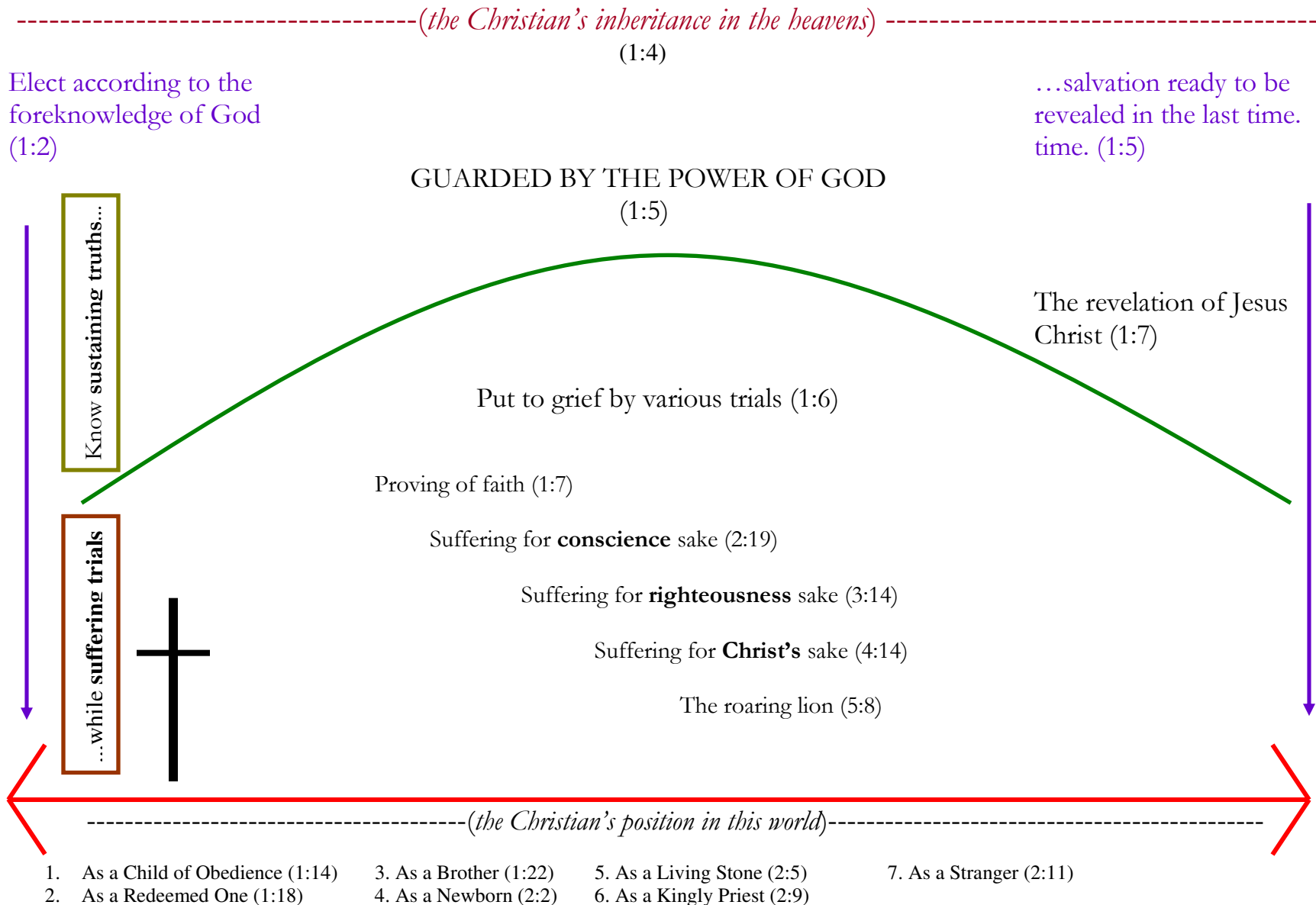


Christian Suffering According to 1st Peter

By Vin Santanelli



***A Brief Explanation of the Chart**

The following explanation is meant to clarify our chart. We hope this chart and explanation will enlighten the reader regarding some very important truths found in 1st Peter. It is the opinion of the author that a good chart should support (not supplant) the truth of God and, in the end, leave one more dependant upon His Word and not some chart, be it however good.

Peter's Epistle

Peter's first epistle pictures believers upon the earth as the house of God. (1 Pet. 4:17) As such, they are under the government of God (for "judgment begins at the house of God") and responsible to Him according to the positions they occupy in this world (see the 7 positions listed at the bottom of the chart). While in this hostile world, believers will experience trials and sufferings as they seek to please their Lord. As they wait for the world to come, they should expect to suffer for the truth (4:12), know that such suffering will bring them glory (1:7; 4:13) and, therefore, not seek self-vindication now (2:21-23), but instead wait for "Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." (4:5)

The Top Line

The Christian's inheritance in the heavens. (1:4)

The Christian's inheritance is "incorruptible and undefiled and unfading." It is "reserved" in the heavens for the believer. We have illustrated this by the top line.

