

Established Strengthened and Settled

A Study of the Life and Epistles of Peter



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“Established, Strengthened, and Settled”
(The Life and Epistles of Peter)

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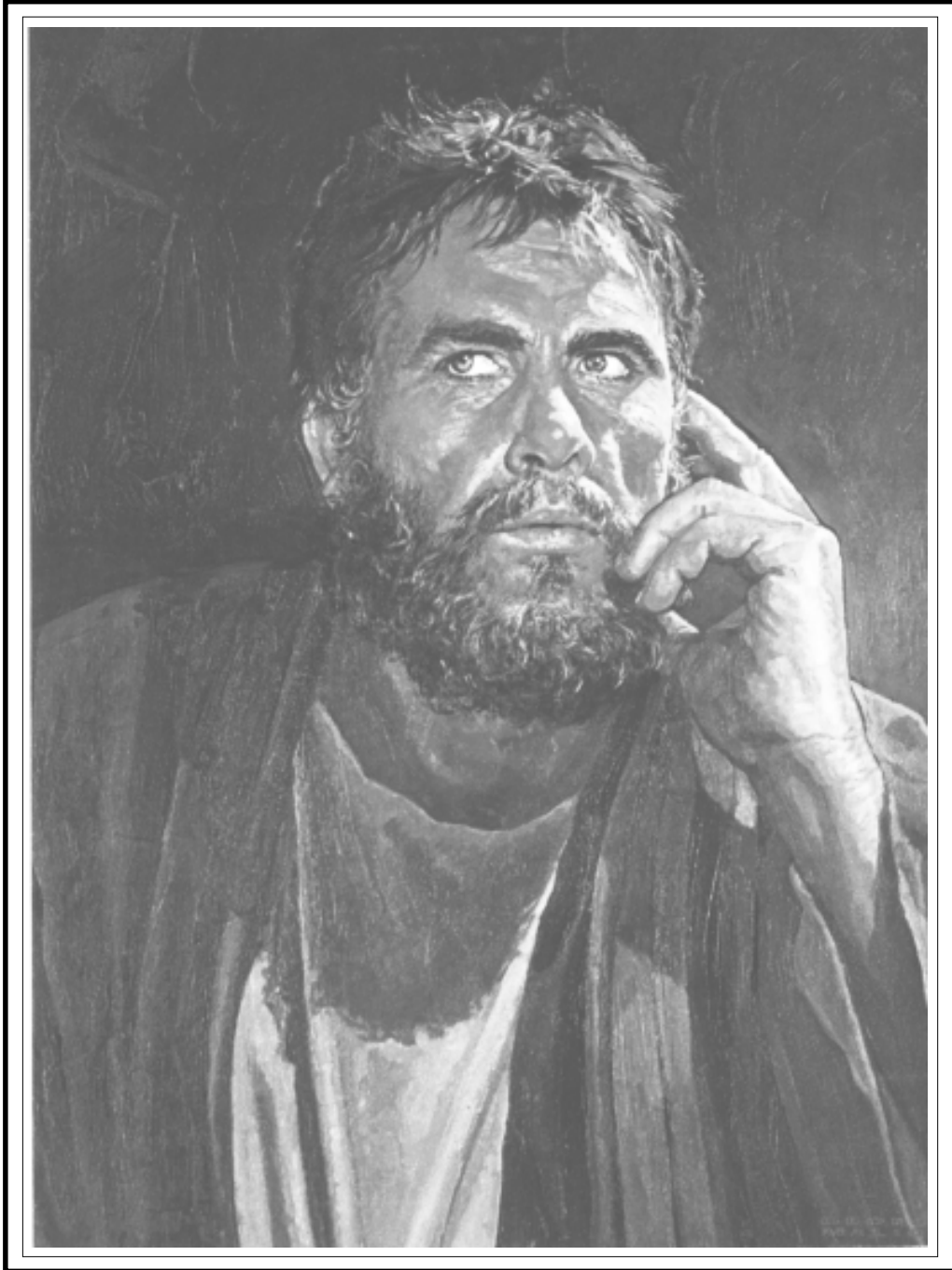
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PETER



Outspoken Leader of the Twelve Apostles

“...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.” 1 Peter 5:10

DEDICATION

With deep gratitude and loving esteem, this *Christian Maturity Series* is dedicated to the honorable

Brian J. Bailey

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my spiritual father and able teacher from my youth in the sacred mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, whose exemplary life and ministry have inspired my love for Christ and His Truth; who has always been to me, and to all of us who know him, the ideal Christian gentleman, irreproachable and charitable. And above all, he is a man approved of God, a man to whom God shows His face!

ESTABLISHED, STRENGTHENED, and SETTLED

Introduction

The Epistles of I-II Peter were authored by Peter himself in the maturity of his life, just prior to his martyrdom in A.D. 66. Both epistles are saturated with the Apostle's life-experiences and reflect a polished and perfected Peter. These two inspired letters were his final admonitions to the younger, oncoming generations of the Church.

As a youth, Peter had been adventurous, self-confident, aggressive, daring, rash, self-willed, impulsive, outspoken, inconsistent, quick-tempered, presumptuous, and argumentative. In spite of all his shortcomings, Peter had an immense hunger for God. He was eager to hear “the words of eternal life.” God saw the desire of his heart, and converted this rough fisherman into one of the finest saints of all time. This transformation, however, did not come overnight.

It would not be possible to fully appreciate Peter's two epistles without first having an understanding of his early years as an immature follower of Christ. In this study we are *comparing* the youthful, unrefined Peter with the fully developed Apostle Peter who later in life had become “established, strengthened, and settled” and one of the chief foundation stones of the Church.

We are also considering some of the same character flaws in Peter that we see in ourselves—defects that require a deathblow if we would be a partaker of the coming glory. The subject of “glory” is found no less than 16 times in Peter's epistles—a glory that is preceded by much suffering.

Therefore, in this exciting study, we are not simply assimilating Peter's two epistles. In actual fact, we are looking at *the entire life of Peter*, a man who ranks among the most colorful of all the New Testament characters.

PETER'S BACKGROUND

From Galilee

In the time of Christ, Palestine was divided into three main regions. *Galilee* was to the north, *Samaria* was in the center, and *Judea* was in the south. Jerusalem and the temple were in Judea. In traveling from Galilee to Judea, it was necessary to pass through Samaria, where the travelers were not always received graciously. There was great animosity between the Samaritans and the Judeans because of their religious differences (cf. Lk. 9:51-56, Jn. 4:9).

Galilean Characteristics

When our Lord prayed all night to know which disciples to select as his 12 apostles, the Heavenly Father directed Him to choose all Galileans. God by-passed those who were born and raised in Judea, possibly because they were so entrenched in tradition. There was a new message to be brought to birth and proclaimed, and the Lord would only ordain men who were pliable and *open for change*. He needed new wineskins, vessels that were elastic. The historian Josephus and the Talmud (or Jewish writings) describe the regional characteristics of the Galileans as follows:

Josephus: “The Galileans were ever fond of innovation, by nature disposed to change and sedition, to follow a leader and to begin an insurrection; were quick-tempered, and given to quarreling.”

The Talmud: “The Galileans were anxious for honor more than for money. They were quick-tempered, impulsive, emotional, and easily aroused by an appeal to adventure, and loyal to the end.”

All the apostles were Galileans, either by birth or by residence (cf. Acts 1:11, 2:7). These regional characteristics are vividly seen in every one of them, especially in Peter. They were excitable, adventurous, impulsive, ready to support a new and unusual cause, and open for a change of order.

One's temperament and disposition descend from two sources: 1.) ancestry - the traits passed on to us through our bloodline; and, 2.) the region where we grew up. Our personality is molded by the spirit of the locality where we were raised. The Galilean characteristics come out strongly in Peter, and they blemished his testimony. These foreign elements contaminated his faith. Therefore, Peter had to have many specific trials to purge him of this *Galilean mentality*. The same mentality was clearly manifested in James and John and all of the other apostles as well. On the other hand, they possessed great *openness of spirit*, a quality needed for the next move of God.

Hometown

Peter was from Bethsaida, a little town in Galilee (Jn.1:44) as also was his brother Andrew, and Philip. Bethsaida was on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (Mk. 6:45), just a few miles from Capernaum, where Jesus made His headquarters during His ministry in Galilee. Peter lived in Capernaum (Mk.1:21, 29-31) at the time of Christ's ministry there. Nazareth, also in Galilee, was about 20 miles southwest of Capernaum.

Peter grew up in a devout home, evidenced by the fact that he had “never eaten anything common or unclean” since his youth (cf. Acts 10:14). He was ceremonially meticulous and possessed deep spiritual convictions. Also, he eagerly awaited the coming of the Messiah (Jn.1:40-41).

PETER'S LIFE IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

(Pages 2 - 9)

Eighteen areas in Peter's life that needed to be converted before he could strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32)

1. Peter was a man who said *never*. (Mt. 16:22; 26:33, Jn.13:8, Acts 10:13-14)
2. And wondered how many times he had to forgive before he could hold a grudge. (Mt.18:21,22)
3. Who inquired: "What is in this for me? What do I get out of this?" (Mt. 19:27, Acts 1:6)
4. And always had something to say, even when there was nothing to say. (Mk. 9:2-5)
5. He was robbed of anointed words when he looked at his circumstances. (Mt.14:27-31)
6. And rebuked and corrected his teacher, the Lord himself. (Mt.16:22)
7. Who set himself up for unnecessary trials by bold, daring, rash statements. (Mt. 26:33)
8. He also contended with Christ about something He said was in his heart. (Mk.14:29-31)
9. "I am ready", he asserted, when Christ said, "You are not ready." (Lk. 22:33)
10. Peter jumped into wrong causes: "I am ready to go into prison and to die with thee." (Lk. 22:33).
11. His faith was *mixed* with his own ideas and presumption, and needed purifying. (Lk. 22:32)
12. He struggled with self-rejection when he failed, and needed public restoration . (Jn. 21:15-17)
13. Who fell asleep in the garden when Jesus needed him most. (Mt. 26:40-41)
14. And humiliated and misrepresented Christ when, in a rage, he cut off a man's ear. (Jn.18:10-11)
15. Peter thought he was more spiritual and dedicated than his brethren. (Mt. 26:33, Jn. 21:15)
16. And barged into matters without thinking—possessing an impulsive nature. (Jn. 20:3-6)
17. He was independent and unbridled. As a young man, he went wherever he wanted. (Jn. 21:18)
18. Peter was guilty of comparing ("Who is the greatest?" "What will this man do?" - Jn. 21:21-22)

Peter's Need to be Converted

1. The Man Who Said Never

Peter was *firm* about everything he believed. Ten years after the resurrection when he was commanded in a vision, “Rise Peter, kill and eat,” he responded; “No Lord, for I have *never* eaten any thing that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:13-14). In the vision, God was showing His acceptance of the Gentiles, who were generally considered “common and unclean” by the Jews. There were still traces of prejudice and tradition in Peter and the other apostles (cf. Acts 10:28, 11:2-3). Peter's response of *never* related to his upbringing, but it was hindering many Gentiles from coming into the Church. Peter, who often blurted out “never” ended up saying “*ever*.” And when he was converted in this particular area of his life, he was able to strengthen many Gentile brethren.

Nothing will ever change in our lives if we do not allow God to change our *minds* (Rom.12:2). Actually, this is quite a sobering thought! On several other occasions, Peter insisted that he would never (under any circumstances) tolerate certain things. In John 13:8, he protested, “Thou shalt *never* wash my feet.” Christ replied, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Peter's reaction to this was, “Well then, give me a whole bath. Wash me all over, my hands, and my head.” Now he was going to the other extreme—from no washing at all, to being washed all over. With Peter, it was an “all or nothing” situation. Frequently he gave no contemplation or forethought to his actions and words.

In Matthew 26:33 Peter asserted, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I *never* be offended.” Peter was sincere when he made this declaration. He was wholehearted for the Lord, but was following Christ in his own strength. (*Self-strength* is a big obstacle for many young Christians, and it leads to major let downs.) Peter was so emotionally aroused that he was paying no attention at all to the warning his Master teacher had just given him. He stressed that in order for the Scripture to be fulfilled (Zech.13:7), the pressure would be so great that all his apostles would flee from Him. Peter disagreed with Him vehemently, setting himself up for a terrible failure.

