THE PARADOXICAL MESSAGE OF JOY IN SUFFERING

ACCORDING TO I PETER

By

FILIMAO MANUEL CHAMBO

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SUMMARY

We live in a very complex society. Different cultures, languages, religions, and beliefs paint the picture of Southern Africa. Suffering has become the News headlines. Often we hear about civil wars, poverty, calamities, divorces, abuses. On the other hand the "Aids nightmare has already begun." (Naidoo 1999:1-2)

In the midst of this pain the Christian church does not change her believe that God is a faithful God who never leaves His own. He has plans to prosper His children and not to harm them. But Christians are not exempt from suffering. In fact sometimes they suffer because they are followers of Christ. From time to time there is persecution of the Christian church by non—Christians. In the midst of suffering, Christians should rejoice. Throughout this paper I seek to understand the nature of this joy that goes beyond one's circumstances. This study is base on I Peter. I Peter was written to encourage believers to endure suffering and to find meaning in their suffering. I Peter argues that Christians do not belong to this world they have new home in the Kingdom of God where they will experience everlasting joy. There shall be no more suffering. "Even so, how does this family relate to the governing authorities and social institutions with which they must deal everyday? And how does the church respond to a society that is making life miserable for Christians? (Cradock 1995:15 )

I argue throughout the paper that suffering is not Gods will for human kind. Suffering is caused by evil. Because of sin suffering has entered into the world. Sin subjected all human beings and entire creation to suffering. There is no joy in sin; the results of sin have always been unbearable. The effects of sin are painful. All kinds of suffering (physical, mental, and emotional) were introduced by sin. But Christians are more than conquerors for Christ is Lord. Christians have victory in Jesus Christ. Suffering can not rob that victory. Therefore joy is possible for Christ's presence and comfort is always present in this life—His power sustains us. At the end of times it will be perfected. There is hope for now and for the future.
# Table of Content

Acknowledgment

Summary

Chapter One
**Orientation**
1.1 Understanding the Title 1
1.2 Problem 4
1.3 Purpose 6
1.4 Methodology 7
1.5 Structure of thesis 8

Chapter Two
**I Peter as Writing**
2.1 Authorship 9
2.1.1 Petrine Authorship 10
2.1.2 Silvanus & I Peter 14
2.1.3 Pseudonymous 17
2.2 Recipients 21
2.3 Date and Place of Origin 28
2.4 Purpose 30
2.5 Structures and Integrity 30

Conclusion 35
Chapter Three
Theological and Ethical values

Introduction 36
3. 1 Theology of 1 Peter 37
3. 2 Ethics of 1 Peter 44
Conclusion 48

Chapter Four
Joy and Suffering in General

Introduction 50
4. 1 Joy 52
4. 1. 1 Joy in the Old Testament 53
4. 1. 2 Joy in the New Testament 54
4. 2 Suffering 56
4. 2. 1 Suffering in the Old Testament 60
4. 2. 2 Eve: Sin & Suffering 63
4. 2. 1. 2 Adam: Sin & Suffering 64
4. 2. 1. 3 Israel: Sin & Suffering 65
4. 2. 1. 4 Suffering Righteousness 68
4. 2. 2 Suffering in the New Testament 69
4. 2. 2. 1 The Suffering of Christ 70
4. 2. 2. 2 The Suffering of the Followers Christ 72
4. 3 Pauline Writings on Joy in Suffering 77
4. 3. 1 Paul's Background 78
4. 3. 2 Paul's Paradoxical Message of Joy in Suffering 80
4.4 New Heaven & Earth: No More Suffering! 85
Conclusion 88
Chapter Five

Joy in Suffering In I Peter

5.1 The Eschatological Joy (1:6-9) 90
5.2 Christians In a Evil World: The Effects of their Ethics (2:11-12) 96
5.3 The Blessing of Suffering (3:13-17) 103
5.4 The Suffering of Christ as an Example to the Believers (3:18-4:6) 106
5.5 Joy and Confidence of the Christians in Suffering (4:12-19) 108

Conclusion 109

Chapter Six

Application to the Modern Church of Southern Africa

Introduction 113
6.1 General issues Partnering Southern Africa's History 116
6.2 The Christian Missionaries in Southern Africa 120
6.3 Politics and Christianity in Southern Africa 125
6.4 Traditional Religion/Practice & Christianity 134
6.5 Suffering for the Sake of Christ in Mozambique 139

Conclusion 143

Bibliography 146
Chapter one
Orientation

1.1. Understanding the Title

The Christian message would be meaningless if it did not address all aspects of human life. The Christian message needs to be relevant in all circumstances, good and bad. Christ is only relevant as Lord if He is presented as Lord in all aspects of life—spiritual, social, physical, and mental. This is, the socio-economic, political and religious, aspects are all of God's concern. For Christians, or God's children, there is no spiritual life that is separated from their social, economic and political life. There is no political, social, economic life that is separated from spiritual life. Christ must be relevant all the time in all circumstances.

The apostles and the writers of the New Testament were very much aware of the above-mentioned truth. Therefore their messages and teachings did not end on "repent" and find peace within your heart for Christ is Lord and saviour. Through the help of the spirit of God they addressed issues that were of great concern to the believers. These new "babies in Christ" needed to "crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,
now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:2-3). Peter, the
apostle of Jesus Christ, writes to the believers in dispersion (1:1-2) to
address their situation and give them the spiritual milk needed in their
particular situation.

1 Peter does not tell us that these Christians may have requested his help on
what should be their reaction in the face of suffering or their socio-economic,
political, and religious situation. It is obvious that the readers were faced by
several challenges that were not pleasant. They may have had different
forms of challenges as individuals, but all led to suffering. Some may have
been faced with slave and a master relationship, while others with how a
Christian wife should relate to an unbelieving husband or vice-versa. The
relationship of Christians and the rulers of the nation were also in question.
Some may have faced discrimination and maltreatment just because they
were followers of Jesus Christ.

The issue in question here was “what is proper Christian response to these
challenges?” Or “since we are God’s children why do we have to be faced
with all these challenges?” “In fact, shouldn’t God do something about
these?” “Does he really care?” “Is it worthy to be a follower of Jesus Christ?”
I believe most Christians even today can identify with this questions for they are the result of our human limitation to sometimes fail to see God's hand at work in our lives. According to Lucas (1999:1) "Peter Told us that We Were to Rejoice in the Affliction of Christian Suffering." Lucas goes on to say "Sorting out affliction is the hardest thing for us to discern in our own Christian walk. We always wonder as to why we have been afflicted. We must also understand that the reason affliction comes to us is varied. For example we are told of two different types of affliction in 1 Peter. One affliction comes because of 'doing well' and the other comes because of 'doing sin'. Peter tells us to rejoice because of the first type of affliction and endure the second type of affliction with patience.

Peter gives a light of hope in darkness to those suffering affliction and persecution. Peter's response to the question of what to do in the face of such conditions is based on "hope." There is hope no matter what one is going through. Hope because Christ is alive and He is coming back again. This hope is centred on the victory of Jesus Christ (1:3,13,21; 3:5,15). According to Peter, God has a purpose by allowing those sufferings to happen. God Himself does not inflict suffering but He does allow it to come our way for a purpose (1:7). Because of this hope and knowledge of God's
good purpose in the life of Christians, Peter suggests to his audience that a proper Christian conduct in the face of pleasant and unpleasant situations is to rejoice (1:6).

Peter says have “Joy in suffering.” This is contradictory. He suggests something that is quite inconceivable in human terms, “joy in suffering”. It is indeed paradoxical. It suggests two opposite ideas that make it seem absurd or unlikely although it is true.

1.2. Problem

“Crushed, overwhelmed, devastated, torn—these feelings wash over those who suffer, blinding all vision of hope, threatening to destroy them. Suffering has many forms—physical abuse, debilitating disease, social ostracism, persecution. The pain and anguish tempt one to surrender and give in” (New Life Application Bible—Intro. 1 Peter). These characterise the first century Christians. It is to this group of people that Peter writes and says, in the midst of all these things “rejoice.”

This paradoxical message of “joy in suffering” unavoidably causes questions like, “How can one have joy while in pain?” Is Peter saying Christians should
suffer in order to have joy? Does joy come as a result of endurance in suffering? Why do Christians have to suffer if they are called to a peaceful life? Did God create suffering so that Christians or believers should have joy? How does this message apply to 21st century Christians in Southern Africa? Is the nature of their suffering the same as that of 1 Peter Christians? The truth is that today's Christians also do face suffering of various kinds. Suffering is a reality.

I sought to understand the nature of suffering and the nature of joy here mentioned in order to understand this message. Suffering was never intended to be part of humans. Suffering came as a result of sin. "Obviously economic injustice, political factors, racism, religious hatred and greed are factors in the existence of suffering. But they are not the only ones. They all point to far more insidious source—one which in fact not all far from our human heart." (Michael 1999:1) Suffering is not from God, for God's character is love, peace, and joy. God's will for all men is love, peace and joy.

Since Christians live in a sinful world it becomes quite unavoidable that directly or indirectly they will be faced with all sorts of troubles, trials,
temptations, persecutions and therefore sufferings. But in spite of all these weaknesses, through God’s grace, Christians have joy. It is not joy of this world, but joy that surpasses all circumstances. God Himself is the source of this joy.

1.3. Purpose

While analysing the nature of suffering and joy of the believers of the 1st century, and looking into the same aspects in 21st century Southern Africa, I hope to unveil the message of hope in joy to Christians of Southern Africa.

Southern Africa Christians face several challenges. The socio-economic, political and sometimes religious situation in general may be a cause of suffering or pain for Christians. Some forms of suffering are not necessarily for the sake of Christ but are due to the conditions of the region. Of course, there are some cases of persecution or suffering for the sake of Christ.

It is to this situation that I hope that, through 1 Peter, Southern African Christians will be encouraged to find joy in all circumstances of life. Not joy as understood in human terms (joy that is only possible if something is pleasant or pleasurable), but joy which has its source in God. Joy
understood as God's nature, and character. This is, I will endeavour in a form of comparative study to interpret the message of joy in suffering according to 1 Peter and its application to the Southern African Christian church with special emphasis to Mozambique.

1.4. Methodology

There is a big historical and social gap between the 1st Century audience of 1 Peter and the 21st century audience. These aspects need to be analysed and interpreted where necessary.

To accomplish my goals, I will do a comparative study of 1 Peter, the entire Bible and Southern Africa while applying the historical & socio scientific perspective. Hayes and Hollayday (1987:45) suggest that for a good grasp of the message of the text one needs to analyse the "history in the text" and "history of the text". It is in the "history in the text", that one finds what the text itself narrates or relates about history. This is, "the text becomes a window through which the readers of the word can peer into historical period." The focus on this section will first be on "history of the text." Here is where we search for information about the author of the message, the source of the message, how, why, when, where, and in what circumstances the
message originated, and by whom and for whom it was written.

1.5. Structure of thesis

In the first two chapters, I give the introductory issues pertaining to the thesis and 1 Peter in general. The third chapter is also based on First Peter, addressing the theology and ethics of the epistle. Since the Bible is one single unit, it would be incorrect to study the subject of joy in suffering only in the light of 1 Peter. Chapter four, therefore is an analysis of joy and suffering in general, in the entire Bible. In chapter five, I turn back to 1 Peter and this time doing an in-depth study of the message of this epistle, specifically in the subject of joy in suffering according to 1 Peter. Chapter six is the application of this message to the modern (21st Century) Christian church in Southern Africa, with special emphasis to Mozambique.
Chapter Two

Peter as Writing

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to give introductory issues, which pertain to the letter of 1 Peter. The analysis of the author and his background will take precedence, for this has a major influence on his message. The questions of the original addressees, literary forms, date and place of origin, purpose, and structures, will follow. This is intended to help us see the text in a new light: (the world of the author), the world within the text (narrated world of characters, intentions and events), and the world in front of the text (the world of the reader).

2.1. Authorship

The opening statement of 1 Peter 1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” seems to suggest an easy solution to the question of authorship. It is possible that Petrine authorship was generally acceptable during the early stage of the church. But throughout the years of study of this epistle scholars have found the authorship of First Peter debatable. New theories have been developed to substantiate the debates surrounding this epistle. These
theories are based firstly, on the records of 1 Peter 5:12: "By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly..." This raised questions like, who was Silvanus? What was his contribution to the writing, organising, or even content of the letter? Secondly, could Silvanus or any other person have written the letter and used the name of Peter as the author to honour him for his service for the church of Christ? If so, would it be correct then to consider the letter as pseudonymous? What is the source of information contained in the letter? Who would best be identified with the literal form of this epistle? These are crucial issues to be considered when analysing the authorship of 1 Peter.

I will discuss three prominent theories on 1 Peter's authorship: (1) The Petrine authorship; (2) Silvanus, either in Peter's lifetime under his instruction or after his death to continue the ministry and finally (3) Pseudonymous.

2.1.1. The Petrine authorship

This theory argues that Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ wrote the letter. The argument is based on the opening statement of this epistle which bears witness to Petrine authorship: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:1a). This is a clear claim that Peter, who was an apostle of Jesus Christ,
wrote this letter.

Before one may jump to conclusions reached by other theories it is necessary to consider the background of Peter because this is crucial to the message transmitted by the 1st Epistle of Peter.

Who was Peter? Where did he come from? What compelled him to proclaim the gospel? Peter was Andrew's brother. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist who was to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. (Mat 3:1-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:6-8). When John saw Jesus he declared with a confident and clear voice, "behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29) on another occasion while he was standing with his disciples John said, " behold the Lamb of God!" (v. 36). When Andrew, Peter's brother, heard this he followed Jesus. The word of God tells us that when Andrew found his brother he told him the following words "we have found the Messiah;" and he came with him to Christ (John 1: 38-42a).

The first very important fact that we can draw from these passages is that Peter was a devout Jew. Who had been expecting the coming of the Messiah. He heard how God had worked in the lives of their forefathers and
he knew that God would send them a Saviour who would deliver the chosen nation of God, Israel. The second, but not the least, is the fact that Jesus Christ knew that Peter would be a great in the establishment of the church of Christ in the world. The word of God says, “Now when Jesus looked at him, He said “you are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (John 1: 42). The original name for Peter was Simon. Jesus named him “Cephas”, which is Aramaic. However the Greek language and civilisation had great influence on the Jews during the time of the early Church; the Greek translation of “Cephas” (Kepha) is “Petros” which means rock or stone. The English version Peter comes from the Greek translation “Petros.” Jesus named “Simon, Peter not for who he was but for who he would become through the grace of God. In Matt 16: 18, “Jesus said to Simon Peter, “you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.” (Michael 1988: 4-6)

The words, “an apostle of Jesus Christ” 1 Pet 1:1 emphasises the elements of commission—authority and responsibility to the sender. The word apostle is from the Greek word apostolos, which is derived from apostellein, which means to send. (Harrison 1984: 71). Stibbs and Walls (1983:71) stated that the phrase “apostle of Jesus” could be viewed in two ways (1) the one who is sent by Jesus Christ; or (2) the one who is sent to serve and proclaim Jesus
Christ. "It is this commission which gave Peter authority to write such a letter to Christians." On the other hand, Blum (1981:210-211) states that when Jesus called Peter to be a fisher of men (Mark 1:16-18) the call demanded total commitment. This means total commitment to preach and to nurture God’s children and encourage them to rejoice in the Lord in spite of all that might come on their Christian walk.

The internal evidences declare Peter as the author of the epistle; “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion...” (1:1); “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims...” (2:11); “The elders who are a witness of the sufferings of Christ...” (5:1); “By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly...” (5:12). And the external evidence witnesses that in the earliest times of the letter there was no question about Petrine authorship. The letter was accepted as written by the apostle of Jesus Christ, Peter. Polycarp who died in AD 155 is said to have made quotations from the letter and asserted that Peter had written it. Others also made use of this letter. Eusebius witnesses that Papias, who lived until AD 130 used Petrine material and accepted it as Peter’s work. (Grudem 1996:21-23)
The historical background that is presented here may create the impression that there is no need to consider the other two theories. However there are some facts that should not to be overlooked, if a clear interpretation of the message of 1 Peter is to be conveyed.

2.1.2. Silvanus and 1 Peter

The theory of Silvanus' authorship is based on 1 Peter 5:12 "By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly..." Who was Silvanus? What was his contribution or involvement in the ministry? What is the possibility of his contribution to the first epistle of Peter? According to Shroyer in "The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible," (1962:351-352), Silvanus is also named Silas. Silvanus or Silas was one of the leading men of the church in Jerusalem. He was also called a prophet and an associate to the apostolic mission of the Apostle Paul and Peter. In Jerusalem they used the name Silas while Paul and Peter used Silvanus because it is the Latinized form as it appears in Roman and Hellenistic circles. Silvanus travelled with Paul and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1) and was put in jail with Paul in Philippi (Acts. 16:19). There is a possibility that Silvanus may have been in "the area of Pontus and Cappadocia, the northern country with which First Peter is associated." (1962:352).
His contact with these areas (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia) may have given him the burden to take the gospel there. His association with Peter as apostle and prophet in the Jerusalem church may have contributed to the idea that he might have been involved in the writing of the epistle. As a Roman citizen he had a Hellenistic character which could have had an impact in the writing of 1 Peter. (Lyons 1986:276; Shroyers 1962:351).

