesus. Through the words of 1 Peter 4, preachers can challenge believers to persevere through such difficulties. Pointing the believer to Christ's example encourages the Christian to abstain from sin, even when the consequences continue to pile up in his or her social life.