In Matthew 16:21-22, after Christ revealed to his disciples that he must suffer many things and be killed, Peter took hold of the Lord and began to rebuke him, saying “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” Never! This shall *never* be, Lord. Why was Peter so insistent that this must never be? Because it was upsetting his expectations of grandeur. His calculations were something like this: “If my Hero dies, so will all my dreams of power, prestige, and rulership.” Young Peter still did not properly understand that a crown is always preceded by a cross. These issues that baffled Peter as an immature believer, later became his greatest emphasis in life, as we will see later in his two epistles. Repeatedly, Peter mentions the sufferings of Christ, but also the glory that follows (see 1 Pet.1:11, 1:21, 4:13-14, 5:1, 5:10).

Matthew 16:23 - “But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” And then Christ proceeded (in verses 24-26) to tell the disciples that the way to *life* is by way of a denial of self. Because of the self-seeking motives in Peter's heart (motives that savoured the things of man), Satan gained an entrance *into Peter*, who urged Christ not to go to the cross.

2. How Many Times Must I Forgive Before I Can Hold a Grudge?

Matthew 18:21-22 “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say *not* unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” Seventy times seven is another way of saying “Do not bother to count.” Forgiveness is for our own sake as much as it is for our offenders. When we are *unable* to forgive, our hearts become infected with evil and bitterness (Heb.12:15).

By the act of forgiving we are *releasing* others from the offenses they have committed against us. Otherwise we are keeping them as prisoners in our thoughts. As the prison keeper, we are in prison too, preoccupied with the debts our captives owe us. Under the new covenant, Christ has made provision for the believer to be able to forgive and release others. The Master Teacher taught his disciples to pray daily: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mt. 6:12). “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt. 6:14-15).

In the account of the woman who brought an alabaster box to Jesus (Lk. 7:36-50), the Lord made this interesting statement: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loveth much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Lk. 7:47). Our love for God depends upon understanding *how much* we have been forgiven. The more light we have, the more aware we become of the multitude of trespasses from which we have been freed, and therefore, the more we love God. This makes us indebted to release others of their obligations to us. The legalist or self-righteous person feels he has offended very little, and has little to be pardoned. Therefore, he loves little.

Peter's failures and shortcomings in life brought much brokenness of spirit and mercy for others. He had come to realize how much he had been forgiven. At one point, Peter was unable to forgive or accept himself. Perhaps he felt he had committed the unpardonable sin or had permanently lost the favor of God. Peter had denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. Yet, Christ had not rejected him; *Peter had rejected himself*. The Lord's acceptance and forgiveness of Peter rescued him from self-destruction. Psalm 130:4 declares, “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be [revered].” People cast off all restraint when they think there is no hope or forgiveness. Forgiveness makes it possible for men and women to regain self-respect and in turn have respect for God. Let us therefore show acceptance to others and forgive “seventy times seven.”

3. What Do I Get Out of This?

“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” (Mt.19:27). This is another way of asking, “What are we going to get out of this proposition?” On the other hand, this question posed by Peter is not necessarily a selfish one. When we forsake everything to follow Jesus, it is important to know the purpose and prize for which we are sacrificing our all. Christ did not rebuke Peter for asking. He replied in verses 28-29: “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [i. e. the resurrection] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also [referring to the 12 apostles] shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And *every one* that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

At this point, Peter and his fellow apostles had little comprehension of the eternal calling. Their minds were engrossed with an earthly kingdom and an outward demonstration of power. Right up to the time of the cross (even at the last supper) there remained much ambition and competition among them as they argued about who would be the greatest (Lk. 22:24). Peter especially wanted to know—“What shall we have, therefore?” What am I going to have for myself? After walking with Christ for only three and a half years, it would have been impossible for these young men to understand the deepest motives of their own hearts. Often it takes *many years* to discover the person we truly are.

In the process of time Peter learned that life's true purpose is *not* possessing a great ministry or looking successful. His Savior did not live for outward success but was willing to look like a failure, consummating His ministry upon a cruel cross. Life's true purpose is to receive “a crown of glory from the Chief Shepherd that fadeth not away” when He appears (1 Pet. 5:4). This crown is *only* given to the faithful. It is placed upon the head of one whose mind is clothed with humility. The true purpose of life is to please the One who has called us, and to completely finish the work He has committed to our trust. Our ultimate objective is to be completely His, to love every part of Him, and to be thoroughly espoused to Him. We should never serve Christ simply for what He will give us. We should offer ourselves completely to Him because we love Him dearly and because He is worthy of our best. Yes, there is a crown to be gained or lost (Rev. 3:11), but the crown itself is not the most important issue. In losing a crown, we have lost the favor of the King who crowns us. In receiving a crown, we receive the King's smile, and the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

4. The Man Who Always Had Something to Say

Mark 9:4-6 - “And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he [knew] not what to say; for they were sore afraid.” Peter always managed to have something to say, even when there was nothing to say. Peter's unbridled mouth ensnared him on numerous occasions as a young believer. Most sins we commit are with the tongue. In Proverbs 10:19 it states: “In the multitude of words there [lacketh] not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” The ability to control the tongue is a mark of Christian perfection and wisdom (Jas. 3:2-12). As an older man, Peter added temperance (or self-control) to his knowledge (2 Pet.1:6). Self-control includes bridling the mouth as well as the emotions. Sometimes the wisest thing we can demonstrate is *silence*. Peter had to learn to be a harmless lamb, like his Lord (Isa. 53:7, 1 Pet.1:19, 2:21-23).

5. Peter Was Robbed of Anointed “Words” From God

In the account of Matthew 14:27-31, we see that anointed words we receive from the Lord can be stolen if we take our eyes off the Lord and focus on adverse circumstances. Peter received a life-giving Word from Christ when he beckoned him to “come.” Peter stepped out on that Word and was upheld by that Word. When he took his eyes off the Master and looked at the raging sea and the boisterous winds, immediately he started to sink. How often does this happen to a saint of God! God gives promises to his people, but when the storms of life come and put them to the test, their hearts often faint. When Israel departed from Egypt, repeatedly they were reminded of the land of promise that awaited them. Most of them never inherited the promises because the difficulties en route to Canaan land hardened their hearts. Therefore, our whole being must *continue* to stay focused upon the One who issued the promise, or we will not see the promise fulfilled (cf. Heb. 2:1, Jn. 8:31-32).

6. He Rebuked and Corrected His Teacher and Shepherd

Matthew 16:22 - “Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” How inappropriate it is for a pupil to rebuke and correct his teacher. In this case, it was even more unfitting because the teacher was the Lord Himself. How crude of Peter! He was like a rough piece of timber that needed to be sawed, shaped, sanded, smoothed, and polished. Certainly none of us have ever been guilty of correcting and rebuking our teacher or pastor!

It is interesting to see in Matthew 16:16-17 that it was Peter who had been given the revelation from the Father that Jesus was the awaited Messiah. Yet, in 16:22-23, Peter quickly became a channel for the adversary. One moment he was hearing from God, and in the next moment he was a voice for the enemy. Thus, we see the mixture of motives in Peter's heart and his need of conversion.

“But [Christ] turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Here is a sample of the chaff that had to be sifted from the wheat in Peter's life (Lk. 22:31). Part of Peter's heart dearly loved the Lord, but there was another part of him that savored the things of the flesh. This dual nature is what invited Satan to work through his life to oppose the purposes of God. Remember, Satan is attracted to those things in our lives that are compatible to his nature.

7. He Set Himself Up For Unnecessary Trials by Bold, Daring, Rash Statements

Matthew 26:33 - “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I *never* be offended.” Here we see the problem of *self-strength* in Peter. He was “confident in the flesh” as it says in Philippians 3:3-4. He was “glorying in the flesh” (Gal. 6:13). Confidence in the flesh and glorying in the flesh are expressions used of those who are strong in themselves and proud of their own ability to work things out, apart from God's grace. Peter did not realize at this stage of his Christian development that he was boasting and bragging of his superior ability to endure pressure. The adversary heard his daring remarks and put him to the test, striking fear into his heart and inducing him to deny the Lord. Unfortunately, Satan is allowed to test us in those areas where we make bold declarations. This is another example of the chaff in Peter that Satan was sifting through. This test was created by Peter himself. He could have averted this temptation if only he had listened to the pleadings of his Master teacher. We, too, could avoid *unnecessary* trials and tests if we learned to bridle our tongue and listen more to our godly teachers and to the still small voice of the Spirit.

8. He Contended With Christ About Something He Said Was in His Heart

Mark 14:29-31 - “But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. *But he spake the more vehemently*, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.” In these passages, we see that Peter is literally arguing with Christ. He is disagreeing with Him about issues the Lord said were resident in his heart. Peter is saying: “I am not like that Lord. I would never do that. You are mistaken, you do not understand me. You do not know what I am made of.” It was very much in the heart of young Peter to react to and disagree with his teachers and with the Lord Himself. The truth is, *we do not know what is in our hearts*, nor do we know what we would do under the pressure of certain situations. In all humility we should pray, “Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from all evil.”

9. “I Am Ready”

“And [Peter] said unto him, Lord, *I am ready to go* with thee, both into prison, and to death.” Christ's reply to Peter was, “No, you are not ready!” (Lk. 22:33). For one thing, it was not the will of God for Peter to go to prison and to death at this time in his life. Therefore, there was no grace for Peter to attempt to do so. God does not give us grace (divine enablement) to carry out *our own* causes. He only gives grace to accomplish *His* program. Many enthusiastic Christians believe they are ready for God's call, but they are unaware of the special needs in their own personal lives. Moses tried unsuccessfully to initiate his own ministry, but was out of sync with God's purposes. He was several years ahead of God and was still in need of much preparation (Acts 7:22-30).

10. He Jumped Into Wrong Causes

Luke 22:33 - “And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.” Peter's impulsive nature induced him to jump into *wrong causes* for Christ. This is also evidenced in John 18:10 when Peter rashly drew a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest. Peter had an abundance of *unharnessed* zeal and energy. Often it was not the Spirit of the Lord or *true faith* that prompted Peter, but his own desire to defend the Lord, or to do something for God. We will do more harm than good to the kingdom of God if we try to serve God our way. If we do not gather the harvest God's way, we will end up scattering it in every direction (cf. Mt.12:30, Lk.11:23). Ask the Lord: “Is this endeavor born of your Spirit, or is it born of my own emotional need to do something for God, or to make my mark in life? Lord, show me my motives!”

11. Peter's Faith Was Mixed With Presumption

Luke 22:32 - “But I have prayed for thee, *that thy faith fail not*: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Peter's faith was mixed with his own ideas and presumption, just as today's popular *hyper-faith* message. His faith needed to be purified of natural elements (cf. 1 Pet.1:7). He was striving to serve the Lord his way, not God's way. Peter asserted his willingness to die with the Lord, but dying with Christ was not God's plan for his life, nor was any grace made available for that. God still had another 36 years for Peter on this earth to accomplish a very important ministry.

Real faith is *totally supernatural*. Faith is “not of ourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Peter's faith was *mixed* with his natural mind and emotions. Therefore his attempt to defend the Lord was done in his own strength and he failed miserably, cursing and denying the Lord. This experience nearly destroyed him. Christ knew that Peter was going to suffer a tremendous humiliation, and he prayed that his faith would not fail. Later Peter needed public affirmation by the Lord Himself.

12. Peter Struggled With Self-rejection When He Failed

John 21:15-17 - Three times our Lord told Peter in front of his brethren, “*Feed my sheep*.” In doing this, Christ was publicly reinstating Peter to his ministry. Peter had been so cast down and humiliated after denying the Lord that his faith had nearly failed, and he was no longer able to preach the gospel. (People who live on emotional “highs” generally sink to great “lows.”) Christ had not rejected Peter for his failure—Peter had rejected himself and was unable to forgive himself. Our Lord understood Peter's pain of failure, and He rescued him from the pit of condemnation and despair. Because of God's grace to Peter, several weeks later he was able to preach powerfully on the day of Pentecost and assume his role as the leader of the 12 apostles.

13. He Fell Asleep in Gethsemane When Jesus Needed Him Most

Matthew 26:40-41 - “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, *and saith unto Peter*, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Just a couple of hours before, Peter had boasted, “Though all men forsake thee, I will never,” and “I am ready to go into prison and unto death with thee.” Now, he was not even able to stay awake for a few minutes while the Master agonized in His greatest hour of temptation. Peter's strength of will and determination had wilted in just a few short hours. Peter wrote in his first epistle, some 35 years later: “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever” (1 Pet.1:24-25). Peter had come to realize that man at his best, with all of his good intentions, self-strength, and self-improvements, is like the glory of a flower that quickly fades (cf. Psa. 39:5). Only what is wrought in our lives by the eternal Word of God can stand the test of time and pressure.