The statement "By Silvanus...I have written you briefly..." (1 Pet 5:12) suggests an answer to the question of style and vocabulary of 1 Peter. Some scholars argue that the style and vocabulary of 1 Peter can not have been of Peter since he was considered an unschooled person (Acts 4: 13). The word used here to characterise Peter and John as unschooled or unlearned (agramatos) can mean 'illiterate, unable to read or write.' Grudem states that 'uneducated common men' focused on their ability in argument with scholarly experts of the nation because they were without formal rabbinical training. (1996:21-33). I do not seek to establish whether or not Peter had written this good Greek or whether someone else helped him to do so, rather I would like to concentrate on the meaning of "By Silvanus...I have written..." (5:12).
The epistle was written during the period of Greek influence. In 332 BC Alexander the Great conquered Palestine. Then the process of 'Hellenazation' began. This meant imposition of Greek language and culture on all the people. This process was carried on for the next four centuries. The Greek language was vital for communication then. Archaeological findings give evidence of some Greek writings, which can be dated from the first century or earlier. Therefore, it is possible that the Jewish people used mainly Greek to communicate with Gentiles. Greek language also became vital to the writing of the New Testament. "This indicates that it would not have been unusual for Peter to have used Greek regularly for over thirty years in the Jerusalem church and to have been very familiar with the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint." (Grudem 1996:29). Can we then say that these arguments dispense with the possible influence of Silvanus? Not at all, Silvanus could have been the scribe or the secretary for the epistle. Some scholars would insist that Peter dictated and sent the letter to and by Silvanus. (Wuest 1973: 132).

I would rather argue that Silvanus could have received the message from Peter and rearranged the structure of the epistle. The fact that Peter may
have been able to speak Greek is not proof that his Greek was up to the standard of that in the first epistle of Peter. The Greek in the second epistle of Peter, which also claims Petrine authorship, is not up to the standard of that in 1 Peter. Therefore "By Silvanus..." (5:12) "may mean that Silvanus was the secretary who polished up the language (this seems better than viewing him as the bearer of the letter)." (Carson, Moo, & Morris 1992:422).

The arguments on Silvanus' authorship are not the only challenge for Petrine authorship. There are many of scholars who assert that the letter was probably written after the death of Peter. They argue that even if it was written during his life time, someone else could have used his name, as was the custom of the day, in order for the letter to be more acceptable—Pseudonymous letter.

2.1.3. Pseudonymous

This theory suggests that Peter did not write 1 Peter. The name of Peter was used so that the letter would be more acceptable since Peter was an apostle. Some scholars have found valuable reason for this argument.

Best (1982:49-54) has organised systematically the arguments presented by
himself and other scholars to support pseudonymous authorship. (1) The vocabulary and style is too good for Peter. (2) Peter as a Galilean Jew would not have been accustomed to the version of Septuagint, and this is the version quoted in first Peter. (3) The areas of the recipients were not of Peter's ministry but of Paul's. But the relationship of Peter and Paul is questionable since according to Gal. 2:11-14, Paul rebuked Peter for doing what was wrong rather than what he knew was right. (4) First Peter is too Pauline. (5) There are suggestions that the persecution of first Peter could have been after the death of Peter. (6) Why would a letter from a great person such as Peter be accepted so slowly in the early church? What details does history offer to support Peter's ministry in Asia Minor? If the letter was written in Rome (Babylon) why is it that some of the Asian Christians did not send greetings home? (7) The teachings of Jesus are not evident. This suggests that the author lacked familiarity with the teachings of Jesus. Therefore the author could not be Peter, the apostle of Jesus, for he would have given special emphasis to the teachings of Jesus. After all these arguments one has to pose a question, "Is the apostle Peter its real author or do not its literary style, its destination, its content and time of composition suggest pseudonymous authorship, perhaps by a Paulinist long after the death of the apostle?" (Elliott 1990:22)
The above reasons and possibly others became a challenge to the traditional view that Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ, was the author of the letter. Therefore it is important to analyse them while at the same time make an assessment of the evidence to reach a conclusion.

The issue of "the Greek is too good" has been discussed briefly above. However other arguments remain. The ideology that the letter reflects kinds of persecution that happened after the death of the apostle Peter is downed by the fact that the statements of all trials, sufferings, and persecution mentioned in the letter can be viewed as general statements of what was likely to happen to Christians during the first century. Often the preaching of God's word was challenged by opposition groups which resulted in localised persecutions 'various trials' (1:6). This could very well be true during Peter's life period. "Traditionally most students have found these references compatible with the Neronic persecution which Peter experienced." (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:423).

Is Peter too Pauline? Why? Tradition by Eusebius and Tertullian states that Peter near the end of his time was teaching with Paul in Rome. Secondly,
Silvanus was Paul's companion in the ministry so his association with Peter may well be said to be "sufficient to note ... that affinities to Paul's writing weigh more heavily in favour of authorship by Peter the apostle than against it." (Grudem1996: 32). Finally, it is important to note that the similarities in the message of both apostles are vital since they all ministered during the first century. It is possible that they may have shared their letters that were sent out to the churches. Both apostles put emphasis on the Lord Jesus Christ and the benefits of his death and resurrection for his church. Peter does not recall or list details about the life of Jesus Christ on earth for this is not vital for the purpose of the letter. Peter was writing to give instructions to the readers concerning their circumstances (5:12). Thus, his message about Jesus is based on the example He gave as a suffering servant (2:21-23; 3:18; 4:1-2, 13; 5:1). The readers and the author could identify with Jesus suffering.

The message of the suffering servant was not new but an old promise of God through the prophets in the Old Testament (Isaiah 53). This message was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Peter mentions the sufferings of Jesus as an example to those who follow him. He also points to the fact that just as Jesus was victorious, so all his followers will be victorious. Christlikeness
means sharing in his sufferings and his attitude towards sufferings (Mat. 5:11-12). Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ the victory has been inaugurated but it will be perfected on the day of final salvation—the day of complete deliverance from the world of sin and reception of the precious inheritance kept in heaven for those who were true followers of Christ.

It is vital for this script to have a good grasp of the issues surrounding the authorship of First Peter. I endorse Petrine authorship. The letter itself states it (1:1). The external evidences (tradition) support Petrine authorship and finally the message of the letter can well be said to be from a disciple of Jesus Christ who had seen all that the Lord experienced but because of his love he gave his life with joy to save the world. Because of the love of the Father and his gift of life through Jesus Christ, the addressees can rejoice in spite of their circumstances, which will be discussed on the next section. However it is evident that Peter wrote with the help of Silvanus (5:12). Silvanus may have been responsible for organising the letter and writing it in better Greek.

2.2. Recipients

The letter was addressed to "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered
through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.” (1:1). The author described his addressees as a “holy priesthood” (2:5); “chosen people of God... Once you were not a people, but now you are people of God; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.” (2:9-10). It is surprising that the people of God were suffering. Were they the only people who were suffering? How could the chosen people of God suffer? Isn’t suffering for the sinners (punishment for disobedience)? What were the causes of their suffering? What were their social, political, and economical situations? These questions if answered will serve as the aircraft through which we can fly into the world of the original addressees of the letter.

The addressees were people of God, but they were human beings like all the others. They lived in a certain country, with historical, social, political, and economical values and challenges. These values and challenges form the core of the problem of suffering. Therefore I will endeavour to unveil the message of joy in suffering according to 1 Peter while giving special attention to these values and challenges of the day.

Writing or sending a letter to someone may have different meanings and objectives. But always a letter is intended to address people within their
situation (love, sorrow, job, education, etc.). A letter is mainly written if there is some kind of interest (responding on a certain issue or making a request, complimenting, greeting, congratulating, advising, etc.). There must be something that binds the addressee and the author. For a third part to understand the letter there is a need to mirror into the social, political, economical, and religious life of both, the author and the addressee.

We are now moving into the twenty-first centuries while the letter was addressed to the people who lived in the first century. We live in a completely different world today. The social, economical, political, and religious situation is far different from theirs.

The letter was addressed to children of God, those who accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. These Christians were from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. However it seems acceptable to mention that the bigger group was of Gentile background; “Once you were not a people, but now you are people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you received mercy.” (2:9-10); “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of
Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1:18-19). “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.” (4:3-4). “Such descriptions and emphasis of what they have become rather than what they were originally are more conceivable to the Gentiles. (Carson, Moo, & Morris 1992:425).

At the opening of the letter the author uses language that was common to Israel (elect, strangers of Diaspora etc.), “simply applying to the church in the New Covenant age the language which previously had been appropriate for the God’s covenant people, the Jews.” (Grudem 1996: 38). This was a new covenant which was for both Jews and Gentiles who believed in Christ; for God has given His Son so that whoever believes in Him shall have life (John 3:16). This was a mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles.

The addressees were living in four provinces of Asia Minor north. These countries were under the Roman Empire’s control. These areas were hellenised. There were great extremes of riches and poverty. There were cities and rural areas. In the rural areas the feudal conditions prevailed and
slaves worked vast estates. In the cities there was a measure of individual industrialisation with individual small businesses. There was an official demand of all residents of Asia Minor to participate in the cult of the Roman Emperor (a cult that originated there), with the exception of Jews. There were other religious practices focused on gods and goddesses of mythology in the official life in cities and states. Stoicism and Epicureanism were among those practices. (Best 1982: 16-17).

According to John H. Elliott (1990:59-68), since the addressees were of diverse cultures, and religious background, a "dispersion of strangers," this would practically present a problem of social co—ordination and unification. The mixture of nationalities and cultures, religious and social classes would obviously lead to conflicting interests of the many different and often competing groups within the general population. "Only the citizens enjoyed full civic rights while the (alien) residents (known as metoikoi, paroikoi, katoikoi, synoikoi) were regarded as foreign—born natives, although they might have been born in the city and have grown up there." (1990:68).

The social status determined the economical status. The owning of land was limited to full citizens. Being Christian also meant that they were people to be
persecuted. "On basis of what is said in 1 Peter regarding the reproach that the name Christian had earned the believers, it has been argued that simply bearing the name "Christian" had already been declared crime by official Roman policy (4:14-16)" (1990:73). Public hostility and resentment were directed to the conversiment sect of Christianity rather than the mystery cult. This was because "Ignorance (2:15), curiosity (3:15), suspicion of wrongdoing (2:12; 4:14-16) and aggressive hostility (3:13-14, 16; 4:4) were public reactions which the Christians had encountered and under which they suffered" (1990:79). All ignorance bred suspicion, so suspicion engendered slander and reproach. All the pertinent terms refer to verbal rather than physical abuse or legal action: such ignorance, suspicion, slander and reproach had engendered sorrow (1:6; 2:19) fear (3:14) and suffering (2:19, 20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 15, 19; 5:10) on the part of the Christians. This is why Peter writes to encourage them and help them through his exhortation to realise that they belong to God and he is with them all the time; he will bring deliverance. Therefore they should rejoice even though they go through a tough time.

The work of John H. Elliott (1990:21-58) is comprehensive as far as the social situation of the audience is concerned. He finds two key words that
best describe the audience of First Peter, "aliens" and "strangers." From the original meaning of the words (Greek) "Elliott argues, the audience of Peter was a group of socially marginalised people who were 'residents aliens' and 'temporary residents' prior to, and independent of, their conversion to Christianity... They were disenfranchised workers labouring in the cracks of a network that largely excluded them, but they had found meaning to their existence in the Christian family." (McKnight 1996: 24-25).

The Greek word used "paroikoi" generally means strangers, foreigners, aliens, people who are not at home, or who lack native roots, in language, customs, culture, or political, social and religious allegiances of the people among whom they dwell. The word could also be used to refer to resident aliens "dwelling abroad" without civil or native rights. (1990:24-25). The audience of First Peter was vulnerable to the conditions of "paroikoi." "Legally their status within the empire, according to both local and Roman law, involved restrictions concerning intermarriage and commerce, succession of property and land tenure, participation in public assembly and voting, taxes and tribute, the founding of associations (koina collegia), and susceptibility to severer forms of civil and criminal punishment." (1990:37). It is clear that the position of the addressees as aliens determined their social
standard, which was not plausible. However there is another interpretation of the term, "aliens" or "visiting strangers." This is a metaphorical interpretation, which inserts that the Christians are aliens in this world, and they are visiting strangers, their home is where God the father is. McKnight agrees with Elliott that the interpretations and discussions surrounding the terms aliens and strangers in the world, (2:11-12) "may be both social (disenfranchised people) and metaphorical (earthly life while waiting for a heavenly home);" However, "the metaphorical description of God's people derives from their social boundaries that society constructs." (McKnight 1996: 26). This leads to a question of the date of those social boundaries and the purpose of the letter.

2.3. Date and Place of Origin

Working from the point of view that Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ is the author of the letter. The audience was a group of people who were socially marginalised (disenfranchised people) and visiting strangers in this world while waiting for their heavenly home. A group of people, seen as the minority, who opposed the traditional, cultural, political, religious and social set up (of the world) (4:4). This resulted in sporadic persecution at the hands of those who felt their position or privileges threatened.
Persecution or suffering was very much part of the history of the early church. Persecution because they were followers of Christ and his teachings. It is then practical to state that the letter was written before the death of Peter, which was under Nero's persecution in A.D. 64. Nero was disliked by the aristocracy as well as by Christians who came to believe that he was responsible for all the imperial legislation against them. He persecuted at Rome. Tradition asserts that Peter and Paul died under his persecution in Rome. (Best 1982:36-45; Grudem 1996:35-37). Therefore the letter was probably written from Rome shortly before Nero's great persecution, between A.D. 62-64.

The epistle records that the letter was written in Babylon (5:13); however, Babylon was likely to be a code word for Rome as the great city that rules over the kings of the earth. Harrison argues that this reference of Babylon could not be of the place in Mesopotamia since this particular place was deserted during the time of the writing of the letter. "Babylon is being used in a mystical sense, somewhat as in the book of Revelation, to indicate that complex of arrangement idolatry complex with the power of empire, which has become known for its persecution of the saints of God, as in its initial phase

2.4. Purpose

1 Peter was written to strengthen and encourage Christians of Asia Minor (his audience) to find the meaning of their suffering in Jesus Christ. The readers are to grow in their trust in God and their obedience to Him in every aspect of life. They are to live a holy life, a life that honours, exults and glorifies God because they belong to him (1:3 - 2:12). Holiness living is to be visible in their relationship with the rulers, masters, wives and husbands, and with everyone—even in the midst of suffering (2:4 - 4:19). The Elders are exhorted to be good shepherds of God’s flock by caring for and serving them according to God’s guidance (5:1-11). These aspects are given more attention in the section on structure and integrity of the letter.

2.5. Structure & Integrity

Scholars have given different structures to the epistle of 1 Peter depending on the purpose of their commentaries, books, and articles. However, for the purpose of this script, the most acceptable structure is that of Michael, which I will adopt. Michael suggests three themes: (1) The identity of God’s people (1:3 - 2:10): “chosen” people of God, Holy “priesthood,” saved and reborn in
to a living hope. They are exhorted to live holy lives. The general aspect is about salvation: conversion, faith and hope. Having identified them as people of God, he outlines the responsibilities of people of God. (2) Responsibility of people of God (2:11—4:11): their responsibility in a hostile world. They are urged to respect everyone, love their enemies and do good to everyone. In general they are to strive to live in peace with everyone and under whatever circumstances of life. Finally, (3) The responsibility of a church and its elders (4:12 - 5:11). (1988:xxxiv - xxxvii).

Outline

Introduction: Greetings (1:1-2)

I. The Identity of the People of God (1:3—2:10)

1. Great Salvation (1:3-12)
2. A New Way of Life (1:13-25)
3. A Chosen Priesthood (2:1-10)

II. The Responsibility of the People of God (2:11—4:11)

1. The Mission of God's People in the World (2:11—12)
2. Respect: The key to Living in the World (2:13—3:12)
3. The Promise of Vindication (3:13—4:6)

III. The Responsibility of the Church and Its Elders (4:12-5:11)

1. The Fiery Trial (4:12 - 19)
2. The Responsibility of a Church under Judgement (5:1 - 11)

Conclusion: Final Greetings and Benediction (5:12-14)

The outline or the structure of 1 Peter leads to the question of the integrity of the epistle. First, the record about the persecution or suffering seem to be in two aspects: (1) 1:3-4:11 describes a hypothetical kind of suffering and ends with a doxology (4:11b). (2) Suffering or persecution is either in progress or just about to break out and is presented as a reality rather than possibility (4:12 - 5:11). How can the two parts of the book be reconciled if they are to be viewed as a unity? Furthermore, what about the epistolary ending (5:12-14), was it part of the first part or was it added after the completion of the second part of the book? Was 1 Peter in its entirety an actual letter? Some scholars like Windisch and Beare view the second part to be epistolary (4:12-5:11) including the greetings at the beginning and at the end. They view the first section as rhetorical and an impressive homily style. This section (1:3-
4:11) is seen as a baptismal homily or a baptismal liturgy. These arguments are downed by the question of the relevance of baptismal liturgy to a presumably distant congregation that probably knew nothing about the original setting.

