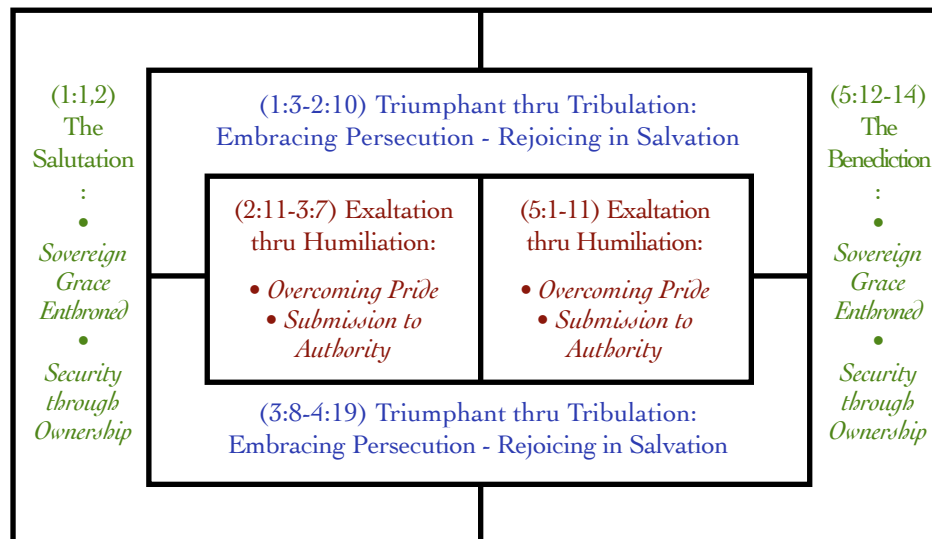


Introduction: There are six main divisions in this book as a whole, unfolding three basic ideas. The first idea is *sovereign grace enthroned*. The second idea is *triumph through tribulation*. The third idea is *exaltation through humiliation*.

This letter deals with two great problems facing the Christian life: persecution and pride. The first problem exists outside of ourselves, whereas the second problem arises from within ourselves. Thus we are "pressed down" and "puffed up". It is noticeable from the outset that the first and final solution to both problems is the sovereign grace of God. We may therefore conclude that God's grace is manifested in two fundamental principles: (1) Triumph through Tribulation and (2) Exaltation through Humiliation.

I. Sovereign Grace Enthroned (1:1,2; 5:12-14). The striking similarities between the salutation and the benediction find their unity in the sovereign grace of God. Grace and peace join together forming the basic structure of the Christian life. The foundation of this structure is the saving work of God in electing, sanctifying and redeeming His people. This great truth enables the persecuted Christian to know that he is a child of God and has overcome the world, "because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 Jn 4:4) The sovereign grace of God also humbles the proud Christian by reminding



him that "no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:29-31) God manifests His sovereign grace *through* tribulation and humiliation.

II. Triumphant through Tribulation (1:3-2:10; 3:8-4:19). Too many Christians attempt to run away from tribulation when it is actually through the fiery furnace that God perfects His people. Rather than seeking deliverance from danger, the believer should be seeking deliverance from those things in his life which tribulation is designed to purge. "When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie, My grace, all sufficient shall be thy supply; the flame shall not hurt thee, I only design, thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine." (John Rippon) It should therefore not be surprising when Peter exhorts these Christians to "greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:" and "rejoice,

inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 1:6; 4:13) We rejoice because the God of sovereign grace is refining us for His glory and good pleasure. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Pet. 4:19)

III. Exaltation through Humiliation (2:11-3:7; 5:1-11). These last two sections of the letter outline the basic structure of human and divine relations. Authority and submission are highlighted throughout, detailing the practical issues associated with pride and humility. Although the proud in heart seek after honour and glory, these are reserved for the humble. "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Pet. 5:5-7)

This first epistle of Peter therefore teaches us how to be strong in suffering and humble in heart through the sovereign grace of God: "But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet. 5:10,11)