14. Peter Humiliated and Misrepresented the Lord

John 18:10-11 - “Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Christ had taught the apostles for three years not to resist evil, but to turn the other cheek. Peter's action to defend the Lord totally misrepresented the message of Christ and undoubtedly brought shame to Him. Peter was not aiming for the right ear, he was trying to take off the man's head. However, there is another analogy we could make here. The sword represents the Word of God, and the ear the instrument of hearing. How often do zealous young Christians *cut off* people's ability to hear by wrong application of God's sword. The sword must be used with skill, meekness, and wisdom (Song 3:8).

15. Peter Thought He Was More Dedicated Than His Brethren

Matthew 26:33 - “Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” Peter believed he loved the Lord Jesus Christ more than his brethren. He felt that his level of dedication was a notch or two higher than the rest. Thus we see the spirit of competition resident in the heart of Peter, and also an uncrucified ego. After he failed miserably, the Lord gently asked Peter: “Lovest thou me more than these [i. e. more than these your brethren]?” (Jn. 21:15).

16. He Barged Into Matters Without Thinking

John 20:3-6 - “Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple [John], and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie.” Here again we see an action that so depicts the overall impulsive nature of Peter. John, who was probably the youngest of the apostles, outran Peter to the grave. His contemplative disposition, however, would not permit him to venture inside the unsealed tomb. He just stood there and observed in reverential awe. Such was not the case with Peter, who entered abruptly into the holy sepulchre.

17. Peter Was Like An Unbridled Colt When He Was Young

John 21:18-19 - “Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

As a young man, Peter had an independent spirit. He went where he wanted and did as he pleased, although certainly he was not living a life of gross disobedience. There is nothing wrong with a young colt, but a horse is of little value until he is disciplined, trained, and bridled. Youthful Peter was being apprehended by God from his independent lifestyle to be harnessed for a very important ministry. God was already intruding into his routine and placing him into constricting circumstances for training. In just a few years, Ananias and Sapphira would fall dead at Peter's feet, according to the words he spoke. Multitudes would be healed just by his shadow as he passed by. Therefore, Peter had to learn to control his erratic behavior, and most of all, his tongue.

Peter learned to be “the prisoner of the Lord.” He was literally in and out of prison in the years that followed. These were manifold temptations during which Peter acquired great patience and self-control. At the end of his life, he was ready to be sacrificed as a lamb without spot, even as the Captain of our salvation was offered. Christ foretold his martyrdom in John 21:18-19, and even the manner in which he should die. Peter would stretch forth his hands (willingly and in the spirit of meekness) and others would crucify him. Church history tells us that Peter was crucified upside down. God can only be glorified when we are prepared to be offered as a meek little lamb.

18. Peter Was Guilty of Comparing Himself With Others

John 21:20-22 - “Then Jesus turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following ... Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, *and what shall this man do?* Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” Here we see the problem that is resident in so many young hearts—the problem of comparing. Comparing ourselves with others is rooted in ambition and competition. Peter had a desire to be the greatest and was always conscious of what his peers were doing. This is the very reason so many people struggle with jealousy. When our motives are pure and we are only seeking to glorify God, not ourselves, we will *never* be troubled with jealousy. We will not care what others are doing or how we measure up to them. One of the keys to having victory in this area of our lives is having our own personal promises from God.

When Peter inquired, “And what shall this man do?” Jesus responded, “What is that to thee, follow thou me.” In His own polite way, Jesus was saying to Peter, “Just mind your own business and keep your eyes on me. Never mind what your brother is doing.” This was another area in Peter's life that needed to be converted before he could strengthen his brethren. Peter was not even aware of his motive for asking, “What shall this man do?” We should ask the Lord to show us *why* we say certain things. Truthfully, we do not understand our real motives apart from divine revelation.

The Apostle Paul warns that we are not wise when we compare ourselves and measure ourselves with one another (2 Cor.10:12). “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

PETER'S CONVERSION AND ONGOING CONVERSION

In the Book of Acts

A Review of Peter's Failure

Peter was a different man after his devastating failure of denying the Lord. Sometimes failure accomplishes more for us in our spiritual development than success. Failure leaves an *indelible mark* upon our lives. The effect of Peter's failure was a mind that was beginning to be clothed with humility. Peter had been utterly broken. His dreams of grandeur and self-exaltation lay in ashes. His “confidence in the flesh” had been dealt a tremendous deathblow. In the process, however, Peter's faith had been nearly destroyed too; but the prayers of Christ had sustained him.

In Peter's mind, everything was lost. He was ready to leave the ministry. He had disgraced and denied the Lord whom he loved. He had let down the Master in His greatest hour of need. Peter loathed himself! He was embarrassed and humiliated, almost to death. The guilt he felt was overwhelming. He had lost all self-respect after denying, not only the Lord, but also his own message. Peter could not live with the agony of his failure, for he was unable to forgive himself for his folly. Another aspect of his anguish was the fact that the whole episode could have been averted if only he had listened to the voice of the Master. Later, Peter admonishes us in his first epistle to be sure we are suffering for the right thing. He emphasizes this at least seven times in *First Peter* alone.

Life Out of Death

When Christ was risen from the dead, Peter was foremost on His mind. The angel instructed the women at the grave to “tell the disciples *and Peter*” that Christ was risen indeed, and to meet Him in Galilee (Mk.16:1-8). The Great Shepherd and Bishop of our soul was carefully watching out for the welfare of a sheep who was ready to give up and go astray (1 Pet. 2:25). Jesus came and rescued Peter. Peter was unable to forgive himself after the events of three days before. And yet, Christ had not despaired of Peter—Peter had despaired of himself. How gracious our Lord is to lift up those who have fallen, and restore self-worth and a good conscience to those who have erred (Psa.130:4).

Peter, however, needed to be affirmed publicly before his brethren after his failure. After all, Peter was the leader of the 12 apostles and they were well aware of what he had done. Three times the Lord recommissioned Peter, saying, “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.” Peter was being reinstated to his call and ministry by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This act of grace changed Peter's life. All was not lost. Christ had forgiven and restored him, and the ministry to which Peter had been called was going to be fulfilled. This brought a resurgence of hope and faith in the heart of Peter.

Jesus remained forty days upon the earth after his resurrection (cf. Acts 1:3, Lk. 24:44-45). During that time, He opened up the Scriptures to the disciples and explained many of His purposes and plans for the Church. After forty days, Christ commissioned them to preach the gospel to every nation, and then He ascended back into heaven. Acts chapter one records the ascension and the ten days that followed when the 120 disciples waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. During these ten days, we see Peter emerging as the leader once again.

Peter Rises Again

Right from the beginning Peter had been the natural spokesman of the twelve. When the sermon on the Bread of Life offended many of His followers, Christ turned and asked the twelve, “Will you leave also?” Peter quickly asserted their loyalty to Him, saying, “Where shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (see Jn. 6:66-69). Again, at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked the twelve, “Whom do you say that I am?”, Peter spoke up and proclaimed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt.16:16).

For several days after his denial of the Lord, Peter sat stunned and bewildered over what had taken place. It seemed to Peter that he could never open his mouth again to preach or defend the cause of Christ. But after his public restoration by Christ before the brethren, he took heart and began to recover from the shame and reproach of his failure.

Peter Directs the Assembly to Choose Another Apostle to Replace Judas

Just after Christ's ascension into heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised Holy Spirit. During those ten days, it was Peter, once again, who stood up in the midst of the brethren and began to give direction to the 120. There in the upper room, Peter guided the group into choosing a twelfth apostle to replace the fallen Judas (read Acts 1:15-26).

Peter—The Spokesman on the Day of Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, just 54 days after his denial of the Lord, Peter was able to stand up and preach powerfully and uncompromisingly to the multitudes, adding another 3000 new converts to the Church. The baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire gave Peter amazing boldness that enabled him to explain to the multitudes what this new move of God was all about (Acts 2:14-40).

Peter had experienced major conversion in his soul and now he was strengthening his brethren. He was also using the keys to the kingdom (Mt.16:19), opening the door for his own Jewish brethren to come into the Church. Later in Acts chapters 10-11, he opened the door to the Gentiles; but *first* this required a further conversion of his mind and heart.

Peter—The Predominant Figure in Acts 1 - 12

In the first twelve chapters of Acts, Peter is the predominant figure. From Acts chapters 13-28, Paul becomes the main figure as the Gospel is extended to the Gentiles. In Acts 3:1 - 4:21, Peter healed the lame man, the first apostolic miracle to arouse persecution. He exposed the sin of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-12, and declared later that judgment must first begin at the house of God. He spoke for the twelve when arraigned before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:27-41). With John he was sent to Samaria where, through the laying on of their hands, the Holy Spirit was given to the Samaritan believers. Also, Peter rebuked Simon for his unworthy motives (Acts 8:14-24), saying: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Peter never believed that the gifts and blessings of God could be purchased with money, as the Catholic Church teaches, and Peter is esteemed to be the first Pope by the Catholic Church. On a tour through Judea Peter healed Aeneas and raised Dorcas from the dead, and whole cities turned to the Lord (Acts 9:32-43).

Peter Opens the Door to the Gentiles

Acts chapters 10-11 record the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles. (Read 10:1 to 11:21). For ten years the Gospel had been offered to the Jewish world only (cf. Acts 11:19, 8:1-4). Yet Christ had charged the disciples to “Go and teach all nations” (Mt. 28:19-20). *Nations* can be rendered “every ethnic group” from the original language. Mark 16:15 says it like this: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel *to every creature*.” Still the disciples did not hear it. It is utterly amazing how a believer can hear something repeatedly without truly understanding it. Thus, Christ exhorts His people: “Let these sayings sink down into your ears” (Lk. 9:44-45).

It is obvious in Acts chapters 10-11 that Peter and the other apostles still had mindsets and prejudice regarding the matter of the Gentiles (see 10:28, 11:1-3). This was hindering the gospel from going to multitudes of Gentiles who were ordained unto eternal life. With all of his accomplishments for the kingdom of God, Peter still had need of a deeper conversion. On the day of reckoning, God will not only ask us what we have accomplished for His cause, He will also require *what we could have accomplished* if we had listened more carefully and thoroughly obeyed His voice.

In Acts 10:9-16, God gave Peter a vision when he was very hungry. He saw many fourfooted creatures, wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. He was then charged, “Rise Peter, kill and eat.” Peter vehemently protested in the vision, saying, “No, by no means, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.” After musing over the vision and the fact that the Lord had directed him to the non-Jewish house of Cornelius, Peter began to understand the interpretation, saying, “God hath showed me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). The vision obviously applied to the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered common and unclean, to the extent that they would not eat with them or even associate with them.

After Peter preached the Gospel to them (10:34-43), God confirmed the message by baptizing the Gentiles in the Holy Spirit, which was evidenced by speaking in other tongues. Peter and the Jews who accompanied him were shocked that God had accepted the Gentiles, giving them the Holy Spirit just as He had to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 10:44-48). This act of God really upset their tradition and their theology. These Gentiles were not even circumcised or observing any of the Jewish laws or customs, yet God had accepted them *just as they were*.

When Peter came home to Jerusalem, his peers reprimanded him for mingling with the Gentiles (see Acts 11:1-4) but Peter rehearsed the whole matter to them. In Acts 11:18, the Jewish elders and apostles in Jerusalem came to the realization that God had in fact accepted the Gentiles, and instantly they gave praise to the Lord (read Acts 11:18). It was a shocking and transforming revelation, even though Christ had told them ten years before to “preach to every creature under heaven.”

Peter Affirms This Truth at the Jerusalem Conference The Gentiles Are Justified by Faith, Not Rituals

In Acts 15:1-6, about 11 years after Peter's vision, there were certain Jewish believers who insisted that the Gentile believers had to be circumcised and keep all the Levitical ordinances of Moses in order to be saved (cf. Acts 21:20). Therefore, in Acts 15:6-32, all the Church leaders gathered together in Jerusalem to consider this matter. It is better known as *The Jerusalem Conference*.

Acts 15:5-11 *But there rose up certain [ones] of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.*

And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago [about 11 years before at the house of Cornelius] God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, [10:44-48] even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

Peter was the man God chose initially to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, although his ministry was primarily to the Jewish world (cf. Gal. 2:7-8). In the Jerusalem conference (51 A.D.), Peter testified that the Gentiles were cleared from their sins *by faith*, not by observing all of the Mosaic laws. God confirmed His acceptance of them by baptizing them in the Holy Spirit. Soon after, however, Peter was going to contradict his message in Antioch.