Basic integrity of 1 Peter as a real epistle is based on the fact that: (1) there is no manuscript evidence for any break at 4:11 or any other point in 1 Peter. (2) The awareness of a “fiery trial” is evident not only in 4:12 but also in 1:6-7 as well. (3) The use of the common expression “Dear friends...I appeal to you” is evident in both 1:3-4:11 and 4:12-5:11. It is also common in Pauline letters and other New Testament books. This was a terminology which is characteristic of early Christian epistles in general. (4) Also characteristic of New Testament letter writers (especially Paul) is the incorporation of both catechetical and liturgical material into epistles. According to Michael, after all the above arguments, it is also important to analyse the importance of 4:7-11 to the letter as a whole. This passage addresses the “end of the time” (4:7b) and “consequently that Christians make concerted effort to minister and show love and hospitality to each other in their respective congregations”. This is the core of the message of 4:12-5:11, although the emphasis now is on the elders in the congregations. Peter may have
assumed that there were elders of the congregations in the provinces he was addressing, just like he was an elder (5:1). "If there is a distinction between the two sections, it has to do with congregational structure, not with the degree of persecution or of the expectation of the end." (Michael 1988: xxxvii-xl).

The letter of 1 Peter is one single unity with the same message of finding the meaning of suffering in Jesus Christ. Suffering and persecution in normal conditions are unwanted consequences in life. There are many kinds of sufferings and persecutions (lighter and heavy) but what is striking here is the fact that Peter tells his audience along with the suffering and persecution to rejoice for Christ the son of God is Lord and will bring salvation. Above this paradoxical truth of *joy in suffering*, Peter urges his addressees to maintain good conduct. The message of Peter is characterised by theology and ethics of the early Christian church. The message of salvation is purification through the blood of Jesus Christ who died and rose from the death so that all those who belong to him may have victory over sin. The next chapter addressees the theological and ethical truths drawn from the epistle.
Conclusion

Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1) and his associate, Silvanus (who may have polished the language and structure of the letter) (5:12) wrote 1 Peter. The letter was addressed to Peter’s fellow Christians who were ‘resident aliens’ and ‘temporary residents’ (1:1, 2:11) in the Diaspora, Asia Minor. These Christians faced or at least would face suffering of various types of hostility, conflict and trials of faith (1:6; 2:12, 19-20; 3:14-16; 4:1, 4,12,16,19; 5:9). Peter wrote to encourage them to continue to trust God and let Him flow through them to the society even in the midst of suffering. "...the chief emphasis of the letter is on our Christian hope, a glorious and certain hope which enables us to endure suffering with patience and even joy. Like our Master before us, we must suffer before entering glory" (Stott 1994:129).
Chapter Three

Theology and Ethics of 1 Peter

Introduction:

The theological and ethical background of 1 Peter is pivotal. The letter has themes that were part of the vital teachings of the early Christian church recorded in the New Testament and other writings of the first century. It also contains the Hebrew teachings that can be drawn from the Old Testament. 1 Peter was not written as a theology or ethics textbook or script. But the teachings of Christians and Hebrews address theological and ethical values that are unavoidable in the proclamation of the good news. Peter applies the truths that were common to the early church to emphasis his message of joy in suffering which is found in Jesus alone. In other words the apostles or the writes and teachers of the word of God, of the early church contextualised the message of God's great love to be relevant to each situation, setting, or circumstance faced.

The early church found answers for their problems, concerns, burdens, trials, etc., in God's word. This can be seen in the messages of the apostles in the book of Acts and especially in the writings of Paul, the apostle. The issue of
suffering, persecution, and trials, addressed here were not new at all. The
Bible as a whole addresses these problems and gives theological values and
acceptable reactions towards them. Peter conveys several theological values
and acceptable responses to be expected from God's children when faced
with suffering. This chapter will briefly examine those aspects.

3.1. Theology of 1 Peter

Theology is a study about God and His intervention into the history of His
creation. "God is 'the living God' (1:23) whose will is done (2:15, 3:17), who
foreknows who are his (1:21); he is holy (1:15), the judge of all (4:5) and the
faithful Creator (4:19). He is 'the God of all grace' (5:10); Christians have
new birth and living hope because of God's great mercy (1:3). The church is
related to God in several ways: it is 'the people of God' (2:10); 'the family of
God' (4:17), 'God's flock' (5:2), and its members are 'servants of God' (2:16),
etc." (Carson, Moo, & Morris 1992:428).

Ladd (1993) deals with the topic in depth. He proposes that a much more
profound understanding of the theology of 1 Peter is noteworthy (1993:641-
648). 1 Peter presents a tension between the present and the future—
Temporal dualism (1): The messianic age has been inaugurated with the
fulfilment of messianic prophecies. The Messianic predictions of Isaiah 40-60 became reality. Here for the most part the time in view is future to Isaiah's day, as the prophet projects himself ahead and see Judah's punishment as already having taken place. He gives comfort to the people that there will be deliverance from the punishment. He urges Judah to find comfort in the fact that eventually the Messiah Himself will come and bring deliverance from the cause of this punishment, the sinfulness of the people.

Christ's suffering and his death inaugurated the "end of the time." (1:20). The prophecies of the Old Testament emphasised deliverance from suffering which would be revealed in the future through the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). The children of Israel believed that the Messiah would deliver the people of God from all kinds of suffering. Although the future invaded the present, this will be fulfilled in the Second Coming of Christ. Christ will reign forever and sin and its consequences will have no room in the new earth and heavens.

(2) Because of the resurrection of Christ, those who believe have victory over sin and suffering. "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). Christ reigns and he will reign "until he has put all enemies under his feet" (1
Cor. 15:25). The power of Christ's resurrection brings the believers into newness of life, through the proclamation of the good news (1:23). Because of the resurrection of Christ the believers have "a living hope" (1:3). This living hope is based on the fact that the believer's inheritance is different from that of this world. Their inheritance is kept in heaven to be revealed at the end of times (1:5). This inheritance does not spoil or fade but it is eternal. Those who believe and continue to trust in God in spite of earthly circumstances will have total or perfect victory at the end of the times. In the Kingdom of God there is no sin, and consequently no suffering. This should be a reason for Christians to endure suffering because it is only for a little while.

(3) The eschatological aspect of 1 Peter. The sufferings will pass away but the inheritance kept in heaven is eternal. Christ has already defeated the devil and his demonic power and on the day of His Second Coming, he will deliver all the believers completely from the sinful world. (5:1). Christians will always suffer while they live in an evil world.

(4) The evil world is different from the heavens. The evil world is filled with sinful people (4:3). Christians live in this sinful world as aliens for their
eternal home is heaven, and they are the holy nation of God. Their lives are not like those of the people of the world for they live a holy life. John said (1 John 2; 15-17) “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings—of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

(5) God is sovereign and transcendent. The believers were “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.” (1:2). All three persons of the Trinity are involved in the redemption of the elect. Since God is Sovereign He is in charge of everything. He is a redemptive God who is involved in their daily lives. He is there when they go through suffering or persecutions. Peter emphasises God’s divine providence in human suffering.

(6) Human suffering is not pleasant at all, but Christians are to endure all kinds of suffering or trials (1:6), false accusations of wrongdoing (1:12; 4:12)
and suffering because of the name of Christ or Christian (4:16). This experience is part of the believers' lives in the sinful world. Peter said it "is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong" (3:17). God will bring judgement to the wicked but the sufferings of the righteous will prove their faith to be genuine (1:6-7). Furthermore suffering brings testimony of the genuineness of faith in God to the evil society (4:1-4). The body of the believers becomes the witness of the power of the resurrection of Christ in the life of man. In view of all this, Peter exhorts the believers to "humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God...cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares for you" (5:4-7). “Thus Peter desires his readers to face the evils that are befalling them not with stoic pessimism or mere passive fatalism, but with an affirmation that they have a positive role in God's will for the Christian life." (1993:645).

(7) Peter also discusses Christology. Christ is declared as the Lord of all, those who believe in him (1:3, 13; 3:15). He is the Lord of all who brings victory through his death and victorious resurrection. Christians have victory because they are related to Christ.

(8) Atonement: because of Christ's atoning death, Christians are God's
people, a holy nation of God, and a holy priesthood (1:2, 19; 2:24; 3:18). Christians are the true church of God.

(9) The Church is the true Israel. In the Old Testament we learn that God called the nation of Israel through Abraham to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12). The Old Israel disobeyed God. As a result they stumbled (2:8). The church of Christ has taken Israel's place (2:9-10). They are the true temples of God (2:5). The church is to bear the testimony of Christ to the sinful world.

The next aspect of the theology of 1 Peter requires special attention, which is not so important for the purpose of this script. Therefore, I will rather make few comments and recommendations for those who would seek a comprehensive article on the subject.

(10) The Descent into Hades (3:18-20). Peter declares that Jesus ministered to the spirits. Why would he minister to the spirits? Is there such a thing as salvation after death? What kind of spirits was he ministering to? These are some of the questions that have been addressed by scholars in search of a more acceptable interpretation of this passage. I would rather not
go in-depth into the arguments on the interpretation of this passage for it is not the purpose of this script. However, since the theological significance of this passage is vital for the purpose of the letter I, will mention only the most acceptable interpretation. This interpretation holds that, in his preincarnate state, Christ preached through Noah to the wicked generation of that time. Christ was preaching redemption through the ark of Noah and the spirits of those who did not repent from their sins are in hell. Peter wrote “to encourage the believers to bear witness boldly in the midst of hostile unbelievers just as Noah did; to assure them that though they are few, God will surely save them; finally, to remind them of the certainty of final judgement and Christ’s ultimate triumph over all the forces of evil which oppose them.” (Grudem 1996:239).

[For a more comprehensive study of this section I recommend Grudem’s Commentary of 1 Peter (1996:155-162; 203-239)].

(11) The Christian Life. This step leads to the ethical issues of 1 Peter. Peter constantly calls the believers to realise that to be a child of God means to live a holy life (1:13-16). Even in the midst of suffering the believers are called to be Christlike (2:15, 20; 3:16,17). “The Christian life is to express itself in true love toward fellow Christians (1:22) and in tenderness and

3.2. Ethics of 1 Peter

The question of Ethics calls for a comprehensive study of the scriptures. The question of the relevance of the Word of God in Southern Africa is becoming unavoidable. The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa recently published a review article of the book written by Richard Hays “The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics.” (Burridge 1998:71-73) The article outlines four—fold method of bridging the gap between the New Testament and its use today in any particular ethical problem. “(1) Descriptive: a full exegesis of the New Testament about ethical question we are exploring to explicate them without any premature harmonisation. (2) Synthetic: a comprehensive ‘bringing together’ across the whole canon (not selective) which to grapple with the tensions between different texts. (3) Hermeneutic: where the gap is crossed, to bring what we have discovered from the first two stages across to our world today. This will require looking carefully at the different types of texts, with their different modes of appeal, and additionally how they are used with other authorities such as tradition, reason and experience. (4) Pragmatic: applying all this to the specific ethical issue.” I have attempted to apply the four—fold method in
1 Peter. However there is a lot that one will find not discussed in depth here due to the nature and purpose of this dissertation. But I would recommend Hays method for whoever wants to endeavour to do a comprehensive study of ethical issues that may arise from 1 Peter, comparing to today’s situation (ethical issues) in Southern Africa.

The epistle of 1 Peter is filled with a system of moral principles that are to govern or influence the believers’ behaviour. The audience of 1 Peter was a group of Christians who were aliens and strangers in the Asia Minor north. Their Socio-religious position determined their relationships with the natives of Asia Minor and the people of other religions. They were vulnerable to all sorts of trials because of their faith. So, while Peter writes to encourage them to enter into their sufferings with a purpose, it is evident that he asks them to be Christ-like in all their relationships. Christ is the light and he is to shine through them in the homes, state, and workplaces.

Peter charged his audience to follow the Christian ethics; “a systematic explanation of the moral examples and teaching of Jesus applied to the total life of the individual in society, and actualised by the power of the Spirit.” (Carter 1983:956-957). The audience of Peter would not make it on their own
they needed the enabling of the power of God through Jesus Christ. Only with their eyes fixed on Jesus would they be able to go through sufferings with joy, and not retaliation.

The audience of 1 Peter was the children of God. Their sins have been forgiven; they no longer do what they used to do. They are a new creation of God (1 Cor. 5:17). They have been sanctified or set apart from the world to God's service. The goal of the sanctification of the believers is genuine love for the brethren; they should love one another constantly from their hearts (1:22), avoid all malice, guile, dissimulation, envy and slander (2:1) (Schanackerburg 1965:367). The fact that they are God's children (aliens or visiting strangers) compels them to refrain from all kinds of sins or carnal desires. God is holy (1:15), his children are called to holy living. God's children must not indulge themselves in fleshly lust (2:11). They are to be sober (1:13; 4:7; 5:3) and watchful for the snares of the devil (5:8). Holy living is to be reflected even in the marriage situation, and in the master and slave relationship (2:13 - 3:7).

The teachings found in 1 Peter were part of the Christian church in the first century. This is also evident in other writings of New Testament; Christians
were urged not to conform to the standards of the world. However 1 Peter intensifies this view by the thought of the various sufferings to which the Christians were exposed. Schnackenburg (1965:365-371) stated that it seemed like the first audience of 1 Peter had to endure suspicion, slander, and petty persecution (2:12; 3:13, 16). This was the result of their choice to separate themselves from sinful practises (4:4).

Believers are called to view suffering as a step to strengthen them to withstand all kinds of evil. Peter had no intention of condoning persecution or suffering, neither maltreatment between slaves and masters or husbands and wives; but to point out that “the imitation of Christ intensifies inner power of self-control which even pagan stoic ethics know should be valued, though, of course, on different grounds” (1965:370). The one who humbles himself or herself according to the Bible is able to claim proper respect. “Once again, this ethical attitude is buttressed by the religious idea that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (5:5; cf. Prov. 3:34). In the last resort, the fear of God (1:17; 2:17) is the foundation of respect for all kinds of authority” (1965:371)
Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the reason for hope and joy for the believers. The soteriological and christological aspects discussed by Peter are intended to strengthen the believers. The questions: How should Christians behave in an evil society? What is the Christian attitude to undeserved suffering? How can Christians cope with alienation from society around them? Are answered by the practical example of Jesus Christ and the reason for his coming and suffering. The eschatological hope plays a major role in the life of the believers for they know that their suffering for the sake of Christ is worthwhile. "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus suffered to atone the life of the lost (1:18; 2:24; 3:18; Isaiah 53). The suffering of Christ brings glory (1:21). The audience of Peter was a group of Christians. As Christians they were urged to have a living hope in Jesus because as they share in Christ's suffering (4:13) they shall also share his glory (5:1). These truths were to be reflected by holy living, this is holiness in everyday life. (Stott 1994:134-138).

Although the focus is in First Peter it is very important to understand this subject from the view of the Bible as a whole as well as other religions
teachings. Is suffering and joy understood the same way as Peter understood them by all religions groups? What is the overall teaching of the Bible around this subject? Does suffering have same theological and ethical values as described in Peter's first epistle? This is a subject of study in the chapter that follows. The issue of suffering has always been an issue in the Bible. The historical accounts of the interpretation of suffering of God's children and pagans flow from Genesis through Revelation. Although the interpretation of situations may differ I have come to realise that all the writes agree that suffering has entered the world because of sin. "The world is fallen from its original perfection; it's a world full of alienation and conflict, a place that has exchanged the blessing of God for its own will and agenda. The price we pay is broken relationships, war, strife, illness and death." (Retief 1999:22). Our greatest enemy is evil. This will be evident in the next chapter 'Joy and Suffering' that suffering entered the world because of sin—evil.
Chapter Four

Joy and Suffering in General

Introduction:

What a paradoxical message, "Joy in Suffering!" In human terms, it is not normal to rejoice when one suffers. The South African Student's Dictionary (1996:522) defines joy as "a feeling of happiness". Furthermore it states that something that is joy gives happiness and pleasure. The Readers Digest Great Encyclopaedia defines joy as "a vivid emotion of pleasure, gladness; thing that causes delight." On the other hand, suffering is defined as the fact or condition of feeling or enduring pain (not pleasure), sorrow (not happiness) or some other extremely unpleasant (no pleasure) physical or mental sensation.

It is incredible that one could be expected to rejoice while in pain. In fact, psychologically, when one is suffering, one is normally distressed. But Peter calls his audience to rejoice in the midst of suffering. Why would he do that? What did he mean by joy in suffering? What kind of joy was he talking about? What kind of people experience this joy? Was he referring to the sufferings in the real sense of the word or did he use it to mean something
pleasant? In fact where did suffering come from and what were the interpretations of suffering from its primitive time? These and many other questions will be the core of this chapter.

Peter calls his audience to have joy in their sufferings. Their joy was to be based on their faith on the salvation to be revealed on the day of the Lord. They were to enter into suffering with a new perspective, because their God is Lord of all he is even in control of their sufferings. Therefore, it is better to suffer according to God's will and not because of doing wrong.

The first chapter has laid a good foundation for the understanding of the message of Joy in Suffering in the epistle of Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ. This is not the only step; there is another step that is also of great value.