Over The Arch

Guarded by the power of God (1:5)

The power of God guards the believer "through faith." His power protects and sustains them, as they trust Him in a world beset by difficulty and sin.

The Two Downward Arrows

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. (1:2)

The believer's identity as an elect one (according to God's foreknowledge) highlights a reality that has been established in eternity past. This is why the downward arrow points to the arrow on the bottom going to the left. Also, the downward arrow is on the left side of the cross. Election precedes the death of Christ in time.

This truth causes the anxious heart to remain calm, since God's sovereign election shows that He is in control and has a purpose for all things, especially His own.

Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1:6)

1st Peter points the believer to the coming kingdom of Christ. Notice the following:

Salvation ready to be revealed. (1:5) Revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:7, 13) The day of visitation. (2:12) Revelation of His glory. (4:13) The glory about to be revealed. (5:1) The manifestation of the Chief Shepherd. (5:2)

While 2nd Peter also mentions the kingdom of Christ (2 Pet. 1:11), it takes us to the Day of God (2 Pet. 3:12) and the day of eternity (2 Pet. 3:18).

Viewed together, Peter's epistles launch us into the future, beyond this world and into eternity. This is why we find the second arrow pointing downward towards the bottom arrow which points to the right.

By pointing to the future, Peter encourages his readers with the fact that God will reward the faithful (1:7; 4:13) and will bring every matter into judgment (4:4-5,18). This is a great encouragement to those who suffer injustice in the world.

1st Box

Know Sustaining Truths...

Truths regarding the Christian's election, his inheritance, God's protective power, and future salvation are truths that, when known, will sustain the believer as he suffers in this world—giving him the strength to bare hardships for Christ. These truths are listed above the arch labeled “guarded by the power of God.” This is the reason why we find the first box above the arch.

2nd Box

...While Suffering Trials

When the Christian enters into these sustaining truths, he will be in a much better position to meet the difficulties and trials presented to his faith. Hence, the second box entitled “while suffering trials,” which is placed under the arch. Also, under the arch are highlighted the various forms of suffering that Christians will face when true to the truth.

Under the Arch

Put To Grief By Various Trials. (1:6)

Peter progressively highlights different kinds of sufferings that Christians should face in this world. They are given to us in a moral order. Unlike the sufferings of a martyr that lead to death, the sufferings of 1st Peter have more to do with those trials that come by virtue of a Christian's day by day faithfulness to the Truth. Here are the “various trials” a Christian can suffer under:

First, there is the general proving of faith. (1:7) The path of suffering starts out with recognizing the necessity of Christian faithfulness in the face of trial. When faith overcomes the fiery trials of life, such faith will “be found to praise and glory and honor in the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Second, there is suffering for conscience sake. (2:19) This suffering comes as a result of an individual knowing the truth, yet willing to silently suffer unjustly anyway. It is more of a personal reckoning between a soul and God. It is suffering because of the truth one understands in his soul.

Third, there is suffering for righteousness sake. (3:14) This goes a step further. This suffering comes as a result of “doing what’s right.” (3:17) Righteousness here is the outward manifestation of truth in the soul, not simply truth on the conscience. Unlike suffering for conscience sake, here the individual is not silent, but is ready to give a defense for the hope within him and continue in good behavior. (3:15-16) This suffering is more outward and relational.

Fourth, there is suffering for the name of Christ. (4:14) Here we see the higher form of suffering—that which is connected with the testimony of Christ Himself. This suffering comes as a result of a believer identifying himself with Christ in such a way as so as to incur public reviling and scorn. (4:14)

Fifth, there is the adversity of the lion. (5:8) Satan does not turn his head towards a believer that is unwilling to suffer for conscience, righteousness, or Christ’s name. But those who are willing to walk such a path will become the special object of satanic adversity. This is why the enemy is listed at the end, for he especially concentrates on those willing to fully suffer for the Truth.

Bottom Line

The Christian’s Position in The World

The Christian is viewed in different relationships according to seven positions he occupies. Seven is the number for perfection and completeness, so Peter’s epistle gives us a complete view of the Christian’s position and responsibilities in the world.

1. As a child of obedience—in relation to the Father. (1:14)
2. As a redeemed one—in relation to the work of Christ. (1:18)
3. As a brother—in relation to other Christians. (1:22)
4. As a newborn babe—in relation to God’s Word. (2:2)
5. As a living stone—in relation to Christ in glory (the assembly) (2:5)
6. As a kingly priest—in relation to God. (2:9)
7. As a stranger and pilgrim—in relation to the world. (2:11)