Peter Denies His Message Because of Fear

After the Jerusalem Conference was dismissed, Paul and his company returned to Antioch, the home base of the Gentile Church (Acts 15:30-35), and Peter came up to Antioch for a visit.

Galatians 2:11-14 “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain [ones] came from James [the head elder of the Jerusalem Church], he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, *fearing* them which were of the circumcision [i.e. his Jewish brethren]. And the other Jews dissembled [or joined him in his hypocrisy]; insomuch that Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.” (See the NIV.) This was inexcusable, especially since God had chosen Peter to open the door of faith to the Gentiles and had given him the vision in Acts 10, stating that God had cleansed the Gentiles.

Peter was acting one way when he was with the Gentiles, and another way when his Jewish brethren came from Jerusalem. When he saw them coming, he withdrew from the Gentiles for fear of what some of his peers would say or think. This behavior caused all those around him to act in the same fashion, including Barnabas. Paul reproved Peter, describing his action as *hypocritical*. Peter was still prompted by fear, 21 years after the cross. It had been around 21 years since his denial of the Lord. Thus, we see that Peter still needed a greater work of conversion in his soul before he could fully strengthen his brethren. This most recent action in Antioch actually *weakened* the brethren.

Peter's life shows us very clearly that Christian growth is an ongoing experience. After being with Christ for 3 1/2 years, and performing 21 years of mighty ministry, Peter still had areas in his life that needed attention and correction. After preaching on the day of Pentecost, healing multitudes (sometimes just by his shadow), raising the dead, and turning whole cities to the Lord, Peter was still a little inconsistent and fickle. This was *rooted in fear* of what his brethren would think of him.

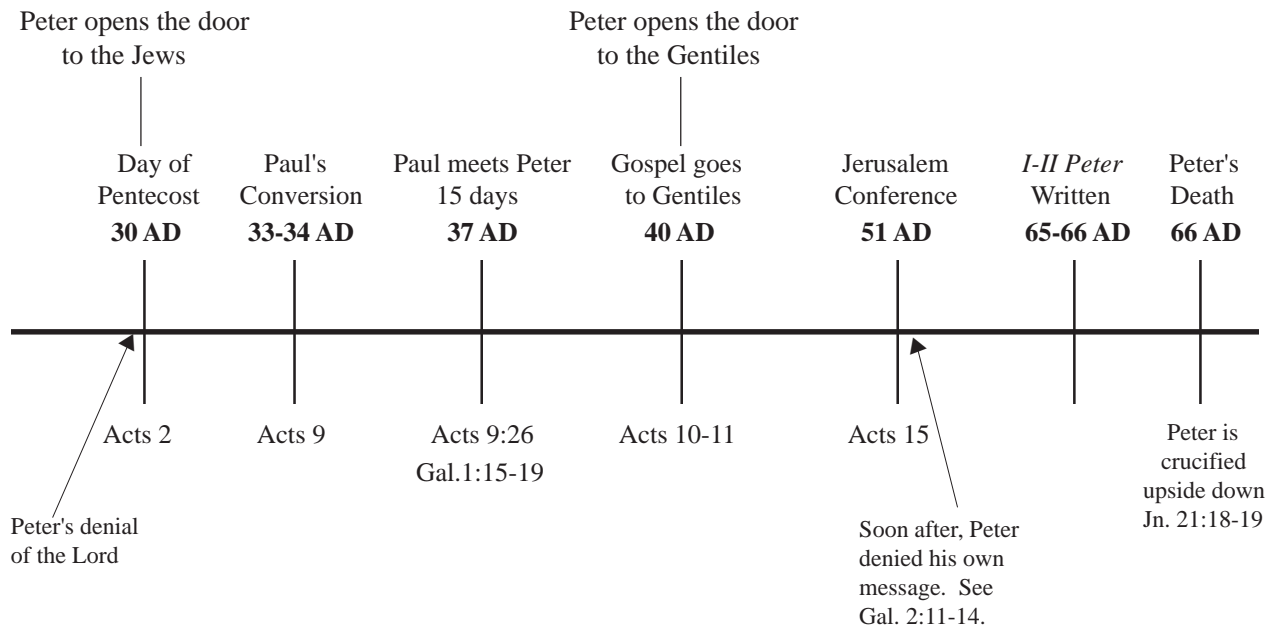
CONCLUSION

Outside of the four Gospels and the Book of Acts, the scriptures have little more to say about Peter's life, until we come to his two epistles. Paul tells us that Peter was one of the pillars of the Church in Galatians 2:9, and also that Peter's ministry was primarily to the Jewish world in verses 7-8.

In Galatians chapter 2, Paul clearly stated that it was not until the Jerusalem conference, some seventeen years after his conversion, that he was introduced for the first time to the 12 apostles. (The only exception to this was when he met Peter three years after his conversion, and spent 15 days with him in Jerusalem, cf. Gal.1:15-19.)

Those 15 days must have been very special for both Peter and Paul. Paul had been visited by the resurrected Christ several years earlier, and had just come back from the Arabian desert. Peter had been with Christ during His earthly ministry for three years, and now Paul had been with the resurrected Christ for three years, receiving the revelation of the gospel. This meeting of the two was in approximately 37 A.D., about 7 years after Pentecost.

In First Corinthians 9:5, Paul intimates that Peter traveled with his wife, and so also did the other apostles. Travel would require a great deal of commitment on the part of a spouse. Peter was also a visiting minister at the Corinthian church, and certain segments of the church preferred Peter's style of ministry to that of Paul, or Apollos (1 Cor.1:12). Thus we can see that Peter traveled the Mediterranean area widely and ministered in many churches, especially the Jewish churches.



Lord, we would ever allow you to convert us!

The Epistle of First Peter

The Epistles of I-II Peter were written in Rome by the Apostle Peter at the end of his life. First Peter was written in 65 A.D. and Second Peter in 66, just prior to his death (cf. 2 Pet.1:14). In the first epistle Peter sought to fortify the saints who had been undergoing persecution *from the world*, while in his second epistle he warns against the dangers *within the household of faith*.

Both epistles are very revealing of Peter. He was writing out of experiences wrought in his heart by the Spirit of the Lord. The issues he raises are those very areas of life in which he had found a key to personal victory. Although the Christians were facing affliction on many sides, Peter admonished them to be sure they were suffering for the right thing. This is because, in his earlier years, Peter had invited *unnecessary* temptations and pressures into his life. Many of our pressures are *self-induced*. Consider how frequently he brings up the matter:

2:19 - “For this is thankworthy, *if* a man ... endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

2:20 - “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?”

“But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

3:14 - “But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye ...”

3:17 - “For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

4:15 - “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a evildoer, or busybody ...”

4:16 - “Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God ...”

4:19 - “Wherefore let them that suffering according to the will of God ...”

Date of First Peter:

65 A.D.

Place of writing: In Rome

To Whom: First Peter was written to the Jews dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. It is highly Jewish in content, and saturated with quotes and allusions from the Old Testament. This epistle was not written to particular individuals or specific churches. It is one of the seven *General Epistles* which are—James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, and Jude.

Theme

The theme of First Peter is suffering, and the Christian response to suffering. The subject is found no less than 16 times in First Peter alone. It is a suffering, however, that leads to glory. Peter tells us repeatedly that the coming glory is preceded by suffering. Any Christian who wants a crown must first be willing to face adversity. Therefore we will look at suffering from three perspectives:

1. The Purpose and Rewards of Suffering.
2. How to Have Victory in Suffering.
3. Making Sure We Are Suffering for the Right Thing.

The Churches to Whom Peter Was Writing



Peter was primarily an apostle to the Jewish world. He is writing to Jews who had been dispersed from their homeland by previous invasions many centuries before. In particular he is addressing those who had settled in *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*. Undoubtedly, Peter had visited these places and ministered in many of their synagogues. In calling them “strangers”, they were not only foreigners living outside of Palestine, but “strangers” in this world (1:1, 2:11, Heb.11:13). Every redeemed child of God is a foreigner and pilgrim in this world.

On the day of Pentecost, a number of Jews from these provinces heard Peter preach and were converted. Acts 2:9-10 specifically mentions Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. Galatia would not be far from any of these.

Peter, also known as Cephas, was widely known in many of the churches in the Mediterranean world. This is vividly seen in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians. Peter was well received in the church at Corinth (1 Cor.1:12). At times, he probably travelled with his wife as is implied in First Corinthians 9:5.

Chapter One

1:1 “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*” These were Roman provinces north and northwest of Palestine. Today they would comprise the area of Turkey. Peter was writing to Jewish believers in these five provinces who had been dispersed from their homeland nearly eight centuries before by the Assyrian invasion. Although he is addressing Jews who had settled in foreign lands, there were many Gentile proselytes who attended their synagogues. Therefore, Peter's first epistle, though it is highly Jewish in style and content, is directed also to the Gentiles.

We Are Elected For Several Reasons

1:2 “*Elect [or chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, [by] sanctification of the Spirit, [to be made obedient] and [to be sprinkled with] the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*” “Elect” simply means chosen. God the Father has elected (or chosen) us for Himself. His selection of us, however, is determined by His foreknowledge. God knew beforehand, long before we were born, the kind of person we would be and the responses we would make to Him. When God sees a heart that will respond to Him, He elects or chooses that person. Even so, we are exhorted not to live presumptuously but to “make our calling and election sure” (2 Pet.1:10).

Peter also says we are *sanctified* (consecrated and set apart) by the working of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is instantaneous at our new birth, but it is also an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. God's purpose for electing us, setting us apart, and sprinkling us with His blood is to make us obedient people. Our goal is to accomplish His plan for our lives and to be made conformable to His image. Our *continued obedience* to the truth will lead us to complete maturity and unfeigned love for the brethren (see 1:22). Peter had come to this state in his latter years.

1:3 “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*” “Begotten us again” refers to our new birth (cf.1:23). Formerly we were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-5). We were alienated from God and His promises, having no hope (Eph. 2:12). Our new birth is a sovereign act of God's mercy to us. Yet, we had to *respond* to His grace and mercy. Others who are offered the gift of eternal life turn it down and treat it lightly (Acts 13:46).

“*Unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*” Believers are characterized by hope, whereas the unbelievers have no hope (1 Thes. 4:13). Christ promised He would never leave us comfortless, nor subject us to despair (Jn.14:18, 1 Cor.10:13). We have much to hope for each day and, ultimately we look forward to everlasting life. This has been made possible because Christ has paid our debt and risen from the dead. Jesus assures us, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (Jn.14:19). Because He lives, we can face tomorrow.

Our Eternal Inheritance

1:4 “*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*” Because we have been born anew, we have been placed in another family, and we have a new father. Thus, we become *an heir* to a marvelous inheritance.

This inheritance can never perish, fade, or spoil, because it is reserved in heaven for us. Heaven is exceedingly beautiful, and there is perfect love and joy everywhere. Our inheritance, however, is far more than a beautiful mansion in paradise; it is also a relationship with the King of Love. Christ Himself is our inheritance (Deut.10:9, 18:2, Psa.16:5, Ezek. 44:28). Also our eternal inheritance includes the people God entrusts to our care (see Psalm 2:8, Phil. 4:1, 1 Thes. 2:19-20).

He Will Preserve Us by His Power

1:5 *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith [until you finally inherit the full] salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.”* As children of God and heirs of salvation, we are carefully guarded and shielded by our heavenly Father. Peter realized this by experience. When a man crosses a highway with a child, it is the man who is firmly holding the child's hand, not the child who is holding the man's hand. Likewise, it is God's power that is holding and keeping us from going astray. We are not left on our own to stand in our own strength. Jude 1:24 also reminds us that He is well able to keep us from falling.

Young Christian, you do not have to be plagued with a constant fear of backsliding. Remember, we are kept by the power of God, not by our own power. Peter had great bouts of discouragement as a young believer. There were times when he felt he could not go on. But Christ was praying for him, even as He lives today to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). Jesus was carefully watching out for Peter, encouraging and strengthening him, even when Peter failed miserably.

Manifold Grace For Manifold Temptations

1:6 *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”* Peter rejoiced greatly in his salvation. He knew that his name was written in heaven (Lk.10:17-20). There were periods, however, when he had to pass through specific trials (as we do) in order to be perfected and prepared for the heavenly kingdom. He describes them as “manifold temptations.” Peter uses the word *manifold* twice in his first epistle. He uses it here, saying “manifold temptations,” but he also uses it in 4:10 when he speaks of “manifold grace.” The word *manifold* in the original Greek means “many varied hues of color.” When both thoughts are combined, it means that there is a special hue of grace that perfectly matches every hue of temptation. Truly God's grace (or divine enablement) is sufficient for every temptation we face. A saint of God does not ever have to be overwhelmed and succumb to the pressures of life (1 Cor.10:13).