The Bible is the one book of God's Word. The writers and the years of writing may differ as they do, but the message of God's love and His will to save His people from their sins never changes. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the concepts 'joy' and 'suffering' first in the light of the entire Bible.
The Second step would be to integrate them in the light of the Bible and historical accounts, and finally in the context of the first epistle of Peter. It is evident that Peter addressing a particular group of people in Asia Minor is not contradictory to the traditional message of the body of Christ of his day. Therefore I will consider the subject first in the light of the Old Testament teachings and prophecies, secondly in the light of the New Testament message as a whole, thirdly in the light of traditional teachings, and finally, in the light of the first epistle of Peter’s message. The understanding of the truths of above issues will be based on theological and biblical interpretations.

4.1. Joy

The biblical and theological interpretation of the word “joy” in the Bible is divided into three categories. These interpretations are based on the Greek translation since even the Old Testament was at some stage put in Greek language (LXX). The three basic meanings were (1) chairo, which denoted physical comfort and well being as the basis of joy; (2) suphraino, which indicated the subjective feeling of joy; (3) aggalliomai, the outward demonstration of joy and pride and the exultation experienced in public worship (Beyreuther and Frinkenrath 1979:352).
4.1.1. Joy in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament joy was used often to refer to the celebration of birthdays (Job 3:7), joy in the Lord for His protection, forgiveness, restoration, and fellowship. The people of the Old Testament (Israel the nation of God) celebrated with joy what the Lord was doing in their lives. They were very aware of the fact that they lived and had their being in the Lord. Their lives were not a result of some kind of foreign powers or spirits, but were given to them through God's grace and He was in control of their lives. They acknowledged the hand of the Lord in the times of deliverance and forgiveness (which was mainly through sacrificial means, see the book of Leviticus).

The Psalmist's song in chapter 16:11 is one of many examples of prayer for safekeeping, pleading for the Lord's protection. This could only be possible through faith or trust in the Lord. The Israelites acknowledged God's gracious provision and care of one's life. According to Davis (1984:588) joy "is grounded in God and flows from him (Ps. 16:11; Rm. 15:13)." He also stated that "Joy is an integral part of one's whole relationship to God." Therefore, "the fullness of joy comes when there is a deep sense of the

From personal to national, it is evident that their motivation was the deeper sense of God's presence and Lordship in the history of his people. Israelites celebrated with joy over military victories, on feast days, at coronations and dedication of constructions, but also they were waiting for the eschatological joy. The prophecies of the coming Messiah were a message of the prophets that gave them expectations for the day of great joy. Yes, they were rejoicing for the temporary things that God was doing for them and what God meant to them, but above all they were expecting the Messianic deliverance which was to come on the day of the Lord. The Messianic period was viewed as a period of joy. Isaiah stated (35:1-10) that in the Messianic age even the creation will rejoice and God himself will take joy in His people (62:5).


The Old Testament joy was centred in gratitude and unshakeable trust in God who is in charge of the history of the nation of Israel—the Lord who would eventually wipe out all the sufferings by the deliverance to come in the messianic age.
In the New Testament, on the other hand, while acknowledging the presence of God in the history of the Church, there is also a realisation that the messianic age has been inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ, and will be gloriously completed in the second coming of Christ. This becomes the great reason for rejoicing even though sufferings may come. The sufferings of the present time, which could be part of the Christian community, are alleviated by faith in the Lord. The victory, which was inaugurated by Jesus Christ by his resurrection from the dead, will be fulfilled in his Second Coming. The Christians rejoicing is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ (Beyreuther and Frinkenrath 1979:352-361). The joy is not of this world (John 18:36)—joy that is above all the sorrows, weeping and lament. Christ said to his disciples that their sorrows would be turned to joy, which no one could take away from them. Van Broekhoven (1982:1141-11420) asserted that the joy of the believers of the New Testament was motivated by the great reward in heaven (Mat. 5:12)—inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1:4, 6). He proceeds to state that joy in suffering is motivated by the fact that it produces character and steadfastness. "Above all the joy in suffering is not a burden because it is for Christ's sake and of the body, and the Church (Phil. 2:17; 1 Pet. 4:13)." At the end of time, the believers will appear "before the presence of His glory with rejoicing" (Jude. 24).
The biblical and theological concept of joy is deeper than the concept of joy in general dictionaries, which is based on psychological perspectives. A perspective that does not conceive a possibility of joy while one is preoccupied with his or her own security, pleasure, or self gratification. Joy in biblical perspective is a "gift of God, and like all other inner gifts it can be experienced even in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances." (Davis. 1984:588). Having said this, it is important to seek the biblical and theological definition of suffering for a better understanding of the integrity of the statement "joy in suffering".

4.2. Suffering

The word suffering derives from the Greek word *pascho*. It is pivotal to understand the interpretation of this word from its Greek etymology; the theological or biblical meaning derives from it. Moulton, in his book, "The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised" (1978:312) records that "Páscho, fut. *peisomai*; aor. 2, *epathon*, perf. *peponentha*, means to be affected by a thing, whether good or bad, to suffer, endure evil, Mat. 16:21; 17:12, 15; 27:19; absol. To suffer death, Luk. 22:15; 24:26, et.al. What is suffered; suffering, affliction, emotion and passion, is referred to as *patema, atos, tó* Ro. 8:18; 2
Cor. 1:5-7; Phil. 3:10; Ro. 7:5; Gal. 5:24. Pathetos, ou, o, e, means that which is passionable, capable of suffering or liable to suffer; in the New Testament that which is destined to suffer, Ac.26:23. Finally, Pathos, eos, to, which refers to suffering; an affection, passion, Ro. 1:26”. Moulton’s description analyses the original word and its derivations. His analysis helps a great deal in the understanding of the word suffering, and its possible causes. However, I have found Gartner’s summary (1978:719) to be a good comprehensive and brief survey of the etymological derivations of pascho (with the stems penth-, ponth-, path-); therefore noteworthy.

Gartner’s description is essential for understanding the wide variety of the meaning of suffering and its development in different settings. His analysis will serve as an introduction to the Biblical meaning, which will follow his summary. (1) The basic meaning of the verb from Homer onward, is that of experiencing something, which stems from outside of oneself and affects him or her, either good or ill. An example of the use of the word to mean to experience, to receive or something that has happened to oneself can be found in Gal. 3:4, “have ye experienced such things (such blessings) in vain?”. In fact, the New King James Version reads as thus, “having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered
so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?” (Gal. 5:3-4). The believers had received the Spirit by faith (v.2). The believer's life can not be perfected in evil things, only in the goodness of the Lord. God gives His Spirit and miracles by faith (v.5). It was unspeakable for Paul that someone who endured so much because of the love of the Lord could turn back to the sinful desires.

(2) Pascho as a verb meant nothing more than 'to be affected by'. Additional words were used to express how one was affected (e.g. kakos paschein, to be in a bad situation). The tendency of the additional word was to give negative meaning. This resulted in the verb itself having a negative meaning, with exceptions to be made when clear indications were given. Secondly, as a noun, it meant that which is passively experienced. The adjectives were then used to specify the nature of the experience (pathos). Aristotle used the noun in both a good and a bad sense. Stoics used predominantly the negative meaning.

(3) In the early period, suffering was viewed as a means of teaching and of making human beings wise. "Tragedies teach the profound truth that through suffering we learn who we are and what benefits us in life" (Gartner quotes
Aeschylus, Ag. 170; Prom. 309).

(4) The Stoics' idea was more universal and cosmological. They believed that all non-divine beings were subject to suffering. Influences and emotions have a lot to do with this because they hinder the knowledge and practice of virtue. The passion must be overcome in order that the ideal of dispassionateness may be attained.

(5) Hermetic literature regards everything created as subject to suffering. However suffering is unknown in heaven. Liberation from suffering is possible if the self is liberated from the body. According to their teachings, this is possible in this life at moments of ecstasy but will be permanently enjoyed only after death.

The Bible regards sufferings as an intrusion into the creation of God. It was never God's plan that man should suffer. Suffering found its door through sin. Because of sin suffering entered into the world in a form of conflict, pain, corruption, drudgery and death (Gen. 3:15-19). Since suffering is not God's plan for His children it will ultimately be eliminated on the day of the Lord. The victory over sin and consequently over suffering and its demonic power,
has been inaugurated through the death and the resurrection of Christ. But consummation will be the climax when suffering will finally be abolished (Rev. 21:4; Isaiah 65:17).

4.2.1. Suffering in the Old Testament

According to the Old Testament suffering is caused by evil. “In the earliest stage of their faith, and in agreement with other semantic religions, the Israelites interpreted suffering as a divine punishment for sin” (Piper 1962:451). Since God’s creation was perfect, the only possible way for evil or sin to enter in the World was through God’s creation. The fall of man opened the gate for suffering.

Man was created in the image of God, a holy image with holy living (Gen. 1:26-27). Man was without sin or evil deeds. God’s will was that man should live forever but man had a choice between life and death. God warned man about the results that sin would bring to the world, sin would result in death (“But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat it you will surely die”, Gen. 2:17).

In the New Testament Jesus Christ said that “the Kingdom of God is not of
the sinful or the dead" (Matt. 22:32). Paul in his epistle to the Romans wrote, "for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (6:26). From the beginning, man was to have life that is beyond the earthly life, the everlasting fellowship with God. Before the sin entered the world, man had the holy image. He had good fellowship with God. There were no sorrows, crime, violence, death, poverty, and consequently, no suffering. Everything was perfect. God Himself confessed when he topped his work of creation that all was perfect, ("God saw all that he had made and it was very good." Gen. 1:31a).

Because of sin, suffering has entered into the world. Sin subjected all human beings and the entire creation to punishment. There is no joy in sin. The results of sin have always been unbearable. Adam and Eve felt ashamed to have fellowship with the Creator; they tried to hide. They realised that sin had destroyed their original image; their body was now mortal and they were no longer one with the Father. They were unable to rescue themselves from the body and the bondage of sin. "The instinctive reaction to guilt is to hide, to cover one's nakedness, to exculpate oneself. But the gulf of separation cannot be concealed, and consequences of this alienation are inescapable. Suffering and misery enter the world: motherhood and childbearing becomes
painful, fatherhood and labour becomes wearisome, and futility hangs like a pall over life. The serpent becomes a symbol of evil, and hostility between man and beast begins" (Mark. 1971:7). However, God, because of His eternal love, reached out and gave hope for deliverance from sin and its power. Genesis. 3:15 is God's message of hope for salvation of the world from sin and its consequences. Surprisingly, God will bring sin to its end through suffering. In other words, suffering can only be eliminated through suffering. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of this passage. To defeat sin, its roots and consequences, Christ had to die and rise from the dead. His resurrection declared victory over suffering, over sin; the offspring of the woman crushed the head of the serpent. The Bible takes the issue of sin seriously because of its painful and destructive consequences on God's creation. "...In the Bible man has only two theological concerns involving himself: his sin and his salvation. Man finds himself in sin and suffers its painful effects; God graciously offers salvation from it. This is, in essence, what the whole Bible is about" (Devries 1962:361).
The effects of sin are painful. All kinds of suffering (physical, mental, and emotional) were introduced by sin. After the fall God said to the woman and man (Gen. 3:16-19), “I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desires will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.... To Adam he said...Cursed is the ground...through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life...”

4.2.1.1. Eve: Sin & Suffering

According to Matthew Henry’s commentary the woman’s sentence for her sin had two condemnations: (1) a state of sorrow, and (2) a state of subjection. She was punished for sin in which she gratified her pleasure and pride (1995:15). Here the pain is not only physical, it also spiritual and mental. The childbearing is painful but also the evil inclination of her children will result in pain. Through birth, sorrows and calamities to which human life is liable multiply greatly.

Man and woman were made both in God’s image to rule over God’s creation. Man was not to rule over the woman but sin would result in a fight for power. It is not God’s will for any person to be made inferior. Human relations were intended to be a mutual relationship in whichever degree of relationship—the
relationship of husband and wife, parents and children, man and woman, state and civilians, employers and employees, etc. Mutual love and respect were to prevail in the entire world. “Thus all attempts at domination, so characteristic of human conduct are a consequence of the disorder which has infected the relationship of man to man, and at the same time make for further disorder and for further alienation of man from God” (Bowie and Simpson 1980:510).

4.2.1.2. Adam: Sin & Suffering

Man has to work hard. The ground, which was supposed to be pleasant to man as he did his work, now becomes painful. Even the ground has been cursed because of the sin of man. Through painful sorrow, man will have food from the ground. “Man’s relationship with nature, like his relationships with God and with his fellow men, is in disorder.” (Bowie and Simpson 1980:510). Kincher (1967:73) identifies three kinds of disorder that came subsequent to man’s fall. (1) Personal Relations: first signs of mutual estrangement (3:7), brutalisation of sexual love (3:16b). Here in embryo are the mistrusts and passions, which will ravage society. (2) Spiritual Relationship: man has become, in his self—contradiction, simultaneously in flight (and banishment) from God (3:8,24) and in battle with evil (3:15). (3)
Physical Relation: life becomes a painful struggle to renew and sustain (3:16, 19).

The reference to the beginning of everything (God's creation and the fall) serves as basis to the introduction of the origin of suffering. It is evident from the basic understanding of the Old Testament that suffering is a result of punishment for doing what was not right. However, it is pivotal to note that God did not curse the man nor the woman. The "pain in childbearing" and "painful toil" are signs of God's judgement to the human race but at the same time God shows His love and grace; "give birth to children"—the human race would continue; "you will eat"—though man would work hard and in pain (judgement), he would still be able to produce food that would sustain life (grace). God is not to be viewed as a symbol of judgement for "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

4.2.1.3. Israel: Sin & Suffering

Because of human inclination to do what is evil, man continued to yield to sin. Soon Cain murdered his brother and was under God's judgement (Gen. 4). During the time of Noah, the earth was more and more corrupt and full of violence. God wiped out mankind because of their sins, and Noah was found
worthy of living because he lived a life that glorified God (Gen. 6:5-13).

Sufferings do not suggest that God rejoices in human destruction. God's will is not that man should suffer in order to have joy. Suffering came because of sin. "The cause of suffering is most commonly seen to lie in the inherent causality of an evil deed: such a causality of a deed brings its own retribution by virtue of its consequences, and so produces suffering," (Gartner 1982:720). Genesis chapter nine witnesses that God's will for man is not death, suffering, or calamities. But because of sin, these are unpredictable in the world. God said to Noah that he would never destroy the earth life with waters again and gave a sign of His everlasting mercy and love, the rainbow. This led to the second section of Genesis, which was marked by a calling to the nation of Israel through Abraham (Gen. 12) to be a blessing, to the nations.

The Israelites were the chosen nation of God. They were God's people who were to be separated from all sins and do God's will. Their lives were to glorify God and be a living testimony of a living God in the world. According to Piper (1962:451), at the early stage of their faith they believed that sufferings only came if one had done something, which was evil. In other
words if they lived a righteous life, they foresaw no suffering; only disobedience to God's will, would result in suffering. They were confident that moral order guided the destinies of man. They justified the prosperity of the wicked as something of a short while (Job 21:28-33) which would be wiped out by God's righteous judgement in His own time (Psalms 7:15-16; 37:1-3; 52:1, 5; 73:12-20; 92:7). On the other hand there were times when they felt disappointed because of no immediate judgement upon the wicked (Eccl. 7:16; Jer. 12:1-4; Hab. 1:2-4; Mal. 3:7-15). They considered their own calamities as indication of the wrath of God (Psalms 38:3; 42:5,9). They also believed that God could bring judgement (suffering) to the nation because of the sins of the kings and to children or a new generation because of the sins of their parents (I Samuel 22:18; I Kings 21:20, 22, 29; cf. Exod. 20:5). (1962:451-452).

It is true that God brings judgement over the wicked and even to the next generation or nation as a whole; but what about the suffering of the prophets of God? What about people like Job? Why do the righteous suffer? The interpretation of the suffering of the righteous people raised questions about God's justice and faithfulness.
4.2.1.4. Suffering and Righteousness

While believing that suffering is punishment for sin, the children of God came to realise that God may allow suffering to take place for a distinctive purpose. This idea will receive special attention in the New Testament and especially in 1 Peter because of its reference to the suffering of righteous people.

The Israelites through the messages of the prophets began having eschatological thinking on suffering. They were expecting the day of the Lord to come (the Messianic Age) for complete joy over deliverance from suffering. The Messianic age would mean the end of all sufferings and persecutions (Psalms 44; 22:19-20; 31:9, 21; Prov. 10:2-3). The day of the Lord would be the time when He would wipe out all the enemies of Israel (Isa. 3:14-15; Dan. 12:1; Amos 1-2). Although not a prominent teaching of the Old Testament, there were a few indications of hope of life after death. On the other hand suffering of the righteous was viewed as divine education or testimonial (Psalm 20:6; Isa. 49:26; Jer. 9:24; Job).

God used suffering to turn his children from unconscious sins to obedience; "Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of
the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal" (Job 5:17-18, also Job 33:19-30). Still, the messengers of God's word, in solidarity with their countrymen, suffered and cried to the Lord wondering why the Lord would not deliver them. Jeremiah (8:18-21) for example agonised in prayer, wondering why his people could not be healed immediately. The Israelites spoke from the exile wondering why the Lord would not deliver them and Jeremiah identifies himself with them.