Our Faith Must Be Purified

1:7 *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* Even as gold is purified in a furnace, so must our faith be purified of foreign elements such as presumption and natural thinking. Peter's faith was mixed with pride and daring presumption, resulting in courses of action that disgraced his testimony and brought shame to the Lord. Peter was quick to jump into *causes* for Christ. He was trying to defend Jesus when he struck the servant of the high priest in the head with a sword. He was determined to go into prison and even to the cross with Christ. Yet, going to the cross was not God's will for Peter. Thus, there was no grace imparted to him, and he failed. God only gives grace (divine enablement) to accomplish *His* agenda, nor our own.

Our faith, too, is often mixed with our own ideas and emotions, even as impulsive Peter had learned earlier in life. Therefore, Peter had to pass through many purifying trials in his lifetime. Now his faith was found “unto praise, honour and glory.” In his old age, all of his actions were stimulated by genuine faith. James 1:2-3 teaches us the same lesson:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into [various testings]; Knowing this, that the [purifying] of your faith worketh [endurance, steadfastness].” When tests come, it is something very positive. Tests are for the purpose of purifying our faith and bringing us into a higher plateau in God.

Everything we do must be done out of faith—not out of impatience, hysteria, frustration, emotion, or our own ideas. All our words and actions must be born from true faith. Thus, our faith must be purified. Whatsoever is not born of faith is often sin (cf. Rom.14:23).

Unpurified Faith

- When Abram asked Sarah to say, “Abram is my brother”, it was not of faith but of fear.
- When Sarah told Abram to obtain children by Hagar, it was not of faith but of helping God.
- When Lot chose the plain of Jordan by Sodom, it was not of faith, but of sight.
- When Rebecca commanded Jacob to pretend to be Esau, it was not of faith, but of deceit.
- When Rachel demanded of Jacob, “Give me children or I die”, it was not of faith, but hysteria. (When Hannah got ahold of God to obtain children, it was of faith, and she produced Samuel.)
- When Job's wife said, “Curse God and die”, it was not of faith but of exasperation.
- When Israel complained in the desert, it was not of faith, but of a hardened, unbelieving heart.
- When Orpah forsook Naomi to return to her gods, it was not of faith but of shallow commitment.
- When Peter struck the servant of the high priest, it was not of faith but of self-strength.
- When Paul and Barnabas argued over John Mark, it was not of faith, but of a determined will.
- When the disciples said to Jesus in the storm, “Don't you care that we perish?”, it was of unbelief.
- When Asa relied on the king of Syria to deliver him, it was not of faith, but of trust in man.
- When Jehoshaphat joined forces with Ahab, it was not of faith but of gullibility and compromise.
- When Job's friends gave Job the wrong counsel, it was not of faith but of human judgment.
- When Esau sold his birthright, it was not of faith, but of shortsightedness.
- When churches did not support Paul, it was not of faith, but of clutching to material goods.
- When David took wives without inquiring of God, it was not of faith but of self-gratification. In every area where David relied on God, he was blessed. In the matter of women he did not seek the Lord, and therefore he was not blessed or directed by God. Thus, he fell.
- When women gossip all day (Phil. 4:2) it is not of faith, but of pettiness and unforgiveness.

The goal of the Apostle Paul was “to present every man perfect in Christ” (Col.1:28). Maturity is only possible when our faith is perfected. Therefore, when Paul visited his churches, he wanted to “perfect that which was lacking in their faith” and for this he prayed day and night (1 Thes. 3:10).

Faith is a battle. We are commanded to “fight the good fight of faith” because often we are attacked with doubts and fears (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:7). Jesus had to pray for Peter that his faith would not fail when he denied the Lord (Lk. 22:32). Remember, the purpose of every trial and every blessing is to enlarge and purify our faith.

Faith is Developed By Not Seeing

1:8 “*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” Although we do not see the Lord at the present time, it is through faith that we know He is standing by our side and aiding our cause. Every time we exercise our faith by obeying Him, our joy and love for Him is expanded until it becomes *unspeakable*.

God develops His faith in us by not letting us see. “Faith is ... the evidence of things not seen” (Heb.11:1). God hides Himself on purpose to develop faith (Isa. 45:15). Quick answers do not always produce deep faith. Sometimes it is the long delays that really develop faith in our lives.

The End Result of Growing Faith

1:9 “*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of our souls.*” Faith comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. We live by the faith of the Son of God. Faith must be maintained because it can be lost. Jesus warned on the Mount of Olives in Peter's hearing: “He that shall endure to the end shall be saved” (Mt. 24:13). These words must have made a great impact upon Peter. It is possible to lose our faith if we harden our hearts in the difficulties of life (Heb.12:15) and turn against the Savior. Peter teaches that some go back and are not retrieved (2 Pet. 2:20-22). The salvation of our souls depends upon *maintaining* our relationship with Jesus Christ. Yet, we do not keep ourselves in the faith by our own strength. Our responsibility is to continue to respond to God's grace.

All the Prophets Pointed to the Coming Christ

1:10 “*Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.*” Jesus said to Peter and the eleven, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them” (Mt.13:16-17). The prophets only had a glimpse of the coming Christ and certain aspects of His person. They were not privileged to see the fullness of God's plan of redemption which was embodied in the coming Savior (Col.1:26-27, Eph. 3:9). That blessing was reserved for us when Christ opened the veil and revealed all of the mysteries of redemption.

1:11 “*Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*” The Old Testament prophets were trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when they foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. They did not understand *when, where, or how*, but they foresaw a suffering Messiah, and endless blessings that followed, especially in the Millennium and in the life to come. All of the Old Testament prophets prefigured and foreshadowed the coming Christ. They lived similar lives and had similar experiences, and every one of them was persecuted and rejected (Acts 7:51-52).

The subject of *suffering and the glory that follows* is repeated continually in Peter's first epistle (1:21, 4:13-14, 5:1). This is a strong theme in Paul's epistles also. In Hebrews 12:2, Paul reminds us, "Looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, [ignoring and scorning] the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus literally ignored the shame of the cross *when He compared it* to the glory that would follow (cf. Rom. 8:18). Remember, we are being fashioned for eternal glory, a glory we will possess "after we have suffered a while" (1 Pet. 5:10-11).

1:12 "*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them [Peter and the other apostles] that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into.*" The Old Testament prophets understood that they were ministering primarily *not* to their own generation but to future generations. *David* prophesied of a coming priest who would be fashioned after Melchisedec's order. A change of priesthood certainly outdated the Levitical priesthood instituted by Moses during the age of the Law. *Moses* declared that a Prophet would later arise, and anyone who refused to hearken to that prophet would be cut off. *Isaiah* saw a Man whose soul was made an offering for sin, Who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. *Ezekiel and Jeremiah* foretold a new and better covenant that enabled God's laws to be written in the hearts and minds of men.

All of the Law and the prophets pointed to the coming Christ. He was *the very embodiment* and fulfillment of the Law and the prophets. Therefore, Peter and the eleven apostles were privileged far above any of the Old Testament prophets, for they were allowed to walk and talk and interact with the Lawgiver—the Living Word of God Himself (1 Jn. 1:1-4). Their intimate fellowship with the Son of God enabled them to present Christ to the world through powerful, Holy Ghost preaching, and also by the sacred scriptures they penned.

Peter had great insight and understanding of this Man, Jesus Christ. Therefore he was able to understand the Old Testament prophets as well. After all, Peter was closely acquainted with the Man whom the prophets wrote about and described. There was a special affinity between Peter and the prophets of old. He was able to *touch* the One of whom the prophets could only speak.

"*Which things the angels desire to look into.*" Even the angels of God are interested in the gospel that is preached here on earth. God teaches wisdom to the principalities and powers by the way He works in the Church and in the affairs of man (Eph. 3:10). If our eyes were opened to see the spiritual realm, we would see angels attending church services, observing and learning the wisdom of God.

Gird Up the Loins of Your Mind - A Command of God

1:13 "*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" "Girding up the loins" is an oriental expression. The people of the East wore long flowing garments which were loose and ungirded. When a man wanted to go somewhere in a hurry (cf. Ex.12:11), he would pull up these loose garments, tuck them tightly under his belt, and be on his way. This was called, "girding up the loins." Peter tells us to do the same to our thoughts, which are often loose and all over. God has created us with a certain ability to turn off wrong thoughts, and focus on the right ones. We are commanded of God through Peter to do this; therefore, it is possible, by grace.

In Philippians 2:12, Paul tells us to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” In the next verse he states that *God is working* in our hearts to will and do his good pleasure. In one breath we are charged to work out our own salvation, and then we are told that it is God who is working in our lives to bring this about. There is no contradiction here! God does His part, and man must do his part. It is not all grace, nor is it all man's free will. It is God and man flowing together. Man's responsibility is to continue to respond to grace and utilize the resources God places in his hands. Below are examples of “working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Deliver thyself - Prov. 6:3, 5 We must take appropriate action with our words and deeds.
Shake thyself - Isa. 52:2 Don't become overly dependent upon the deliverance minister.
Loose thyself - Isa. 52:2 Spread out your sails, so the wind of God can get you moving again.
Recover yourselves - 2 Tim. 2:25-26 ...from the snare of the devil...by acknowledging the truth.
Keep yourselves in the love of God - Jude 1:21 Stay away from sin that makes love grow cold.
Save yourselves - Acts 2:40, 1 Tim. 4:16 Lay hold of eternal life; *we* must grab hold of the life line.
Humble yourself - 1 Pet. 5:6 What we are not in practice of doing is very difficult. Exercise thyself.
Hide thyself - 1 Kg. 17:3 Stay out of the picture. Do not crave public attention or the praise of man.
Chasten thyself - Dan. 10:12, Isa. 64:7 We must stir ourselves up, by grace.
Apply thyself - Prov. 2:1-5, Psa. 90:12 Incline our ear, cry out, seek, and search for wisdom.
Consider yourself - Gal. 6:1 Remember our own vulnerability, and do not be harsh with others.
Take heed to thyself - 1 Tim. 4:16, Prov. 4:23 Guard our own heart first, then watch out for others.
Exercise thyself to godliness - 1 Tim. 4:7 Practice doing the right thing, always. You are sowing.
Keep yourself pure - 1 Tim. 5:22 Avoid wrong alliances, commitments, business agreements.
Submit yourselves - 1 Pet. 2:13 Otherwise self-will and an independent spirit will be our ruin.
Do not harden your heart - Heb. 3:8, 3:15, 4:7 It is a rejection of grace and cherishing an offense.
Give thyself wholly (to prophecies and call) - 1 Tim. 4:15 Neglecting is as serious as rejecting.
Fret not thyself - Psa. 37:1 This is a choice, but it starts in our meditations (Phil. 4:6-9).
Encourage yourself in the Lord - 1 Sam. 30:6, Eph. 5:19 This keeps us from the pit of self-pity.
Walk in wisdom - Col. 4:5 David behaved himself wisely when under an ungodly leader.
Sow to the Spirit - Gal. 6:8 Our words, attitudes, actions, and thoughts are sowing something.
Put on, Put off - Col. 3:9-14 By grace, we must put off the wrong things, and put on the right ones.
Walk worthy of your calling - Eph. 4:1-3 It requires concentrated effort to keep our attitudes right.
Order conversation aright - Psa. 50:23 If you talk against the church, your children will hate church.
Grieve/Quench not the Spirit - 1 Thes. 5:19, Eph. 4:30 Hate, wrath, bitterness drive away the Spirit.
Let no man deceive you - 2 Thes. 2:3, 1 Cor. 6:9 Knowing and obeying the truth will keep us free.
Walk circumspectly - Eph. 5:15 Be wary, watch for potential dangers; be on guard.
Give thanks always - Eph. 5:20 This keeps our wells unblocked, and faith flourishing.
Do not scorn others - Psa. 1:1 It is never tasteful to revile, even our enemies (Jude 1:8-9).
Cleave to the Lord your God - Deut. 4:4 We may either cling to Him, or walk independently of him.
The Bride has made herself ready - Rev. 19:7-8 We prepare ourselves by responding to God's word.
And hundreds of other examples - add your own.

All of the above are choices. They are acts of our will, yet it requires a dependence upon grace (divine enablement) to help us apply ourselves and make the right choices. Our responsibility is to continue to respond to grace, and use the tools God has made available to us. In Revelation 3:11, we are warned against losing our crown. Yet, in 4:10, the men who gain a crown willingly lay it at the feet of Jesus. This is an acknowledgment, in deep humility, that the crown they have won is only because the God of all grace has enabled them.

1:13 “... *And hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” There is new grace imparted into our lives every time we receive a fresh revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is true, not only at the revelation of Christ at His second coming, but each time He speaks to us or meets us in a particular area of our lives. We must never give up when we are under tremendous pressure, but discipline our minds and hope to the end because there is going to be a new pouring in of grace when Christ comes on the scene. Grace is usually given to us when we are in times of need (Heb. 4:16). This is the reason we must hope to the end and not give up.

The Call to be Holy

1:14-16 “*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior and life-style]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy [Lev.11:44].*” Before we were Christians, we were deceived and in ignorance. We lived our life according to the course of this world (see Titus 3:3, Eph. 2:1-3). Now that we have been enlightened, God wants us to be thoroughly cleansed from our former life-style of lust and sensuality (2 Cor. 7:1, 2 Pet.1:4). Our mind and the motives of our hearts must be entirely washed and renewed. This takes time.

“*As obedient children.*” We are called to be a man or woman of obedience. Before our new birth, God described us as “the children of disobedience” and also “the children of wrath” (Eph. 2:1-3). *Obedience* is the paramount issue of life. Are we going to do our own will, or God's? Obedience was the hallmark of the Son of God. As a human He cried, “Not my will but thine be done.” Christ will only select for His bride those who have the same attitude of heart. Our ultimate call is to be conformed to His image. Therefore, *obedience* to God's will should be the paramount issue in life. Obedience will lead to holiness. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord or be near Him.

God Has No Favorites

1:17 “*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*” It does not matter what our nationality or social standing, God is not a respecter of persons. He will show no partiality or favoritism. This was a new concept to the biased Jewish mind, and to Peter (see Acts 10:34-35, 15:7-11). God loves Gentiles as much as the Jews. A Jew who rejects the message of Christ *is just as lost* as a non-Jew.

“*Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*” Peter passed his life on earth in the fear of God. Our pilgrimage here on earth is very short. We should live with eternity in view. The fear of the Lord is actually an anointing. It is one of the seven spirits of the Lord (Isa.11:2). This anointing makes us conscious that God is watching. It makes us afraid of coming short of God's purposes for our lives (Heb. 4:1). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Holy fear keeps us clean and guards us from going astray (Jer. 32:40, Psa.19:7).

Salvation Cannot Be Bought With Money or Earned Through Penances

1:18-19 “*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain [life-style] received by the tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*”

Gifts of God Cannot Be Bought With Money

No one can buy his way into heaven. Redemption from our sins cannot be purchased with silver or gold, which are *temporal* (perishable, corruptible). Our eternal soul had to be ransomed by something *eternal*—the precious blood of the spotless Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Martin Luther was very disturbed with the church of his day over the issue of money and penances. According to the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, the more money you give to the Church, the less time you would have to spend in hell for your sins. The rich could buy their way out of judgment, but the poor had to be in purgatory longer. These inconsistencies provoked Luther to search for the truth. In his search for peace, he rediscovered the lost truth of justification by faith.

Justification by Faith

Jesus Christ sovereignly paid our debt! This is the simple Gospel story. Upon the cruel cross, the Father laid upon Christ the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6). Anyone who believes and obeys the Gospel message can receive forgiveness of sins. Pardon is instantaneous and complete. In the same way that a criminal is cleared by a judge, we are released and cleared of all our transgressions. We are flatly forgiven, even as the thief on the cross was promised: “Today, you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:42-43). There is no implication whatsoever by Christ that the repentant thief had to pay money or suffer in purgatory in order to be redeemed. There was not even an opportunity for this new believer to be baptized. The only thing that saved him was his faith in the Redeemer.

Money Reveals Our Heart

Peter had great financial integrity. He solemnly warned Simon the sorcerer that the gifts of God cannot be purchased with money (see Acts 8:17-24). When Simon offered Peter money for spiritual power, he declared, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Peter did not try to sell prayer cloths or attempt to make a profit from the gifts of healing he possessed.

Money involves our *conscience, priorities, affections, and how we use our time*. It shows whether or not we have *good judgment, faith, discipline, and if we are a person of sacrifice and obedience*. Ultimately, the way we manage money reveals *how committed we are to the Lord*. All of these are spiritual issues. Many believers do not have financial integrity. Christ admonishes us that if we are not faithful with money (mammon), God will never entrust to us the true riches (Lk.16:10-11). How we handle money determines whether or not we go on with God in our Christian walk.

Peter is one of the few leaders in history who had a good end. Many men and women whom God has used over the centuries have had major failures along their journey, and often their downfall concerned the issue of money. In 1948, God began to restore the office of the evangelist to the Church. Evangelists sprang up everywhere and they were used mightily to preach, heal, and deliver God's people. Yet over the years, many of them have fallen by the wayside. Their ruination always involved a failure in the area of *morals, pride, or money*. I truly believe with all my heart that one of the reasons Dr. Billy Graham has remained steadfast for the past 50 years is because of financial integrity. His board keeps records of all incoming finances, and the figures are declared publicly. Dr. Graham takes a comparatively conservative salary, while giving royalties from his books to the organization. He states: “When I began my ministry 50 years ago I feared the Lord. Today I fear Him even more.”

Christ Was Ordained to Die For Man Before the World Was Created

1:20 “*Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.*” The Lamb of God was destined to die for man before the world was created. Peter did not understand this truth when he attempted to defend Christ with a sword in the garden. God fully realized before He created the world that mankind would fall and need a Redeemer. Also, God knew beforehand which people would accept His gracious gift of pardon, and the others who would refuse it or treat it lightly (cf. Rev.13:8; 17:8; Eph.1:4). Remember, God does not deprive anyone of eternal life. Men and women *deprive themselves* of everlasting life (cf. Acts 13:46).

We Can Only Come to God by Way of His Son

1:21 “*Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*” This is an important statement: “By him we believe in God.” We cannot believe in God or know God unless we come by way of His Son. The Son reveals Him to us. Jesus declared, “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, except the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him” (Mt.11:27; Lk.10:22). Christ taught this in the presence of Peter, and Peter took special note of it.

It is impossible to know God unless Christ reveals him unto us. Therefore, to reject Christ is to reject *the only means* by which we may come to God or the knowledge of God. Christ is the only door; He is the only way to God (cf. Jn.10:1-2, 10:9). The man who says he believes in God but refuses to acknowledge the Son has rejected the only true Light of the world and in actual fact does *not* know God at all. The scripture is very clear: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 Jn. 5:12). See also Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9.

A Crown is Preceded by a Cross

“*[God]... raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.*” Glory is always *preceded* by immense sacrifice and suffering. If we want an easy life, we will not have His glory. Before honour is humility (Prov.15:33; 18:12). This is the reason Peter exhorts the younger generation, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may *exalt* you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6). If we refuse the Father's training period mentioned in Hebrews 12:5-8, we will be illegitimate sons and not bear His likeness. God will not grant us the privileges that are given only to full grown sons. God will *not* entrust the throne of authority to undeveloped spiritual infants.

Are you looking for a church where the preaching of the Word of God never offends you? If the Word of God never upsets or challenges us, we should beware! The minister is using a dull sword and we are never going to change! Some people prefer sitting in churches where they can remain comfortable in their bondages and sins (Ezek. 22:26). Rather than stay imprisoned in the death-grasp of self-love and iniquity, we should permit the evil in our lives to be *judged* by the Sword of the Spirit. Allow the Word of God to offend you; let it deliver you out of your spiritual prisons *unto a new life*.

Obedience Leads to Love and Unity

1:22 “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*” Unfeigned love is the hallmark of Christian perfection. It is “the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). Genuine love for the brethren is equivalent to unity. Peter shows us how to come to this blessed state—it comes gradually as we “obey the truth.” Each time we obey the truth (or any matter with which God is confronting us), there is a new purifying in our soul. *Obedience* to what God is saying to our personal lives is the key to growth. It is also the key to coming to perfection and unity. Each time we respond to God (by the help of the Holy Spirit), something in our spiritual life changes. Those things which cause disunity are remedied! Obeying the truth is crucial to any growing relationship, especially marriage.

The reason people remain stalled in their Christian life or even go back to their former life-style, is because they are ignoring what God is addressing in their lives. To neglect what God is saying is to reject it. When God speaks to us, this is the time and opportunity to be changed and march forward.

Our Two Fathers – Our Two Births

1:23 “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.*” This is a reference to our natural birth and our spiritual birth. We descend from two lines—Adam, and the Last Adam. These are the fathers of two races—those who are born and those who are born again. Adam was the father of the human race. All of us are descendants of Adam and therefore we are members of a fallen race. Thus, we were all “in Adam” before our new birth. Our physical birth is from corruptible seed.

To be born of *incorruptible seed* is a reference to our new birth when Christ quickened us by His Word. Christ Himself is called the Word of God (Jn. 1:1; Rev.19:13). He is a life-giving Spirit. At new birth, we were begotten by Christ and He becomes our new father. Our life comes from Him.

Christ is “the last Adam” as Paul declared in First Corinthians 15:45. He is the father of a new and redeemed race. At new birth, we are no longer *in Adam*; we are *in Christ*. We become a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:15). Having a new father, we are placed into a new family. We possess new desires and goals, and we are developing a new mind (Rom.12:1-2). However, this is an ongoing process. It is instantaneous, but also progressive. From this, we deduce that there is a struggle between two natures—our old nature, and the new nature we receive from Christ. As we continue to *obey the truth* our new nature will overcome and subdue every part of the old nature.

God's Word Abides Forever – Man's Glory Fades Quickly

1:24-25 “*For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. [a quote from Isaiah 40:6-8] And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*”

Life had taught Peter that the glory and pride of man fades quickly like a beautiful flower. Psalm 39:5 tells us that “every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” No matter how great or formidable in power, every man and kingdom of man will crumble and return to dust. “*But the word of the Lord endureth forever.*” Besides the word of the Lord, there is one other thing that endures forever. John declared, “... *he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*” (1 Jn. 2:17). The man or woman who does the will of God also abides forever.

Therefore we should major on the issues that count for eternity. Peter was not living for this short span of time on earth; his heart did not covet fame or fortune. He realized by experience that all of these things wither quickly like a beautiful field in the time of drought. Peter lived with eternity in view. This was the kind of gospel he preached unto his listeners.

He did not reduce Christianity to a mere convenience as some are doing today. We should be careful not to preach a gospel of *welfare*. There is a “welfare gospel” that appeals to many because it is a “something for nothing” proposition. It makes the blessings of God a giveaway program - free pardon, free provision, free medical (healing), and freedom from all of our problems. It is a message that focuses mainly on the present life and emphasizes the quickest way out of all our troubles.

“*And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*” What kind of gospel did Peter preach to the people? Although God lavishes His people with many blessings, Peter did not emphasize earthly prosperity and an easy life. His eyes were set upon the eternal. This is the kind of message that is needed today. Peter remembered the words of the Savior spoken in his presence when He said: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Mt. 6:19-20).

Chapter Two

Putting Away Infantile Dispositions And Growing Into Maturity

2:1-3 “*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. If [indeed] you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*”

Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and sowing of discord, are marks of spiritual infancy. If these evils are resident in our lives, we still have not matured. The whole purpose of redemption is to rid us of all these maladies of the fall. We must desire the milk of the Word in order to grow out of these devilish traits into spiritual adulthood. It is absolutely essential to move on from being an infant in Christ, to be a mature bride for the Lord (Rev.19:7-8, Eph. 5:26-27). Christ will not be wedded to a brattish, immature child. Many believers disqualify themselves from being the Bride of Christ because they have refused to grow. Some even return to their former life-style to a life of darkness.

Our safety is to *continue* to grow as we feed upon the Word of God. (Jn. 8:31-32). However, the Apostle Paul distinguishes between milk and meat (1 Cor. 3:1-3, Heb. 5:12-14). *Milk* is representative of the elementary truths of the Word of God. *Meat* speaks of the deeper truths which can only be assimilated by the more mature saints. Ask God to change your spiritual taste buds. Do not be satisfied with the elementary truths of Scripture. It requires the meat of the Word to bring us to full development. Be weaned away from milk (Isa. 28:9) and desire the deeper truths of God's Word.