Isaiah (53:2-12), records that the servant of God has taken vicariously upon himself the punishment of his nation. The suffering servant of the Lord, who was envisioned by Isaiah; the prophet to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. (Piper 1962:451-452). These concepts are fulfilled in the New Testament and new light is drawn from the person of Jesus Christ.

4.2.2. Suffering in the New Testament

The New Testament is the fulfilment of the message of the Old Testament. It is evident throughout the New Testament that the concepts of suffering from the O.T were endorsed. However, suffering begins to have a new picture in the light of the person and the cross of Jesus Christ.
4.2.2.1. The suffering of Christ

In the gospels, Jesus declares that he would suffer. He indicates that his suffering is God's will for the redemption of the world. Jesus had been teaching his disciples of his coming suffering and death. "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Mat 16:21). Peter's response was negative (16:22). This may be one of the indications that the concept of suffering in the Old Testament prevailed in the mind of the disciples. It was inconceivable that the Lord Jesus Christ would suffer. He had not sinned; he was doing wonderful work for God (healing, touching lives, changing people's life from bad to good etc.) In fact Israel was expecting a Messiah who would deliver them from suffering. They did not think of a Messiah who would destroy suffering through suffering and death. But Christ's suffering was divine purpose.

The idea of atoning suffering was new and unique. Yes, the prophecies were there but did they really understand them? It is questionable since many prophecies that were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ seemed to have
been denied by many Jews. But this could not change God's plan for the salvation of the world. "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, - so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25). Without the sacrifice of atonement, Jesus Christ's propitiation, and all people are justly destined for eternal punishment.

The sins of God's people, punished symbolically in the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament period, would be totally punished in the once—for—all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Jesus was without sin, but for the salvation of man from sin, he gave His own life, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed "(1 Pet 2: 24). As a result of Christ death on the cross, believers are positional dead to sin so that they may live new lives and present themselves to God as instruments of righteousness. " Thus, in accepting the necessity of his suffering, Jesus did not act under a compulsion placed upon him, but rather accepted it with the spontaneity of love. The judicial character of Christ's position precludes the assumption that suffering is good or meaningful by itself."(Piper 1962:452).
The new perspective in the face of suffering challenged the early Church. Rather than the deliverance they have been expecting from sin now they are to share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:10). Gartner, (1982:724) stated that, "Christ's vicarious suffering means, however, for his followers not deliverance from earthly suffering, but deliverance from earthly suffering. He has suffered and been tempted; as he had shared in all his people's experiences, he is able as the exalted one to "sympathise with their weakness" (Heb 4:15). His suffering was a test, which he was called upon to undergo, and in which he learned obedience (Heb 5:8). Having been tested by suffering, he is our pattern and example (1Pet 2:21). His suffering requires us as his followers to tread a similar path (1 Pet 2:21; Heb 13:12)."

4.2.2.2. The suffering of the followers of Christ

All theology recognises that people undergo experiences (pathos) which distress, afflict, injure, chasten, and bring on pain and death. Suffering may be physical, mental or spiritual. Since God chose a cross, a means of suffering, by which to redeem mankind, it may well be that he will permit the righteous to suffer for redemptive reasons. Jesus said in Matt 16: 24, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The cross was an instrument of death and a symbol of
necessity of total commitment – even—unto death for his disciples.

Throughout history suffering has been part of the life of the Christian Church. Christians were called to share in the suffering of Christ (Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 4:1 etc.) “to suffer as a Christian in 1 Pet 4:16 means to share in the suffering of Christ (1 Pet 4:13; Phil 3:10), to suffer with him (Rom 8:17)”. (Gartner 1982:724). The body of Christ was called to follow the steps of the master. The endurance of suffering should be learned from the example set by Jesus Christ, prophets, apostles and other believers. However this only refers to suffering for the sake of Christ’s name. The followers of Christ so often suffered as Christians (1 Pet 4:16) unjustly (1 Pet 2:14), under suspicion that they were evildoers (1 Pet 2:12). The Church of Christ has been persecuted from the beginning. Therefore as I go into detail about the kinds of persecutions faced by first century Christians, it is important to make a little comment on the difference of Jew and Christian. I do not want to take for granted that only the readers of these scripts know the difference since both have been identified as God’s chosen nation, the Israelites (old and new).

Christian: a person who has received Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. A Christian is a person who has given his/her life to Jesus...
Christ for redemption from sin and is totally under the lordship of Jesus Christ. His/her life is Christlike in speech, service, attitude, commitment to the will of the father, love etc. (Matt 22:34-38; John 16-17). Christians are one with the Father and the Son. They are body of Christ; the hands and the feet of Jesus Christ in the world.

"Jew (The old Israel): Jew is the name of the descendants of Abraham and Jacob. The name comes from Judah, one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The people of Israel were first called Jews during the Exile. It became their common name." (Clark N & Eby, J.W 1986:154)

At first, the persecution of the early church was mainly by the Jews who felt offended by the fact that the Christians used their sacred book as a basis of the Christian faith. Jews were convinced that Christians were guilty of exorcism. As time went on, however, persecution came from other areas as well. Christianity was seen as just another Jewish sect and therefore it was rejected. Traditional Jews were of the opinion that this was a heresy that was aimed at diverting the Jews from the true worship.

The Jews feared that if they were caught up in the sect, God would pour out
His wrath on them, as they were convinced that the reason for their being subjects of the Roman Empire was because they had disobeyed God. The Christians, on the other hand, saw their religion as the fulfilment of Judaism. The Jews started persecution of the Christians. Then followed persecutions like those of Nero and Domitiom. The Roman Empire began persecuting Christian. Tradition holds that Paul and Peter died under Nero's persecution in Rome.

As Christians were undergoing persecutions, sufferings, physical, mental or spiritual pain, they had hope in Jesus Christ, their Lord. In the light of Christ's suffering, Christians suffer knowing that like him they are marching into perfection. “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect though suffering” (Heb 2:10). Christ had not been morally or spiritually imperfect, but his incarnation was completed (perfected) when he experienced suffering. He identified with us on the deepest level of anguish, and so became qualified to pay the price for our sinful imperfection and became our sympathetic high priest.

Christians experience suffering but great is the reward in the kingdom of their
Father in heaven. This is an eschatological aspect of suffering. This is what Paul said in Romans 8:18, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Christians suffering could be viewed as something for a short period of time because the eternal glory is what they are heading to and will experience forever. Therefore, suffering was regarded as a precious gift (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 2:19). From “The God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory” (1 Pet 5:10). The gospel of John makes no reference to pascho because its entire goal is to portray Jesus and his glorification.

The teachings of the New Testament unanimously agreed that suffering was for a very short period of time. The early Christians had great expectations of the soon returning of the Lord; but the greatest motivation for joy in suffering was the future glory. Thus the Christian awaits not the end of suffering but its goal. Before one enters into an in-depth study of 1 Peter regarding this subject it will be beneficial to analyse Pauline writings and the book of revelation for their great contribution of this paradoxical message in the New Testament.
4.3. Pauline’s Writings on Joy in Suffering

There are thirteen books in the New Testament that traditionally are attributed to Paul. If we agree with the tradition, which I personally do, then Paul has more writing in the New Testament than any other writer. That is what makes it important to study his concept of joy in suffering and somehow compare it with that of 1 Peter.

Throughout the history of the Christian church, Pauline writing or Pauline theology impacted several lives and the theological studies. Great theologians or church reformers were influenced by Paul’s theology. People like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and Barth; owe their lives to Paul. But who was Paul? Where did he come from? What was his mission? How did he impact the church of Christ? What about his teachings on joy in suffering? Did he really understand what was the meaning of suffering; in fact did he suffer at all? These issues will be addressed to help unveil his interpretation of a possibility of one being able to rejoice while in pain.
4.3.1. Paul's Background

Paul was the product of the confluence of three cultural orientations: Jewish, Hellenistic Greek, and Roman. He was introduced in the Bible during the time of the suffering and death of Stephen for the sake of Christ. They "...dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ...When he has said this he fell asleep. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death." (Acts 7:58-8:1). It is possible that Paul was in charge of the execution of Stephen.

Paul was privileged to have learned under one of the greatest teachers of the law of the first century, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 25:5). Paul was a Pharisee. Before he became a Christian he was committed to God's law. He was zealous for the Lord. As a Pharisee, he surely awaited or expected the promised Messiah. He failed to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. Probably he expected a political messiah, one who would help Israel defeat all their enemies and build up a strong nation of Israel. That is the reason Paul is found persecuting the followers of Jesus Christ because he believed their teachings were blasphemes. Christianity was seen as a new sect that was emerging. The Pharisees saw Christianity as a group of people who were misleading the people from what they believed to be true worship and
reverence to God. Paul was a man committed to God and His Law, wanted to organise all of life, every human activity, in accord with God's Word. They (Pharisees) were especially concerned about purity of diet, clothing, and religious observances such as worship, prayer, fasting and tithing.

Paul had been given licenses by the high authority of the Pharisees to persecute those who followed Christ and his teachings. Especially those who preached that Jesus was risen from the dead. While Paul was causing suffering to God's children he met the Lord. He was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians when the Lord changed him and made him a new person. From a persecutor he became a Christian, and therefore vulnerable to persecution and suffering. He became a missionary, prisoner for the sake of Christ, preacher and teacher of the word to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:19-30; 22:6; 26:12-18; Gal. 1:15-18).

Paul as a persecutor of Christians did not realise that God had another plan for his life, to be "an instrument, to bring the name of the Lord before Gentiles and Kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). God had chosen to Paul to be a vessel through which God would flow His blessings to the people. To be a blessing is more than just proclaiming the gospel. Jesus
said of Paul, "I myself will show him how he must suffer for the sake of my
name" (Acts. 9:16).

Paul's conversion meant saying yes to suffering for the sake of the name of
the Lord. Throughout his writings 'suffering' is prominent theological debate.
Witherington is correct to say, "Enduring suffering and sorrows and moral
striving is in Paul's mind in part what it means to 'put on Christ' or to put it
another way, 'put on the story of Christ.' Paul claims 'I have been crucified
with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (Gal.
2:19-20)." For Paul, suffering was evidence that God was making His
children worthy of His kingdom, "...All this is evidence that God's judgement
is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for
which you are suffering." (2 Thes. 1: 4-5). God's judgement is right for He
provides the strength or the resources to help His children endure suffering.
This endurance produces spiritual and moral character, which is a testimony
to the persecutors or people of the world that God never leaves His children
alone. He is always on their side.

4.3.2. Paul's Paradoxical message of Joy in Suffering

Paul's paradoxical message of joy in suffering was motivated by the example
drawn from Christ Himself. The death of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world is a symbol of Christ suffering. What is more exciting is the fact that he did not remain dead He rose from the dead. Christ’s resurrection and the power of his resurrection form a core message of Paul. Because of the resurrection of Christ all his followers have hope because there are victories. For Paul, “if Christ has not been raised our preaching is useless and so is...faith.” (1 Cor. 15:14).

Therefore, Christians have all the reason to rejoice in the Lord for “death has been swallowed up in victory...thanks be to God! He has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:54-57). This gives Paul the authority to say, “my dear brothers (sisters), stand firm. Let nothing move you.” (15:58). In fact according to Paul no, form of suffering can separate us from the love of God because “ in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

Christians are to rejoice even in difficult times “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from
us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (2 Cor. 4:6-10). When the light of God shines in the hearts of people darkness (sin) is dispelled. This light is the full knowledge of God's glory displayed in the person and life of Jesus Christ who has come from the throne of God or the glorious presence of God to bring redemption (John 1:14). When faced by trials and hardship the power to overcome them comes from the throne of God.

The other aspect is that by going through these sufferings one is sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Paul had gone through much suffering for the sake of the gospel, but even in the midst of this (in prison) he can still say “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10). We do not just suffer but we also have unlimited resources of power from God himself, to give us the strength, courage, and joy in difficult times. God's power is at work in us, we may suffer but we don't have to be destroyed.

Common trials can bring uncommon grace. Our continual dying with Christ to
our own interest (1 Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20) often involves suffering, but it allows the power of the resurrection to be a reality in our lives. By our complete commitment to Christ, he reaches out through us. Therefore, we do not fear anything for we know that whatever comes our way, God is still on the throne and will always be. He is in control or in charge of our lives. "Suffering in itself is not beneficial. Those who dwell only on their suffering never gain its benefits or achieve a higher perspective. But those who focus on what God can do through suffering will be strengthened. They can tap into God's resources, allowing him to make something positive out of negative. Suffering can yield perseverance, character, and hope when we allow God to work in us" (Rom. 5:3-4). When, by the help of God we endure tribulations, God forms in us the kind of character that enables us to persevere and strengthens our hope of future glory.

The future glory is the product of suffering and not just a mere recompense of the present suffering (Rom. 8:17b; 2 Cor. 4:17). "Everyone who discerned the hope of glory in the suffering could rejoice in the one and the other, but chiefly in God—God my exceeding joy, as the Psalmist said (Ps. 43:4)" (Bruce 1997:144).
For Paul, final glorification or final salvation was near. The 'kairos' of God was far more important than all the problems and sufferings, "for salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is for gone, the day is near" (Rom. 13:11-12). "This passage makes it clear how important Christian hope was a motivation of Christian ethics for Paul and how strong a sense Paul had that the time before 'the day' was short. He believed that the eschatological count down was a advanced and that the day of salvation would come soon" (Wenham 1995:297-298).

I conclude by mentioning that Paul's paradoxical message of joy had both present and future motivation. While one go through sufferings in this world that is almost unavoidable, there is the unlimited and unending resource of God to carry one through. And finally, Jesus will return and all his enemies will be put to shame but all those who endured and obeyed God's commands will be exalted—the final salvation. Suffering will no longer be experienced, for all things will be new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. God will reign forever. I will discuss the aspect of the future motivation for joy in the book of Revelation, which follows.
4.4. New Heaven and Earth: NO MORE SUFFERING!

We do not need to open a new theological debate to argue that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy. God's character is love, peace and joy, which will abound forever and ever. God will be making everything new, and suffering will have no place in the new creation of God. This is the message of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is apocalyptic (uncovering) writing. The writing of this book is characterised by the use of symbolic language. The book presents God's secret purposes for the present time of the author and the far future (Rev. 1:19). The writer focuses on the need of faithfulness of the followers of Jesus Christ, the call for repentance of the fallen fellows, and the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus is presented as the victorious Lamb of God. Satan has no power for he is defeated already and will always be a loser. The author indicates that in the present time Satan will increase his persecution of believers, but they are urged not to give up their faith in God.

The Believers must stand fast, even to death. God's children are sealed against any spiritual harm. The body may suffer but the spirit is harmless.
When Christ returns, the wicked shall be destroyed forever and those who trust in God and obey his command will enter an eternity of glory and blessedness. This is “the hope in God’s imminent triumph that enables believers to endure amidst suffering and persecution is anchored in God’s faithfulness to his promises, as revealed in Christ (‘an ardent expectation of the imminent coming of God’s triumph over the powers of sin and death which rule the world)…. Apocalyptic theology is not engaged in a philosophical teleology or in speculative periodisation of world history. Rather, it expects the imminent actualisation of God’s promises especially because they have been ratified and intensified since Christ’s death and resurrection” (Beker 1994:128-129).

Revelation 21 sets a mood of joy and triumph for God creates a new heaven and earth, and finally his children are exempt from all pain caused by suffering. Suffering and sin, which are intruders to God’s creation, will be done away. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...” Rev. 21:1. Here the writer makes great announcements. The old has passed away and the “kainos” has come. The choice of the word used here to refer to new, “kainos” emphasises quality. “Qualitatively new, as contrasted with ‘néos,’ temporally new....
Newly made, not impaired by time or use.... New as opposed to old or former and hence better because different" (Zodhiates 1992:804).

In this new creation something special happens, “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their god.” (21:3). God’s glory and presence will live with the people forever. God will then, “wipe away every tear...there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,” (21:4). I have argued that suffering is a result of the fall of man (Gen. 3). Because of the fall of man, death and pain have invaded the creation of God. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom.6:23). Death has no victory at all, it will cease. The curse of Gen. 3 is removed completely.

Those who find their refuge in the Lord rejoice for they know that there is hope of final salvation. There will be a new order when the Lord comes. “These prophecies focus on the eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of the world—beginning with the tribulation, climaxing with the second coming, and reaching completion with the full realisation of God’s Kingdom—all to the great encouragement of Christians who face the
antagonism of an unbelieving society" (Gundry 1994:457).

Conclusion

Suffering is not a pleasant thing at all and in human terms it is impossible to rejoice in the midst of pain. However joy in biblical terms goes beyond a mere feeling, pleasure, comfort and well being. It is unlimited and beyond human control for God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ is the never ending source of that joy which comes from within. This joy is expressed in exultation of God even in difficult times for the believer finds strength in the Lord to overcome all, by knowing that Christ has conquered and there is hope for final salvation. This is the message that Peter applies to his audience of 1 Peter to encourage them to hold on to Jesus. Peter wanted his audience to fix their eyes in Jesus. Pain or suffering could not have the final word, for Christ paid the price so that all those who believe in him shall have joy—everlasting joy. The Second Coming of Christ will mark the fulfilment of this joy.
Chapter Five

Joy in Suffering According to 1 Peter

Peter makes a great introduction in which he begins to identify the children of God. He identified himself first as an apostle of Jesus Christ (this can be interpreted as one with Christ in a mission to reach out to the lost world) and he identified his audience as the chosen people of God (this is related to Israel a nation chosen by God through Abraham to be a blessing to other nations. The new Israel is one with Christ in the mission of blessing the world).