“*Desire the sincere milk of the word.*” Desire is hunger! Hunger is a sign of health. When there is no hunger for God or His Word, it is an indication of sickness. It signifies that a person is indulging in fleshly appetites that are spoiling his appetite for God. Are the wrong friends, places, and music satisfying your desires? Make a list of those things which are ruining your spiritual hunger!

When Peter tells us to *lay aside* all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, it suggests that our will is involved. To “lay aside” something is an act of the will, although we always need grace (or divine enablement) to do it. We always have the choice to *receive* or *refuse* available grace.

“If [indeed] you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Here Peter is alluding to Psalm 34:8. When we have a good taste of the sweetness and goodness of the Lord, we are also enabled to obey Him. When we love someone, we will do anything to please that person. Peter himself had tasted and seen that the Lord is good. When he had failed so miserably, the Lord reached down and reinstated him in a most benevolent way. After cursing and denying the Lord, Peter was restored to be the leader of the twelve apostles and the head of the next move of God. Truly, Peter had received a revelation of God's graciousness and goodness.

CHRIST THE STONE 2:4-9
A Foundation Stone to the Righteous
But a Stumblingblock to the Wicked

Christ is the Rock of our salvation. In Matthew 16:18, Christ said, “Thou art Peter [petros], and upon this rock [Petra] I will build my Church.” In the original Greek there is a play upon the words *petros* and *petra*. “Thou art Peter [*petros*, literally a little stone], and upon this rock [Petra] I will build my church.” Christ did not promise to build His Church upon Peter, but upon Himself, as Peter acknowledges (1 Pet. 2:4-9). Peter and the apostles were foundation stones of the Church (Eph. 2:20), but Christ was the Chief Corner Stone from whom all their measurements were taken.

What is the foundation of the Church? What is our faith based upon? The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone. The apostles and prophets wrote *the Scriptures*, and that is what we base our faith upon. The apostles and prophets all drew their spiritual dimensions [truths] from Christ Himself.

In a building, all measurements are taken from the corner. Peter uses a number of mason's terms in his first epistle. For example, he says we are all living stones in a spiritual house. When he states that the Lord will “*stablish, strengthen, and settle*” you, he is using builder's terms (cf. 5:10). To “settle” is to ground, as on a foundation (cf. Eph. 3:17, Col.1:23).

2:4 “[As you are coming to him—the Living Stone, who was] rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” Christ is the Chief Corner Stone of God's house. He was rejected of men, that is, by the builders (Mt. 22:42-44; Psa.118:22-23). The religious leaders of His day were the builders; they utterly refused His Lordship and crucified Him. They tried to build God's work by their own standards, teachings, doctrines, and traditions (cf. Rom. 9:31-33, 10:1-3). But Christ Himself is the *only* standard by which we may measure ourselves and teach others. He alone is the One whom God approves. Peter himself heard the voice of the Father from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: *hear ye him*” (Mt.17:4-5).

2:5 *Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* Individually we are as stones. God is working on us to make us fit perfectly into a special place in His house (see Eph. 2:20-22). We will need a lot of our rough edges chiseled off, and also much polishing.

Ye are ... “A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” In the Old Testament, the whole nation of Israel was called to be a holy priesthood (Ex.19:5-6). Because of their rebellion at Mount Sinai, the priesthood of Israel was entrusted *only* to the tribe of Levi (Num. 3:12; 3:41, 45), but God's original intention included *every one* of His redeemed.

Today, the calling to be a priest unto God is extended to each and every believer (Rev. 5:9-10). We are all called to be priests and to have access to God in a very intimate way. In addition to this, every Christian is given the privilege of offering up spiritual sacrifices to God. There are many forms of spiritual sacrifices—the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of joy, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the sacrifice of a broken spirit, the sacrifice of our Isaac, and many others. These sacrifices can only be made by the mercies of God, by His enablement (Rom.12:1-2). Jesus working in our lives and making us good is what makes our sacrifices to God acceptable and pleasing to Him.

2:6 “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.” (cf. Isaiah 28:16). God has purposely laid a stumblingblock in Zion to test the hearts of men and women. Zion is the most holy place in Israel. It is the place where God dwells in His fullness. It is the place where Christ dwells. The closer we come to God, the more obstacles there will be to offend us. There are many qualifications, not only for *ascending* but *abiding* on His holy hill (comp. Psa.15:1-5, Psa. 24:3-5).

“He that believeth on him shall not be confounded.” There was a major reason why many of the “builders” could not believe in Christ and were confounded. The *motives* in their hearts were not right, and this destroyed their faith. Jesus made this truth very clear when He warned, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (Jn. 5:44). If the motives of the heart are not pure, jealousy will block up our well. Envy and jealousy prohibited *the builders* from believing in Christ (Mt. 27:18).

2:7-8 “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the Stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner, And a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

Christ is the Light of the world. Light is *very offensive* to those who practice evil in the darkness. The person who loves the truth will also love Christ. He is the Light and the Truth. (Jn. 3:19-21). Unto those who are obedient (or who wish to be) — Christ is precious. Unto the disobedient — Christ is offensive, a stumblingblock. His words reprove and offend them.

If we are not *for* Christ, we will be *against* Him. If we do not listen to Christ, we will end up opposing what He is doing today. I am referring to *believers* as well as unbelievers. If we do not gather the harvest His way, we will end up scattering it abroad (Mt.12:30; Lk.11:23). This is precisely what *the builders* did in Christ's day. Some of the greatest opponents of Christ come from the house of faith! In the first century, the greatest enemies of God's message were Bible scholars.

Those who fall upon the Rock will be broken *in mercy*. God dwells with those who are of a broken and contrite spirit whose will and rights are surrendered to Christ. The Rock will fall *in judgment* upon those who oppose and despise the Rock. They will be pulverized to powder (Mt. 21:42-44).

CHRIST - THE ROCK

Jesus Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament! In His pre-incarnate state, He appeared to Moses as the great I AM. Christ was the One who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him the Law. Abraham rejoiced to see him (Jn. 8:56-59; Gen.18:1; 17:1; Acts 7:2); David saw Him at his right hand (Psa.16:8; Acts 2:25). Israel tempted Christ in the wilderness (1 Cor.10:9). The Apostle Paul tells us that Christ was that Rock that accompanied the Israelites in route from Egypt to the land of promise (1 Cor.10:4). Below are several other verses where Christ is known as the Rock:

- Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is our Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (See also Deut. 32:15, 18, 30, 31, Psa. 92:15).
- 1 Samuel 2:2 “There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.”
- 2 Samuel 22:2 “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.” (see verse 32, 47).
- Psalm 18:2 “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress.” (verse 31, 46).
- Psalm 28:1 “Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock.”
- Psalm 31:2-3 “Be thou my strong rock” ; “For thou art my rock and my fortress.” (Psa. 71:3, 94:22).
- Psalm 42:9 “I will say unto God my rock ...”
- Psalm 61:2-3 “... when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For *thou* hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.”
- Psalm 62:2,6,7 “He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.” In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength.” (cf. Isa.17:10)
- Psalm 78:35 “And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.”
- Psalm 89:26 “...Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.”
- Psalm 95:1 “...let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”
- Isaiah 8:14 “And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel.”
- Isaiah 32:2 “And a *Man* shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” That Man is Jesus.
- “Upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt.16:18). That Rock is Christ. Peter and the apostles were foundation stones of the Church (Eph. 2:20). The scriptures they received from Christ are the foundation of our faith. But Christ is the Chief Corner Stone, the One from whom all truth issues. Within Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3; 1:16-18). By Him were all things *created*. He is *before* all things, and by Him all things are held together.

2:9 “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*”

A Chosen Race

“A chosen generation” means *a chosen race*. All true Christians share common character traits. We all have the same Holy Spirit, the same Father, the same goals, and we all live by the same rule book—God’s Word. Christians are a nationality set apart from all the others. We are citizens of another land. The Church is made up of believers selected out of every kindred, tongue, and nation. God has ordained certain ones from every country to be kings and priests to Him (cf. Rev. 5:9-10).

A Kingly Priesthood

“A royal priesthood” is *a kingly priesthood*. The high calling of New Testament believers is to be *made* into kings and priests, and to reign on the earth. The priestly office involves sacrifice and suffering. The kingly office is that of power and authority. Christ was both a priest and a king. At His first coming, he demonstrated the priestly office. He gave Himself a ransom for many. At His second coming, he will rule as a sovereign king over all the earth. We, too, are called to reign with Him, but before we have a crown, we must have a cross. Thus, Peter exhorts us to “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6).

A Dedicated Nation Unto God

“A holy nation.” The Church is *a dedicated nation to God* among all nations. Paul entitles the Church “the Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16. Christ refers to the Church as *a nation* when he said to Israel, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a *nation* bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Mt. 21:43). When the nation of Israel did not produce spiritual fruit, Christ removed their authority and gave it to a nation who would produce good fruit. That nation is the Church, which is a people *among* the nations. We are that special people.

A Treasured and Special People

“A peculiar people.” We are *a special and treasured people to God*. We are His redeemed. Christ “gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). We are not saved *by* good works, but *for* good works.

“*That ye should show forth the [wonderful deeds, and display the virtues and excellencies] of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*” Every one of us was lost and groping in darkness until Christ gave us His light. New birth is actually an act of God, a miracle of grace. We should never think that it is just by repeating a prayer or formula. Sometimes people repeat a formula and nothing whatsoever has changed. New birth is an act of God. Paul said we were “delivered from the *power* of darkness” and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. This is the kingdom of love and light (Col.1:12-14), and I am glad to be a citizen of this kingdom.

Now that we are in the light, we should demonstrate the deeds, virtues, and excellencies of the One we represent. May we never be a misrepresentation of Christ in word or deed (cf. Jn.10:41-42). Christ told the man who was delivered from the shackles of Satan: “Return to thine own house, and *show* what great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him” (see Lk. 8:38-39).

2:10 “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Peter is now alluding to Hosea 1:10. He is applying this verse to the Church, which is made up of a remnant of believing Jews and Gentiles. The only way we can become the people of God is by believing in the Son of God. It has nothing to do with race or nationality. A Jew who does not believe in Christ is just as lost as anyone else.

The original promise in Hosea 1:10 was made to the nation of Israel, that they would be reinstated to their spiritual authority and position in the Millennium. The nation of Israel will obtain mercy when Christ returns. At that time there will be a national repentance and restoration (cf. Rom. 11:26). They will no longer stumble over the Stumblingblock. Until that time, the kingdom has been removed from them and given to a nation (the Church) that is bearing fruit.

Lusts That Wage War Against Our Soul

2:11 “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” Peter considered himself and every true believer an alien in this world. The world system promotes sensuality and lust everywhere. The whole world is corrupted through lust (2 Pet. 1:4). This is the reason for the breakdown of the home and marriage. We are living in an adulterous generation. We can feel the pressures of the decline of morality in our times. Fornication, adultery, pornography, and homosexuality are spirits that are waging war against us. These spirits are determined to destroy our character, our homes, and our eternal souls.

“Abstain” is a word that involves the will. We may choose to walk the walk of wisdom, or we may choose *not* to and thus be ensnared. If we sow to the Spirit, we will reap life. But if we sow to the flesh, we shall reap corruption. When a person reads the wrong material or looks at pornography, he is sowing to the flesh. Listening to sensual music and being enamored by evil musicians is sowing to the flesh. Watching endless soap operas with their continual extramarital affairs is sowing to the flesh. Constantly meditating upon someone other than your spouse is sowing to the flesh. If you are in the wrong places with the wrong friends—it won't be long before you fall. We must not play with the emotions of others, or with our own emotions. This is sowing to the flesh. (Gal. 5:16, 6:7,8).

Although these are acts of our will, I am not emphasizing the strength of the will. We always need grace (divine enablement) to help us make the right decisions and to help us sow to the Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. We need a life of worship, a life of prayer, and a life of walking with good people. We must seek to be filled with the Spirit, or we will be filled with something else. Always remember Joseph! When there was temptation, he ran. Samson stayed around, and fell. By grace, which path will you choose?

2:12 “Having our [lifestyle] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day [the Shepherd inspects you].” As Peter has already stated, we are aliens in this present world. We are citizens of another country. We do not follow the vanities of the children of darkness, or live their lifestyles. Therefore, since we are contrary to them they look for occasions to speak evil of us. And because they are looking for occasions to find fault with us, we must conduct ourselves properly at all times. When our Shepherd inspects us and we are found without fault, it causes even our accusers to respect us, and God is glorified (cf. Prov. 16:7, Lk. 2:52). *Genuineness* earns the respect of all!