It is evident that the author and the audience are both bound by the love of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (1:1-2). This was possible because of the love of the Father who gave his only son Jesus as the lamb to die for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 3:16); through His great mercy and love through Jesus Christ, Christians have a living hope (1:3). There is no reason for not blessing the Lord for He has done great things. Without salvation they were lost; in fact they were not people. Now they have a living hope, an inheritance that does not fade neither spoil which is kept in heaven and it will be given unto them or revealed to them on last day or the end of the times 'on
the day of judgement' (1:3-5). "In this you greatly rejoice" (1:6).

5.1. The Eschatological Joy (1:6-9)

The opening statement of this periscope, "In this you greatly rejoice" is vital for the message of Joy in Suffering. I hope to open the windows of the message of 1 Peter through this passage. It is important to know the nature of the sufferings and the nature of the joy through sufferings. In the brief section where I sought to identify the addressees of this letter and their social situation, the nature of their suffering and joy is identified. This section is intended to be an in-depth study of the paradoxical message of joy in suffering. I will argue throughout this section that the joy of the readers of 1 Peter was motivated by their eschatological teachings of the Second Coming of Christ. Peter does not use such terminologies but his message can easily be identified with that of Paul on the issues of the Second Coming of Christ as the end of the times and the day of the consummation of the evil world.

"In this you greatly rejoice" (1:6) What did Peter refer to? Did he say this in reference to 1:3-5 or only 1:5? What is the mood used for the word rejoice (agalliate). The opening statement "in this" (en ho) is obviously referring to a precedent message already conveyed. He had just finished praising God
for the great salvation (1:3-5) that he has given to his children. This salvation means new birth into a "living hope." Jesus Christ is a living God who rose from the dead through the power of the Father. Those who are associated with him also have victory. Their living hope becomes an assurance of what the father will do for them in the future to come.

The assurance or confidence is motivated by the fact that the future has been inaugurated by the victory of Jesus. "Not only does the new birth stimulate a 'living hope,' but that hope is defined by 'an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade' (1:4). That inheritance is their completed salvation (1:3, 4, 5, 6-9) and eternal life in the Kingdom of God, where they will enjoy worship, praise, and blessings.... The only condition God sets for His people is that they must have faith (1:5)...This faith is a faith in the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In sum, the new birth gives rise to a living hope that is defined as an inheritance that is guarded by faith in that final salvation" (McKnight 1996:71).

"In this" evidently refers to the future deliverance. Peter's audience was urged to rejoice in the hope of the future (1:3-5) even though they may be going or will be going through various trials. Stedman (1995:2-3) in an article
entitled *The Message of First Peter* argues that this suggests that Christians already have a reservation in heaven. And he goes on to say, "Now some people say 'This is pie in the sky by and by. That is opiate for masses—you know, to keep us happy while we struggle along down here.' That is what Karl Marx told the world. And I suppose it can be looked at that way, in a sense. Yet when you see young people who ought to be filled with a sense of life and living, lying sometimes for hours like zombies, corpses in our public parks because they have nothing to do, nowhere to go, nothing to live for, you can see what a living hope does. It activates us. It motivates us now. This is great thing about Christianity. If you take away the hope of another world, another life, you destroy the meaning of this life." (1995:2) This is what Peter is addressing hear. Peter is saying do not let your living hope die. Keep it alive. It is worth it. So he says rejoice in the midst of suffering.

The word "rejoice" here is best understood to be present indicative with future meaning. "In confident assertions regarding the future, especially prophecies, a present tense can stand for the future. If the time element is established by the context (in this instance, *en ho* linked to the preceding *en kairo eskato*), the present becomes semantically a 'zero' tense, taking a future meaning from the context" (Michael 1988:28). The entire message
from 1:3-9 should be considered to be in the future tense.

Not only the mood of the word rejoice is noteworthy, but also the meaning. The uses of rejoice or joy in the New Testament has significance to a deep spiritual joy, rejoicing in God or in what He has done and what He will do. According to Peter, Christians will "rejoice and be glad when Christ's glory is revealed (4:13)." (Grudem 1996:60-61). Wuest (1973:24) states that "Rejoice" is from a Greek word speaking of extreme joy expressing itself externally in an exuberant triumph of joy. In verse 8 we see that it is a glorified joy made possible by our mortal bodies. Tears of joy are just an evidence of the inability of our present state to fully feel the joy that comes to us at times. But then in our bodies of glory we will be able to drink in and appreciate all the boundless joys of the Saviour's presence."

The prophets wished they could have full details about the salvation that was to come (1:10-11). The prophets experienced various trials and they sought to know when the Messiah would come to deliver his children from the evil world. It was revealed to them that this truth was destined for the believers of this age (Wuest 1973:30). Jesus Christ while teaching his disciples and the multitudes said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and
falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12). Jesus made it clear here that a true servant of God was most likely to suffer; not because he/she chooses to, for God Himself would not want His children to suffer, but He may allow it to happen for the benefit of the one who suffers.

Peter is confident that the sufferings of his addressees are for a little while. This does not mean that they would soon be given social rights, or freed from all kind of maltreatment. It is in reference to the metaphorical meaning of visitors and strangers of this world. The earthly life is limited while the salvation or glory to be revealed is eternal. In spite of all sufferings or kinds of trials, the joy of God’s children is fed by the unfailing spring of divine faithfulness; it is a deep blessedness which nothing that happens today and tomorrow can affect. The trials last for a little while and are insignificant in the light of the glory that is to be revealed. Our light affliction...is but for a moment, as the Apostle Paul put it (I Cor. 4:17).

The Children of God are to face trials, knowing that God may allow this to happen “so that the genuineness of your faith... may be proved genuine and
may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1:7). The Greek term used here to refer to genuineness (*dokimion*) was a common term used for testing or refining metal. “Peter deliberately employs this analogy to say that situations of testing are occasions when God refines and purifies the faith of his people as precious metal is refined in a fire (Isa. 48:10, ‘I have tried you in the furnace of affliction’). The trials burn away any impurity in the believer’s faith. What is left when the trials have ended is purified, genuine faith, analogous to the pure gold or silver that emerges from the refiner’s fire.” (Grudem 1996:63-64). What is more important is the fact that their faith surpasses the metals, which even though refined spoil or fade. In fact human language has no vocabulary to express the joy of the believers and their faith and love in Jesus Christ, though they have not yet seen him with their physical eyes (1:8). “Peter sees this response to the Lord as so potent that he describes it as the inauguration of this final salvation: ‘for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls’ (1:9)” (McKnight 1996:72).

It is evident here that suffering is not the reason for the rejoicing of the believers, rather they rejoice in their sufferings on account of the glorious future awaiting them. In sum Christians are to have proper perspective on
their sufferings or trials. First they must realise that their suffering will be brief compared to the eternal nature of the inheritance. Second, tribulations may be there but their end will come. Third, since God is sovereign Lord whatever happens is the result of his sovereign will. His sovereign will is not to harm his children. Therefore the believers’ lives are under God’s control in all circumstances. Fourth, sufferings of the Christians are different from those of the people of the world. Christian suffering proves the genuineness of faith, and by so doing becomes a living testimony to the evil world. Those who will endure sufferings and do God’s will receive honour, praise, and glory on the day when Christ is revealed. Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4. (de Villiers. 1975:70-74). Peter used the eschatological joy as a reason for enduring the sufferings of various forms which will follow 2:11-3:12.

5.2. Christians in an Evil World: The Effects of Their Ethics (2:11-12)

The audience of Peter was a group of believers—people who belonged to God—people who were transformed by the power of God. They were God’s children. They had been saved and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Peter clearly states that as people who are to be Godlike or Christlike, they are to live holiness (1:13-2:4). Unlike the people of the evil world, they are a
'spiritual house' built on Christ the precious stone (2:4-8). They are a holy nation of God, the holy priesthood, and they are God’s people who have found mercy from God (2:9-10). Such people are to be totally committed to God’s will.

They were holy people, sanctified people, which mean that they were set apart from sin and set apart for God’s glory. Holiness is the unique and exclusive quality of deity. Therefore, holiness is a state of Godliness (1:15), and all are invited to be holy because he is holy. Christ is sanctified in the sense that His atonement and resurrection make the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit possible. What is even more wonderful is God’s faithfulness. He sanctifies His children and He is able to keep them from evil though they live in the evil world. The readers of 1 Peter are urged not to indulge in the sinful desires; however the choice is fully theirs. If they to chose to disobey God as the Old Israel had done they will stumble (2:7-8).

A sanctified person lives a holy life, his/her sinful desires or nature has been crucified with Christ and he/she lives a life that glorifies God (Romans 6). Above all a person who lives a holy life is under God’s control. The holy love of God controls that person’s attitudes, motives, thoughts, speeches,
relationships, heart, mind, teachings, dressing code, etc. All aspects of such a person are found to bring glory to God.

1 Peter 2:11-12 is a general introduction, which points to the consequences of ethical actions of the believers. de Villiers (1975:74) puts it this way, “the effects of true Christians on the pagan world.” I like his choice of words here, specially “true Christians,” for the name ‘Christian’ is sometimes employed to indicate a person who was born in a Christian family or country. Such a person can be named a Christian because of the identification with the group he/she belongs to. Jesus Christ, said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord,’ did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.”’ (Matt. 7:21-23).

Peter’s audience was not just a group of nominal Christians. The letter itself gives no possibility of such kind of Christians. For God’s people do not practice lawlessness. Peter’s audience was a group of “true Christians” saved and sanctified people. They were God’s representatives in the pagan
world, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light...now you are people of God...you have received mercy " (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The audience of 1 Peter was a group of "aliens and strangers in this world" (2:11). Although the social interpretation of their condition is what I endorse, the metaphorical meaning is nevertheless important. Believers are aliens and strangers in this evil world, for their ultimate home is heaven. There are two aspects here that are important: (1) the readers have no rights for they are foreigners; their social situation determines their economical, political and religious situation. (2) They are under terrible conditions and they make them worse by the fact that they are called Christians.

Peter calls them to a more meaningful life. They are to "live exemplary lives to provide an attractive alternative to the pagan way of life (2:12; 3:1)" (McKnight. 1996:126). Although living in a corrupt society, their lights are to shine by separating themselves from the corruption of the world, not yielding to its destructive sinful desires (2:11). In fact, the body's desires are not sinful in themselves but sin perverts these desires; and the Christian is
tempted to satisfy the bodily desires in ways contrary to God’s will.

Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 describes some of the sinful desires, “sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfishness, orgies, and the like. I warn you as I did before that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” According to Peter the sinful desires war against the soul (2:11). Here again we see the traditional message of the early Church. Paul said to the readers of his letter (Galatians), “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Gal. 5:17).

In Romans 7:15-25, Paul shows how the struggle within the Christians can create tension, ambivalence and confusion. Sin is at work to frustrate God’s purposes. However, sin has already been defeated through the victorious death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians, although on their human nature can not overcome such sin, can yield to Christ and accept his provision of divine power to be freed from the sinful nature.

The use of the word ‘soul’ in 1 Peter is intended to emphasise the inward,
spiritual nature of this purification. Sometimes ‘soul’ (psyche) is also used to indicate the whole person (3:20; 2 Pet. 2:14), but here (2:11) he used it to indicate the inward spiritual nature, just as in Mt. 10:28 and 2 Peter. 2:8. Peter wanted his audience to realise the importance of living a holy life and not yielding to sin—to be pure in heart; “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Mat. 5:8), Jesus said.

The good behaviour of the Christians is only possible because they are grounded in the love of God. Good behaviour results in a living testimony of the living God who is at work within his people and who will complete the work on the day of the Lord. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and with all your mind.” (Mat. 22:37). This is total commitment to God. It is being rooted in the love of God and only then the love of God can flow through you to the lost society.

The relationships of the believers with the unbelievers are to be guarded by love (2:11-3:12). This is God’s will, which can only be revealed when one does not yield to sin. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to
test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2).

When Peter urged his readers to humble themselves and be motivated by love in all circumstances, this was not a sign of condoning suffering or abuse. His recommendation is that Christlikeness should be seen in the actions of the believers at all times. Christians are followers of Jesus Christ; therefore they should learn from him. Jesus suffered but he was sinless man. He suffered for the sins of the world. He did not return evil for evil but rather with love throughout his sufferings. Peter's recommendation is that Christians should not react the same way the people of the world react, but their lives must be a living testimony of the power of God's salvation now and to be revealed.

As a result of salvation, believers can resist the values, goals, and activities of the evil world. God's power is constantly moulding them. Their minds are not filled with evil thoughts because they are renewed by the power of God. Thus, they are able to find and accept God's will for their lives. God's will is always morally good, and acceptable to Christlike people even in the midst of sufferings. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing,
because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing...For the
eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their
prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (3:9-12).
Therefore Peter is confident that the sufferings of this world can not harm the
believers and they are blessed if their suffering is for the sake of
righteousness (3:13-17).

5.3. The Blessing of Suffering (3:13-17)

Peter has been addressing the believers in such a way that they understand
their identity as God's children and the will of God for their lives. Now he
turns to a section where he specifically addresses the problem of the
suffering of believers because of their righteousness. His introduction to this
section (3:13), "who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" is
questionable. What did he mean by harm? Is there a possibility of being
under persecution that causes no harm? Is he suggesting that Christian are
not going to suffer at all? Peter's question here should be understood to be
rhetorical. Traditionally this kind of question was made with no expectation of
an answer but awareness that no one can harm the spiritual life of the
believers (Psalm 56:4; 91:7-10; 118:6; Isa. 50:9; Matt. 10:28-31; Luk. 12:4-7;
21:18).
The devil has no power over the souls of God's children so long as they do not yield not to sinful desires but do good. That is, even though God may allow suffering to come, it will not harm the spiritual life of the believers because the believers have their hope set on Christ. "If God is for us who can be against us? For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:31-39). The love of God is fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

Peter's questions were in view of the persecutions or sufferings that Christians had or would experience. Peter is not saying that Christians would not suffer for even he suffered for the sake of the gospel. The healing of the lame man in Jerusalem (Acts 3) had brought Peter and John into trouble with the Jewish authorities to the point of imprisonment, followed by a mighty deliverance (3:1-5:42). Besides that, it would be contradicting his own message of joy in suffering to suggest that if Christians do good they will not suffer. Throughout the first section of the epistle of First Peter, I have indicated that he has been talking about the possibility of the suffering of
believers inflicted by unbelievers (1:6-7; 2:11-12-3:12). Peter was aware of such a possibility but he wants the believers to realise that their hope is not in vain. They will receive the salvation of the Lord on the day when the Lord will come. "Peter tells them that, as a result of their righteous lives and God's care, their blessedness will be such as to turn off all the malice of their persecution and make their suffering itself to be a joy." (Wuest. 1973:87). "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake you are blessed." (3:14). In normal conditions those who did good were not supposed to suffer, but because of sin those who live in sin have a tendency to fight those who walk in the light because they do good. Peter said that it was better to suffer for righteousness rather than to suffer for doing evil. "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23).

The Lord Jesus Christ said that those who are persecuted for the sake of his name are blessed (Mat. 5:10). Peter had confidence in this message for he saw the Lord Jesus Christ's reaction when persecuted. When Peter tried to fight those who arrested Jesus ("And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear" Matt. 26:51), he was rebuked by Jesus (Matt. 26:52). The attitude of Jesus Christ was not for fighting for he could have
asked the father to send the fire and had all the enemies eliminated at once. His attitude and reaction was of a loving God. It is plausible to see the same kind of reaction in Peter, Paul, and other apostles and believers in the midst of persecution. Therefore Peter urges them not to retaliate but rather to show love while persecuted.

The inner commitment of the believers (3:15) to Jesus Christ results in speeches that are given in love even in the midst of suffering. When unbelievers make false testimonies, they are to use that opportunity to testify about their living hope. "Such witness is possible only if believers live in good conscience, depending more on their winsome attitudes and good lives to answer false accusations than on their words (3:16). Always, of course, it is understood that the Christian's suffering is that which comes on him, not for his misconduct, but in spite of his good life (3:17). Some of us suffer more for our foolishness' sake than we do for righteousness' sake. Such suffering goes without reward. It is no more than we deserve" (Purkiser 1974:198).

5.4. The Sufferings of Christ as an Example to the Believers (3:18-4:6)

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was blameless, a lamb without sin but he
suffered for the sins of the world. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). The believers are brought to God because of the willingness of Christ to die for their sins (3:18; Heb. 9:28). Christ's suffering should be an example to His followers. Through the sufferings of Christ, those who believed found deliverance from sin (3:18-4:6).

The resurrection of Christ makes the salvation of the believers possible (3:21). The followers of Christ are under God's protection and Jesus' caring. Jesus intercedes for the believers at the right hand of the Father in heaven (3:23; Heb. 7:25-26), because He knows that evil spirits do not rejoice when one is saved. Christ's resurrection and His ascension to heaven is a demonstration of His divine power to save the lost from sinful desires and from the sinful world.

The suffering of the Christians should be that which brings redemption to the world. If the attitude is Christlike, the goal will be for the glory of God (4:1-6). A Christian's ethics will be an example just as Christ's ethics are a pattern that believers need to follow.
5.5. Joy and confidence of the Christians in Suffering

(4:12-19)

This is the beginning of a new section, which no longer addresses suffering as a possibility but rather as a reality. I have discussed this in the previous chapter to defend the integrity of the letter. The First Epistle of Peter discusses suffering in two dimensions, first as a possibility (1:6-7; 2:12, 21; 3:14; 4:1-2, 14, 16) and secondly as a reality (2:15, 18-20; 3:9, 14, 16; 4:4, 17, 19; 5:9-10). These aspects are not limited to one section of the letter but rather to the entire letter. "Thus, although persecution is specially in view in verses 12 to 19, it is not necessary to see them as addressed to a different situation than the earlier parts of the letter. This section continues the long discussion, begun at 2:11, on living as a Christian in a hostile world. The theme of suffering as a Christian has been prominent since 3:13, with only verses 7 to 11 forming a minor parenthesis about life within the church in the end times." (Grudem 1996:177-178).

The Christian church is to be expected to suffer because Christians share in Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Christians rejoice in suffering because they share with Christ in the mission to reach out to the lost society and on the day
of judgement they will be glad that Christ will finally bring their enemies to final judgement and they will be glorified. Christ will reign forever; sin and suffering will no longer exist, for Christ's victory will be revealed. Those who suffer as Christians should trust themselves to God just as Jesus Christ did when He said, "Not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). Christians will show their confidence by doing good. God is a faithful Creator who is absolutely trustworthy.

Conclusion

"Crushed, overwhelmed, devastated, torn—these feelings wash over those who suffer, blinding all vision of hope, threatening to destroy them. Suffering has many forms—physical abuse, debilitating disease, social ostracism, persecution. The pain and anguish tempt one to surrender and give in." (Life Application Bible). But Peter says these things do not have to destroy a person for there is a living hope in Jesus Christ. It is true that one may suffer because of being a Christian but Peter addresses both situations, suffering for the sake of Christ and suffering because of social structures. This is what makes Peter's message relevant today for all Christians and especially those of Southern Africa. The analysis of Southern Africa, with special emphasis to Mozambique will show that Christians go through various kinds of suffering
but they do not have to be destroyed for there is hope. A hope that surpasses political, social, and economical visions. It is a living hope that does not fade.

There is joy in suffering. Christ is the price for this joy. There is a price for everything. One day as I was exercising at the Health & Racquet club, I realised that the price to have a presentable body or to be a healthy person is great. I watched every single person at the Gym that day. Everyone was feeling the pain of working on his or her bodies. It was so evident that some looked tired and exhausted but they had to carry on. The pain of exercising is turned to joy when the body begins looks well. The price to health and beauty is sometimes painful. But the joy in this case only comes when changes take place. It is a short-term happiness. The same applies to the ill person. If the Doctors are able to help this person recover from any kind of sickness, especially AIDS, there is great joy for that moment. The hungry or naked when helped through the relief programs is filled with contentment for that short period of time as long as these material things are delivered to him or her. If a country is oppressed or colonised some people are more than willing to lay down their lives for the sake of the country. Some die and some survive. The pain of need of freedom is unquestionable. On the other hand
sacrificing one's life causes suffering and sometimes disasters to the family if not the whole society. For many African countries to be free today it took men and women who were loyal to their land to die for the freedom of Africa. But joy in this case only came as a result of defeat of the 'enemy'. What one sees or experience motivates this joy in a particular moment. But the joy in Peter refers to joy that transcends even the actual situation of Southern Africa. Joy that transcends AIDS, civil wars, hunger, or whatever kind of suffering. This joy is ever present because it is from God himself. It is joy that experience God's intervention through His Spirit in the present life, to provide, heal, comfort, and encourage. This joy also focuses on the future, when God himself will wipe away all the tears, and final salvation will be declared. There shall be no more suffering.

Southern Africans experience various kinds of trials. But there is a distinction as far as the response of the Christians and non-Christians is concerned, towards suffering. Christians response is motivated by the idea of redemptive love of Jesus. They view their sufferings as redemptive to the society. The epistle of first Peter here is applied, for Christians are called to be holy in all their responses. They are to do good all the time, no matter the situation faced in that particular moment, good or bad. Christians are called
to view their suffering as sharing in Christ's suffering. Christ's suffering was redemptive for he laid down his life so that all may have life. Good conduct of Christian in the face of persecution or trials becomes a redemptive testimony to the society for the glory of God. Also, it strengthens the Christian, his or her faith is made genuine. Dependence in Christ is a daily thing for he is reigns. This brings joy, which is intensified by the future hope, of the end of times. These ideas will form part of the last chapter of this script.
Chapter Six

Application of Joy in Suffering in Southern Africa

Introduction

The first chapters served as an interpretation of the principles and truths of the message of joy in suffering in general and in First Peter. This was important because, before one jumps to a conclusion, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the interpretation of the message within its original socio-economic, politic, and religious context. This is, the interpretation is intended to be "exegomal" which means to "lead out of" or reading out of the meaning. I do not claim to have acquired all the understanding of the original meaning of the text of I Peter, but I have tried to concentrate on the interpretation or explanation of the message of joy in suffering within the context of the letter and its influenced sources.

This chapter is intended to be an application of the principles and truths acquired from I Peter, in the context of the present society of Southern Africa. Since the message of joy in suffering is meaningless to the unbeliever (even in the first century it was not intended for them), my attention will be on the Christian church.
The Christian church in Southern Africa is a result of political and mission forces. I will discuss its originality, influences, or impact on the society as a whole, as well as its challenges. To apply I Peter in the context of Southern African society (Christian) it is necessary to answer the following questions: Do Christian suffer? If they do how? Who inflicts suffering on them? Do they suffer because of their faith or because of the social conditions of the continent? What impact do other traditional religions, socio-economic and political situations of Southern Africa have on Christians? Are these the reasons for suffering? These and other questions will be addressed in hopes of doing justice to the application of the message "joy in suffering".

It is important to note that I Peter was written in the first century for the first century Christians of Asia Minor, and we are in 21st century in Southern Africa. Although there is a cultural gap historical gap (past and present), and language gap, to be considered before the conclusion is drawn, there are also some similarities of the conditions of the original audience of Peter and the Christian church of Southern Africa. The audience of Peter in the first century and today is God's chosen people. People belonging to God, who were pagans but through God's grace, found salvation because they believed
in Jesus Christ. Just like the Christians in Asia Minor, today's Christians are
called to serve the people for God's glory. Christians are called to do good
so that the people will see their good deeds and glorify God. They are "a
royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may
declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful
light." (1 Pet. 2:9).

It is true that some Christians of Southern African countries may suffer
because of the political, socio-economic conditions and traditional religion
beliefs, but they may also suffer for the sake of Christ. Non-Christians
persecute often Christians, through false accusations against the church.
Often Christians are seen as fanatics because they do not want to accept the
New Age way of thinking. The occult and Satanism is another subtle but
dangerous onslaught against the church of Christ. The discussion in this
chapter will be based on information of various sources, documented—books
and other forms of media like Newspaper, internet and verbal—interviews,
and testimonies, and personal experiences and encounters.

John H. Haynes and Carl R. Holladay in their book *Biblical Exegesis*
(1987:23) stated that "the goal of biblical exegesis is to reach an informed
understanding of the text, however, no one can ever determine or give the full meaning of the text. Exegesis is based on one’s encounter within investigation of a text at a given point in time”.

Although my aim is to give an interpretation of this message in the context of the Southern African Christian church of 21st century, it is unavoidable that my Mozambican and South African roots would be predominant. It is also important to realise that my Wesleyan Evangelical background influences my interpretation and application. So, while applying “joy in suffering” to the Christian church in Southern Africa, special emphasis will be given to Mozambique and South Africa within the context of evangelical churches.

6.1. General issues Partnering Southern Africa

Southern African countries are characterised by historical trends of poverty, exploitation, and marginalisation. It is a multireligion, multicultural and multilingual society. On the other hand, Southern Africa is rich with various mineral resources, fertile soil, and other economical resources of various kinds that are attractive and appealing internationally. The people are warm, friendly and hospitable.
The countries share historical records of colonisation and oppression. Europeans began coming to the region in the 15th century. Historical records suggest that they had no intention of exploiting the region but this is what happened. A few years later, missionaries began coming to the area to spread the Word of God. Missionaries played a major role in the religious and social life of the people by opening churches, mission schools and hospitals. This is how the Christian church was introduced in Southern Africa. Therefore one can say that Christian church in Southern Africa is a result of mission and political forces in Southern Africa.

Christianity was not the original religion of the region. Traditional religions, which still prevail even today, in conjunction or separately with Christian faith, were the known ways to worship God or gods in Africa. "Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religion system with set of beliefs and practices. (Mbiti 1969:1).

Southern African countries share pictures of suffering of various forms. Suffering has different faces in all countries. In some countries it is intensified and in others minimised. This applies for both Christians and non-Christians. Iris Marion Young (1990:30-65) wrote that there are five forces of
oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence, which I view as forms of suffering in Southern African countries. Oppression can be defined as the exercise of tyranny by the ruling group or conquest and colonial domination. Oppression can also be used to designate the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer because of everyday practices of a well-intentional liberal society.

(1) Exploitation: “The central insight expressed in the concept of exploitation, then is that this oppression occurs through a steady process of the transfer of the results of labour of one social group to benefit another.” (Young 1990:49). Women undergo specific forms of exploitation in which their energies and powers are expended for the benefit of men.

(2) Marginalisation: In this system of oppression, a whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life. It also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalised conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction.

(3) Powerlessness: This involves people's lack of significant power because of not participating in making decisions that affect the conditions
of their lives and actions. The powerless are situated so that they can take orders and rarely have the right to give them. In this system some are in a social position that allows them little opportunity to develop and exercise skills. It can also mean exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the status one occupies.

(4) Cultural imperialism: The dominant group asserts its perspective and experiences as universal or neutral. The oppressed group's own experiences and interpretation of social life finds little expression that touches the dominant culture, while that same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experiences and interpretation of social life.

(5) Violence: Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person. This can be the case of rape, killing, or other crises. Violence is systematic because it is directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group.

These forces of oppression cause suffering. It may be individual or in a
group. It inflicts spiritual, mental and possibly physical pain. However, unlike the unbelievers, the Christians are called to find joy in suffering. The question now is what form of persecution do Southern African churches experience today for the sake of Christ's name? This calls for a brief survey of historical data of the Christian church in Southern Africa from the time when missionaries arrived in the area to this date.

6.2. The Christian Missionaries in Southern Africa

During the 15th century, Europe sought to know more about other lands. They sought to find an easy way to travel to India and Africa. Prince Henry of Portugal set up a school in Portugal where seamen could come and study navigation. During this period sailors from Portugal were able to reach and explore Southern Africa. Portugal established many trading posts along the western coast of Africa, where European goods were exchanged for African goods—especially gold. Africans were also captured and sold as slaves. Portugal opened the door for other western countries to come to the region. Since there were other nations much stronger than Portugal that were also interested in new opportunities, the region saw a great invasion by British, French, Dutch, and other European nations that followed later. (Abramowitz 1971:115-124).
Southern Africa has been colonised for many years since the 15th century. Imperialism brought advantages to European governments and disgrace to Africans. During the period of colonisation the foreign leadership questioned or undermined the values of African people. This resulted in a need for civilisation or assimilation wherever it was applicable. The African society, especially that of Sahara experienced some changes on their perspectives of life. The dressing code changed, the learning process increased, hospitals instead of traditional healers took place, technology developed in various ways although with more of an exploitation agenda, and many other changes took place. Among those it is believed that Christianity introduced major changes in the lives of the people, as far as cultural and traditional religion is concerned.

The Portuguese and Spanish countries were the leading organisations in colonisation, and in the process they brought men and women to preach the gospel; the missionaries. Therefore the first missionaries to come south of Sahara were Portuguese Catholics at the end of 15th century. The Protestant Church (of which we belong) began sending missionaries in the 19th century. This was a result of great revivals that took place among the
Evangelical in the western world. (Parrat 1991:1). However, according to Charles Forman, in the 19th century, the Protestant missionary work was not successful due to the adjustment of the kind of life in Africa, the climate, and medical problems, resulting in illness or even death. (Forman 1986:227-230).

The missionaries preached, and taught the word of God. Besides that they contributed to the process of civilisation of Africans. They developed most of the writings of African languages, translation of the scriptures, education, extension of agricultural work, medical missions, nursing and medical schools, programs for rural development, urban social services and adult literacy campaigns. (Forman 1986: 228). In the process of ministering to the needs of the people of Africa, many missionaries introduced Christianity together with their cultures as what is acceptable to God.

Missionaries are charged with having neglected the values of African traditions, culture, and religion, therefore dehumanising African people or robbing them of their personality, and dignity. The services in the churches were more European and Western than African. The worship songs, dressing codes and ethical values reflected the western world in Africa. This
was believed to be true Christianity. Some missionaries and mission workers are accused of have worked under the umbrella of the colonisers and therefore adopted their worldview of African people and devalued cultural traditions. Among other charges against the Christian churches is the fact that Christianity was introduced to Africa during the colonial era. It was then that the African Religions and traditions were considered pagan worship. (Parrat 1987:2-3; Mbiti 1969:229-277; Forman 1986:227-231). "The main motive of missions in the 19th century was the Evangelical one, common to Protestants and Roman Catholics, of rescuing as many of the heathen as possible from the everlasting damnation which otherwise awaited them. The grand object was to save as many souls as possible for eternal life in the next world. This was a very powerful motive—more powerful it seems than any that derives from a more liberal theology about God's dealings with non-Christians or from a more discriminating assessment of the value of other religions." (Viddler 1961:252)

Christianity in Southern Africa during this century is a subject of study and higher criticism in seeking to justify syncretism and the teachings of the New Age Movement, Liberal Theology, African Theology and Black Theology including traditional religions and other foreign religions like Islam and
Buddhism. African Theology and Black Theology are growing fields of study this century in Africa and other continents. Their main challenges are cultural and traditional religions. The challenges faced by Christianity today are mainly the result of political struggles against colonisation, traditional beliefs, and the demonic worship. How can one worship God—Christ without loosing his or her cultural values and traditional beliefs?

Culture is the greatest weapon in these struggles. During and after the political struggles for independence of Southern African countries, questions arose about the values of African culture and tradition, and the dignity of African people was highly questioned. This impacted the Christian churches and their theological beliefs.

African churches sought to understand why God allows the Africans to suffer. If He is a just God why does He allow the invaders to oppress His children? Did God intend for certain race to be superior and others inferior? The need for liberation or freedom became a song of the nation of Southern Africa; politically motivated as well as religiously motivated.
6.3. Politics and Christianity in Southern Africa

Political parties started to emerge as a reaction to colonisation. Africans suddenly began to realise that they were being oppressed by the western world. They began to seek liberation from the oppressors. They began to seek values of African culture and tradition, which were believed to have been ignored by the contrapart. Western Imperialism was strongly challenged by Africans from the 19th century but it only reached its climax in the 20th century because of nationalism. This process required many who were committed to build a national spirit—nationalism. Several things were considered to make this a success: (1) A common language, (2) A common government, (3) A common history and (4) A common culture. Nationalism is the feeling of loyalty that people have toward the land in which they live; loyalty to the nation. This was not easy to achieve because at the beginning of 19th century about 1815, African tribal groups were disunited and at war with one another. (Abramowitz 1971:342-362).

Sufferings because of political reasons were not to be addressed or at least the church ignored them. The main reason why the church existed was to help people meet Jesus Christ as saviour to secure their future inheritance in
heaven. "In this period, missions were specifically viewed as proclaiming individual conversion. The wilderness that was to be tamed was no longer located in the physical and social world; the wilderness was in the hearts of man.... The personal experience of the truth taught by Scripture gained in importance. It should be noted that the Evangelical Movement that grew out of the Great Awakening and extended to its associates gave little attention to political issues. Indeed, evangelicals prided themselves in the fact that politics were never mentioned in Methodist politics." (Bosch 1980:146)

In South Africa when the apartheid system was introduced in 1948, the Christian church failed to stand for the truth. They joined in the system and felt comfortable to worship God under such non-biblical conditions. There were churches for the whites, blacks, coloureds, and Indians. And yet the church preached that "we are one before the eyes of the Lord," and "love your neighbour as you love yourself."

The other challenge was that one had to consider respecting his leaders (political leaders) and not question much the suffering or oppression because God would deal with them at the end of times. Therefore one can sing, "Die Here hou my in die holte van Sy hand" which means "The Lord keeps me in
the palm of His hand." Whatever happens or causes pain let it be only to the outward as long as the inward being is not affected. The body can be destroyed but if the heart is pure the future is bright. So much damage has been done because of such policy.

The historical accounts unveiled by the truth and reconciliation commission are unbelievable and often unbearable. For some people truth and reconciliation commission was totally unnecessary. I do not share such view for "the bitter memories of people can be supressed or repressed. But they can not be erased, buried without account. Not can they be healed by supressing or repressing them. The lack of healing, particularly if the memories are sufficiently intense and extensive, will engender not only personal brokenness but social brokenness." (Gerald 1997:3)

Politics of differences is also reflected in the economical powers of the church. There is a tendency to maintain the standard of the so-called "poor people of dark Africa." While the Christian church is in the business of bringing people to Christ, helping people to be civilised, and educating them, demarcations and reservations are often made according to one's background. As I visited different churches and bible colleges of various
denominations it became unavoidable to notice the difference. The plan for church buildings differ according to the standard of the people. It is unavoidable to notice that while in some areas a hostel for bible school students will not be build without putting a geyser, somewhere else it would be recommended not to put one.

The reason for this was the fear that if one should not raise the standard and expectations of the students who come from a lower standard of life, they would not want to return to their home areas to minister. The educated generally leaves the rural areas, where suffering is such a big part of life, to go and work in the cities. It important for the church to realise that it has a role to play in alleviating the suffering that is part of the society as a result of the social injustices of the past. This was one of the major concerns for political liberation. Decolonisation was a process intended to free or liberate Southern African people in all aspects of life.

The process of decolonisation in Africa was known as nationalisation. Its development began after the Second World War. Although some had already gotten their independence. Generally, the date for the beginning of national movements is 1920. The impact of Negritude and African Personality
is not to be underestimated in the process of African Liberation. Blyden, in the process of fighting against racism, wrote: “Now if we are to make an independent nation—a strong nation—we must listen to the songs of our unsophisticated brethren as they sing in their history, as they tell of their tribal or national life, of the achievement of what we call superstitions”. (Martey 1993:14).

Most of the African political leaders were Christians. They were people who had been brought up in the Christian tradition, and even educated by the church in the mission schools. These were the people who led the national independence’s of the 1950’s and 1960’s of Africans in many countries. Many colonial powers had to return to their lands of origin or just give the political leadership to the nationals. (Parrat 1987:2).

The motivation for liberation and nationalism was the discovery of the potential and strengths of African people, which has been ignored and underestimated by the colonial powers. This is partially true on both sides, political powers and Christian church. The culture became the “weapon” for liberation in political situations, and since the church is believed to have conformed to the standards of the colonial power, culture becomes a strong
"weapon" in the process of Africanisation of the Christian faith. (Martey 1993:13).

Southern African countries began getting their independence politically. This had a great impact on the Christian church. Some churches began the process of nationalisation within the church itself. This was a way to liberation from foreign leadership. The Christian community had to deal with issues of Christian African identity. Identity based on culture and traditional religion. The church sought to understand the values of African culture.

The enquiry was aimed at understanding the reason of the continuing flux of missionaries, and foreign leadership within the churches. Although political independence was obtained, there continued to be bondage on the side of the Christians. Christian churches continued to reflect European rituals, music, forms of worship etc. On the other hand, most of the African leaders (political) were Christians who were educated in Christian missions. These leaders directly or indirectly influenced some of the pastors, priests, and theologians (African) to review the interpretation of the Scriptures. E.g. President Kaunda of Zambia is quoted asking, “why the Church in their country was not more African.” (Parrat 1987:5).
The African Theology originated as an attempt to relate Christianity and African culture. At the same time many independent churches emerged or grew, reflecting African traditions in their worship. The independent churches (Christian) or indigenous religions introduced dancing, drums, and music into the worship services. They also carried from cultural and traditional values and beliefs, the idea of healing faith, which is of great attraction to the societies. Deviation, prophecy, and magic became part of the worship and faith in God. These influences are seen in almost every single church in Southern Africa, including the churches that continue to be true to their western pattern of worship. (Parrat 1987:12-21).

The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 100 (1998:3-19) gives a brief outline of issues that African theologians (of all backgrounds) will have to consider in their study of theology and interpretation of the scripture in the 21st century.

1. Theological dialogue in Africa will take place in the context of the ongoing march of modernity with its pressures on, and reshaping of, traditions and cultures.

2. Theological dialogue in Africa will take place in the context of
the on increasing growth in the gap between the rich and the poor.

There is a call to be sensitive to the theological agenda of the poor.

3. Theological dialogue in Africa is set to take place largely around the issues of bread and being. This is, there is a great search for our being—cultural background or identity.

I welcome the call to contextualise the Word of God; call to address issues related to suffering of believers and non-believers; the need of a theology that reflects clear understanding of African culture and practices. However, the danger in this field of study will be the manipulation of the Word to accommodate our self ambitions.

It is true that we belong to the African soil, we belong to each other, and share the same identity (du Toit 1998:36-60). We are faced with same challenges (directly or indirectly) of poverty, suffering, discrimination, unemployment, lack of education, homeless, political unbalance, broken homes and relationships, crime, violence, and several others. Though one of the core agenda and task of African theology is to enable the Christian church in Africa to articulate African Christianity and "to develop her own theologies so that she may cease depending on 'prefabricated theology,
liturgies and traditions' to be not an exotic but a plant become indigenous to the soil" (Maluleke 1997:8) Christians are carry other responsibilities. African theologians have responsibility for the suffering. “Christian ethics...must be accountable to the ineradicable presence of evil and suffering in the Christian life and human life.... But Christian ethics—if it fails to look clearly not only at the suffering of others but also at our responsibility for it, at never-ending possibility that we ourselves or those we love will suffer terribly, and mental illness can enslave the Spirit and decimate dignity and resilience—runs the danger of sanguine superficiality on the one side, and of enervating despair on the other.” (Journal of Bible & Theology 1996:156-161)

According to Mbiti, Christians should be open to the traditional religions and philosophy of Africa and to incorporating into Christian practices, rites that are familiar to Africans. This is, dreams, visions, exorcism and healing, traditional modes of dance and songs and even esteem for ancestors. But all practices must come under the authority of the scripture and not vice versa. (Smith 1982:313). The evangelical church is then vulnerable to accusations for it will not accept some of these traditional practices into the worship of God.
6.4. Traditional Religion/Practices and Christianity in Southern Africa

For some people following Jesus resulted in being homeless. Some traditional practices are not acceptable into the Christian belief. For example, the ancestral worship, witchcraft, demonic worship, and other related practices are neither acceptable nor welcomed into the Christian tradition. It is either the worship of men and demons or full commitment to worship Christ. The word of God is clear as far as its teaching is concerned on this subject. There is only one God. No child of God dare worship other gods or idols.

When the Christian church was introduced in Southern Africa, these traditional practices were already there. People believed they needed to worship their dead relatives to be successful in life. Most Africans (even today) believe that if things are not going well in the family or in one's life; it is the result of not taking good care of the dead. In several areas of black communities, it is a custom to have a special day of sacrifices and worship of the ancestors so that all may go well. Usually in these gatherings, food and beers are taken to the graveyard in the belief that these are dedicated or given to the dead. In some situations, a young girl could be dedicated to the dead as their wife. This girl/lady would not be allowed to have a husband or even a boyfriend for that matter. She becomes a wife of the dead. A small
hut is raised where food is delivered once in a while for the dead. The dead are believed to visit often the hut were they eat and drink what the family has provided. Witchcraft practices were also part of the agenda of the ancestral huts. Another business related to these huts is that of having a mediator between the dead and the living. The dead is believed to communicate through the witch person, his or her desires and what the family should do to have everything in order. These mediators become the people who should perform the rituals as indicated by the dead.

I had a friend who was dedicated to the dead. In her parents' yard, there was a small hut, which belonged to her because she had been married to the dead. We were at the same school but school was almost not necessary for her since she would not be expected to work some place else. This beautiful and attractive girl was not allowed to have a boyfriend. Several guys tried to make a date with her but it seemed impossible. She was interested in some guys but she told me that if she should have a boy friend, either her, a member of the family or her boyfriend would die or suffer. Because of this, she would not consider any of the guys.
One day this girl heard the gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as her Saviour and Lord. This meant she had to be free from the traditional practices, which required her full participation. This girl informed her parents about her decision to follow Jesus Christ. She was told she would go crazy if she left the traditional beliefs and accepted Christ. Nothing could stop her from following Christ. This resulted in her being chased out of the house. She had to find a new accommodation, new family, and friends. It may sound easy to find a solution to this problem, but it is not. The pastor or the church could provide this lady with accommodation, food, clothes, etc., but they could not give that family love of the father, mother, brothers and sisters. This caused pain. The girl became homeless and a stranger to her own family. She was refused to visit; she lost all the privileges of a family member, she was cursed and no one in the family was willing to communicate with her. Even if they would meet on the street, they would not greet her or make conversation with her. This is what I call suffering for Christ. She was in that pain for she chose to follow Christ. Her decision caused pain and suffering but she had joy in the Lord. Her faith in and commitment to the Lord resulted in all the family accepting Christ in their lives. The church was invited to come and destroy the hut and all the belongings for everyone in the family realised that these things are just deceitful.
This is only one example of many of the same kind. These sufferings for the sake of Christ have resulted in living testimonies of the sufferings of Jesus for the salvation of the World. The gospel in this way was acted out to the society. In this, the people who suffer rejoice for they know that their suffering will result in the possible salvation of many. They rejoice to know that they share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Beyond this, there is joy to know that Christ is with them and He is a victorious King. Yes, the joy is also motivated by the future salvation—final salvation, but according to a few interviews with the people who have been in this situation, the greatest joy is motivated by knowing that a soul will be saved because of the decision taken. It may be one soul or several people but there is hope that salvation will take place.

A story is told of a Swazi girl, known as Ngobadlane, who had to choose to follow Christ or traditional practices that are not Christlike. Ngobadlane was one of the first Christians in Swaziland. According to tradition, at end of 1800's and the beginning 1900's, girls had no say in the law. Men and family did as they pleased with the girls. Ngobadlane's family had arranged her wedding with an old man who had six wives already. She was to be the
seventh wife. When she informed her Pastor (Rev. Schmelzenbach) at the mission school where she was a student, he asked her the following question, “What do you want to do now? Do you wish to continue to be a Christian and refuse to go to this heathen man... or do you wish to forsake God and return to the ways of the heathen?” She had to make a choice. Rev. Schmelzenbach would not decide for her. Ngobadlane decided to follow Christ even if it meant death. After great struggle and death threats to the pastor and the girl, the issue ended up in court. The girl with her many wounds still bleeding and crying tears told the court that she would rather die than to do according to the customs of the heathen because she worshipped Christ. She was willing to suffer to the point of death for the sake of Christ. No threat would make her change her mind for Christ was the centre of the life. Her suffering, courage, and testimony helped the government to make the laws that today protect all girls from such treatment. Her willingness to suffer for Christ impacted the society. (Church of the Nazarene 1981:11-14).

Suffering for the sake of Christ is a joy. Christ sufferings were redemptive. The sufferings of His followers need to be redemptive. This does not mean that one must punish his or her body in order to suffer for Christ. God never intended suffering for his people. But when suffering does come, God's
people need to be victorious. The sufferings should not become a temptation that destroys the believer but rather something that strengthens and gives more courage to carry on. It must help the believe see that this is not the holy home yet. To be in a Christian church does not mean that we have arrived at our destination but it helps us see the need to continue to depend on Jesus and keep focused on his faithful promise of the final or full salvation at the end of the times.

6.5. Suffering for the Sake of Christ in Mozambique

Mozambique is considered the poorest country in the world. Its economical situation already suggests suffering. Mozambique was a colony of Portugal. The Portuguese, who arrived in Mozambique in the 15th century, introduced their church, the Roman Catholic Church. This became the most acceptable church in the country, especially in the cities. The Protestant church was restricted. Although missionaries from various denominations began coming in great numbers in the 1900's, the Catholic church continued to be the biggest and strongest. Again, the Roman Catholic Church was the church of the government; it protected and promoted the interests of the oppressors. The law of the government also protected the Church.
Since the Protestant churches were restricted in the cities they began establishing churches, schools and hospitals in the rural areas. Even then, the Portuguese government delayed the development of the church by closing schools and requiring competence in Portuguese language rather than the vernacular. From 1940, Missionaries from Evangelical Churches were restricted entrances into the country. The local preachers were persecuted and imprisoned for their evangelical efforts. In spite of this, the Christian church grew, not only in the rural areas, but it also began to emerge in the cities.

In 1975, Mozambique became independent. Persecution of the Christian church intensified with the implementation of a Marxist-style government. Missionaries of all denominations were chased out of the country and some imprisoned. Some national preachers were also imprisoned. My father is one of the ministers that were put in jail because of the gospel. He worked for the Church of the Nazarene in the literature department in Maputo (what was known as Lorenço Marques), the capital of Mozambique. One day he did not return home. We had no idea what could have happened to him. The following day the search began. My father was nowhere to be found. Later we learned that he was put in jail because of the ministry. He stayed in
jail for several weeks. It was not a easy time for the family, for him or for the church, but my father testifies that he had joy in knowing that he was not in prison for doing wrong but because of the gospel. He also had joy for knowing that Christ is with him, and he was confident that God would take care of his family. He had joy because he knew that the same God who delivered Daniel from the den of lions was able to deliver him. He knew that the same God who was with Paul and Silas in jail was also with him. Above all, he rejoiced for some souls came to know Christ through his testimony in jail. He also rejoiced because Christ’s victory, which is manifested even at this moment through his presence, will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ. There will be no more persecution or suffering. Christ will reign forever!

Under the government of Marxism-Leninism, mission properties were taken, closed down or used for government purposes. Destruction was seen all over the country. Ideas like, ‘There is No God’ and ‘Where is God’ became the song of the government. Children and young people were restricted from worship; only adults were allowed to attend Sunday services. This was a dark moment for the church. It seemed impossible to carry on with the gospel.
The civil war made it even worse. The war that went on for 16 years brought a lot of destruction and insecurity into the life of the people in general, but in the midst of the suffering, the church was able to live up to the standard. The church found joy in serving God faithfully even in this time of suffering. As Christians, we were challenged to hold on to Jesus. It did not really matter if we would die, starve, or were put in jail. What was important was to obey God in all situations, to allow God to do His will through us. Even if we die, or suffer the challenge was “let it be for the glory of God”. This gave us joy. We rejoiced for Christ is Lord and He never leaves nor forsakes his own.

The SABC 2 on the 21 of March 1999 broadcast a program on the Role of the Church in the post war Mozambique. According to this media the church was a symbol of hope to the nation during the time of war and it continues to be even today. The church supported the people through feeding schemes, other relief projects and medical assistance. The message of hope and joy in Jesus Christ became a great comfort to the nation. This was a hard reality and not a romantic experience. (SABC 2 – Kairos Productions). The commitment of the Christian church resulted in great confidence in the church. The government so often comes to the church to plead for assistance. The joy is intensified by the tremendous growth, both numerical
and spiritual, all over the country. The faith of the believers was made genuine through these difficult situations. Preaching the gospel has become the basis for social upliftment.

Conclusion

"Persecution takes many forms: Loss of job, unable to get government assistance, denied your basic rights; Not allowed to meet publicly for worship; You cannot find a spouse you can marry; your children are taken away from you; Your house or church is ransacked or burned, your crops are destroyed; Imprisonment, kidnapping, torture, rape, slavery; Death: yours or your family's." (Prayer for the Persecuted Church 1998:1-2). Ackerman (1998:14) quotes Rita Brok saying, "To be alive today is to live with pain...we live in a world come of age, and a world no longer innocent about the suffering human beings can inflict on each other." I can almost hear the cry all over Southern Africa:

"God bring peace to Africa, let it start in me.

Shine your love onto our land so that all the world may see.

Bring your joy into our land; bring your power into our land

Bring your peace into our land, and let it start with me"

(Campbell 1997).
Karen Campbell wrote this song in Malawi and Bible School students sang it. They realised that they were faced and will be faced by several challenges but never to be defeated for Christ is Lord. Campbell argues that for one to be able to bring peace and joy to the dying world, there is a need to have personal experience of God's love, peace and joy, thus she writes, “God bring peace to Africa, let it start in me.”

The joy of Christians in Southern Africa is motivated by the acknowledgement of God's power and intervention in their lives at present and the hope for the future salvation, to be revealed at the end of times. The nature of this joy is divine. It is joy that goes beyond one's circumstances. Those who seek joy of this world will never find it for this is only motivated by short time pleasure.

Satan has been defeated. He has no power to destroy the children of God. Yes, he is busy trying to destroy the church but he will never succeed. “...We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” (2 Cor. 4:7-9). “The Christian community's trust in Christ
and God and God’s goodness, through God’s ‘living’ Word (1:23); renews the ‘living’ hope that created the community (1:3). This hope will not be disappointed (2:6).” (Hbbie 1993:171).

Christians in Southern Africa rejoice in suffering for they know that Christ is with them. They also rejoice because they know that their suffering is a living testimony of laying down their lives for the sake of others just as Christ did at Calvary. Christian suffering is redemptive. It is true that sometimes Christians may question why God allows things to happen to them but that does not suggest that they doubt the power of God. This happens because Christians are also human beings like others. They are not supernatural beings. They feel the pain. Human beings are not perfect beings. The questioning of God’s justice in situations like this is a result of infirmities. But grace is to God for He is constantly at work in the lives of His children. He continuously cleanses and transforms His children. Therefore joy is possible all the time.
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