2:13-15 “*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the [emperor] as supreme; or unto governors, [who are] sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*”

Peter submitted to kings, governors, and law-officers, for the Lord's sake and the sake of conscience. The Apostle Paul teaches us that rulers are God's ministers (servants, instruments). Here you should read Romans 13:1-7. There was a certain sense of justice in the Roman empire. There were courts, hearings, and appeals. The law officers were sent to punish the evildoers, and to commend those who did right. The Roman government often protected Paul from Bible-quoting Israelites who sought to murder him. This is seen repeatedly in the Book of Acts.

Peter taught respect of authority. He submitted to the ordinances of man. However, when the ordinances of man outlawed the gospel, he esteemed God's law above man's law. There are several times in the Book of Acts when he went against man's law to preach the gospel. We will look briefly at two examples in Acts 4:19 and 5:29.

Acts 4:19-20 - “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Acts 5:29 - “Then Peter and the other apostles... said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

God has given us the command to go and preach the gospel to every nation. When a nation outlaws the gospel, God's law overrides man's law. It is right in God's sight to take Bibles into a country and to speak His Word, in spite of man's decree against it. God's law is higher than man's. However, we must use great wisdom, and we must respect the other laws. Let us not use these verses in Acts 4:19 and 5:29 to support demonstrations and civil disobedience. Even though we object to abortion and other government-supported projects, we cannot use this for an excuse to disobey the laws of society and neglect to pay our taxes. Christ taught his followers to show respect to Caesar (Mt. 22:17-21) and other leaders (Mt. 23:3). True religion is the best support of civil government. It requires submission for the Lord's sake, and also for the sake of our conscience.

“*For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*” By keeping the right attitude and obeying the laws of the land, we will silence the ignorant charges and ill-informed criticisms of foolish persons. For the Lord's sake, and the gospel's, we must obey the laws of our society. Otherwise, we will disgrace the One we wish to represent. In Peter's youth, he had struck a servant of the high priest in the head with a sword. Christ had to undo his damage. Over the years Peter had learned to conduct himself discreetly.

2:16 “*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*” The Jews concluded from Deuteronomy 17:15 that they were not obligated to obey any sovereign except one taken from among their own brethren. This mentality carried over into the converted Jews. Christian Jews thought they were free from all other earthly authorities by their relation to Christ. To prevent this misconception, Peter explains that we are free from spiritual bondage, but not free from earthly authorities. He continues this thought of *subjection* in verse 17.

Respecting Authority

2:17 “*Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king [or emperor].*” Peter exhorts us to show proper respect to everyone, including unbelievers. Courtesy is always in order, even to our enemies. We may not agree with the lifestyles of the world, still we must *not* revile the ungodly. Our example is Christ who never resorted to name-calling or slander. However, when Christ told us to *love* our enemies, He did not tell us to *trust* our enemies, or to *walk* with them.

Love the brotherhood. Paul exhorts, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). We should be gracious to all, but especially we should be helpful and merciful to fellow believers. The days will come when we will need one another to survive.

Fear God. This means to show reverence for God.

Honour the king. In this case, the king was the emperor, Nero. Nero was a homosexual. The Apostle Peter commands the Church to respect positions of authority in government, even people like Nero. This is not to say that we respect their character or lifestyle. It is very unscriptural to attack those in leadership. We should never spend our time running down and slandering politicians who are ungodly. This is inappropriate conduct for a believer. Second Peter 2:10-11 warns against following the trend of many who “despise government” and “speak evil of dignitaries.” Even the angels of God shun this erroneous behavior. This is confirmed by Jude, the Lord's brother.

Jude 1:8-9 - Today there is a spirit of lawlessness against authority that is insidiously making inroads into the Church, even as it did in Jude's time. Apostate teachers in the Church of Jude's day “despised dominion” and spoke evil of dignitaries. To counteract this rebellious attitude against authority, Jude reminded the Church of an incident between Michael the archangel and Satan.

Moses died around 1430 B.C. and was buried by the Lord Himself (Deut. 34:5-6). Later, the Lord sent Michael the archangel to resurrect the body of Moses, who appeared to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:1-8; Lk. 9:28-36). When Michael came for the body of Moses, the devil contended with Michael, since Satan still had the power of death before the cross (cf. Heb. 2:14). How did Michael respond to Satan? Did he call him names or revile him? No! He did not *dare* to bring a slanderous accusation against him but simply said, “The Lord rebuke you Satan!”

The reasoning of Jude is this: “If the angels do not resort to name-calling or slanderous accusations against fallen dignitaries such as Lucifer, then men (who have less power than angels) should avoid abusive, insulting language against earthly rulers and angels.”

God never blesses believers for running down or defaming people in government, even if the officials are ungodly. We Christians should pay attention to this! Peter said concerning Nero, “*Honor the king.*” We should be courteous and respectful to everyone, but we should show special love to fellow-believers. Being polite to the unsaved is not *compromise*. This is simply displaying good manners. Being courteous to another does not suggest that we are putting our approval on their way of life.

2:18 “*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*” Here again is a divine obligation to show respect to those who have authority over us. In modern terms perhaps this verse could represent a relationship between an employee and an employer. It might be applied to our relationship with a law officer. Our logic says that if we are treated kindly, we should return the same. But the Word of God does not teach that. Peter commands that we should show reverence, not only to the considerate and reasonable authorities, but also to those who are harsh and overbearing. This is the Christian way; it is only possible by grace.

By our natural responses, we are only too ready to give the boss, the minister, the teacher, or law officer a good piece of our mind. After all, we have our rights. But what if Christ had defended His rights and demanded justice? Our debt of sin would never have been paid. Think about that for a while! *Life* is released as an innocent man or woman suffers injustice (1 Pet. 3:18). Yes, we can insist on our rights, but are we releasing life to a dying world? The choice is ours to make.

We may think that we are not obligated to obey a law officer if he has a nasty attitude, or show respect to a boss who is impatient. However, all of these attitudes reflect something that is very uncrucified in our lives. These *unsurrendered rights* will always show up in marriage and serve to undermine it—“I don't have to put up with this; I don't have to listen to you. I'm out of here!” What is your attitude toward authority? Our attitude will be magnified in our children!

2:19 “*For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*” It is commendable if a man endures the pain of unjust suffering. When a man or woman suffers for righteousness and keeps his attitude right, this is a sacrifice that is well pleasing to God, and *life* from this sacrifice flows out to others. Life comes from death to our own ways and rights.

2:20 “*For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is [commendable] with God.*” There is a reward when a believer suffers for righteousness and maintains a spirit of meekness. To suffer for our blunders with a patient spirit is *false meekness*, and there is no reward for that. Let us make sure that we are suffering for the right cause. Do not spend your life suffering as a crusader for a cause that is born of man, not of God. Ask God to show you mercy and cause you to know how to use your time, energy, substance, and life. He will only reward us for doing His agenda, not our own.

2:21-23 “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*”

Christ said, “The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” (Jn.13:16; 15:20). We are not greater than our Lord. In theory we believe this with our whole heart. However, by actions and attitudes we often make a flat denial of this simple truth! Christ suffered enormous injustices, but many times we cannot tolerate even small infractions! Suffering often involves meekness, and not retaliating when we are injured. Christ was the Lamb of Isaiah 53:7. He did not revile, threaten, or pronounce curses upon any of His persecutors. The Just One died for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). *The innocent suffering for the guilty is what releases life to others.* If we demand our rights, we will release no one from his bondages.

Meekness - The Key to Good Mental Health

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

The Apostle Peter had been a close companion of Christ for three and a half years and was an eyewitness of His sufferings. Never once did he see Jesus sin with His tongue. (Most sins are committed with the tongue). Peter was amazed and challenged at the meekness and self-control of the Master. When Christ was abused and insulted, He simply entrusted Himself and all of the injustices to His Heavenly Father. Christ clearly understood that sooner or later, everything would be brought to light, and to justice. We need to have that revelation also in order to have meekness.

Fighting back always brings bitterness and hardness into the heart. Satan did everything in his power to induce the Lord to retaliate in anger, bitterness, and threats to his persecutors. Then the adversary could find occasion to accuse Him and say, “You are no better than I am.” By restraining Himself from all vengeance, He defeated Satan. This is an important lesson for us! In order to have authority over the Wicked One, the Bitter One, the Offended One, we cannot act and respond as he does. There needs to be *a deeper crucifixion* of the inner life so that we do not react with retribution.

Why Psychology Fails

Christ never taught the Church that we have *a right* to be offended and bitter. The only right we have is to ask God for grace to forgive and release our offenders. This is the reason psychology fails! Psychology tries to patch up the old nature; it seeks to improve the old sinful, fallen nature. It never works! True spirituality deals a death blow to the nature we are born with and emphasizes a new life that is lived solely by the power of Christ.

Personally, I do not believe in human nature at all! It is hopelessly corrupt and needs to be put to death. Human nature believes it has *a right* to be offended, and bitter. Human nature demands rights and vindication. *Divine nature* surrenders rights, and allows God to vindicate. This is the Christian way, but it is often repulsive, even to professing Christians. Too often believers want to follow the natural way, but the natural way does not work. In many respects, Christians are very humanistic in their thinking. Underline and put into practice Proverbs 24:29.

Meekness is Holy Acceptance of Our Circumstances

Meekness is the key to having victory over Satan. Also it is the key to good mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Many people go down into the pits of despair and torment because they cannot and *will not accept* injustices that come into their lives. The natural response is to be hateful and bitter, and seek vengeance, but it leads to depression and despair, and in some cases, suicide. Job demonstrated meekness when he fell down in worship after he lost everything. In doing so, he dealt a tremendous blow to Satan. Also, he saved himself from sliding down into the pits of spiritual ruin.

In summary of all we have just said, the key to victory is found by looking at the Captain of our Salvation and following His example. How did Christ win the victory? By not reviling when He was reviled; by not making threats when He was abused; by committing His life and all the injustices hurled against Him to the Heavenly Father who judges righteously.

There are only two men in the Word of God who are called *meek*—Moses and Christ. Meekness comes through many crushings. Why do we need to be crushed? Because we are self-willed, headstrong, and deeply committed to our own point of view. All of our problems are because we are not imitating our Supreme example, the Lord Jesus Christ. Meekness is the result of yielding our rights and opinions to God over and over, and this is only possible by grace.

2:24 “*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*” Before the cross, the sins of man were only covered superficially by the blood of animals. There was no power to cleanse the guilty conscience. All of those sacrifices looked ahead to the cross when the Redeemer Himself would completely *take away* our sins. On the cross Jesus *abolished* our sins. Also, His blood is able to purify our conscience so that self-worth can be restored (Heb. 9:14, 10:22). Before the cross, men and women were always tormented with guilt (Heb.10:2-3) and were very aware of their past sins.

“*That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*” Christ paid our debt of sin so that we should die to a lifestyle of sin and live righteously for Him. He purchased us for Himself, and He has a divine plan for each of us to fulfill.

“*By whose stripes ye were healed.*” This is past tense. On the cross Jesus bore our sicknesses. He also carried our griefs and sorrows (cf. Isa. 53:4-5). He has already made a provision, not only for the healing of our bodies, but also for our heartaches, discouragements, and bereavements. Christ has even removed the sting of sorrow we feel when a loved one dies. The work has already been accomplished on the cross. He has paid the price for all of these blessings, but we must appropriate them. Although these blessings belong to us potentially, we must begin to apply them to our lives. We must tap into these provided resources. We need to pray through until we have received them.

If you are depressed, sad, or physically ill, begin to seek the Lord *earnestly* until these blessings are released to you. Paul tells us to “work out our own salvation” (Phil. 2:12). God has done His part, but we have to do our part. We must apply ourselves by praying and walking in obedience in order to have these graces imparted to us.

2:25 “*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and [Guardian] of your souls.*” Man is very prone to wander away from God into the danger zones of life. We are all very much like sheep (cf. Rom. 3:10-12). Peter often heard Jesus refer to Himself as the Good Shepherd. The Lord also commissioned Peter, saying: “Feed my sheep.” Peter was well aware of the fact that it is God who is seeking man, more than it is man who is seeking God.

Jesus is also called the Bishop (or Guardian) of our soul. Not only does Christ seek us when we are lost, He also watches over us *after* we are saved so that we do not go astray. Jesus prayed for Peter so that his faith would not faint after his devastating failure and denial of the Lord (Lk. 22:32). Peter reminds us that we are “kept [or guarded] by the power of God” (1 Pet.1:5). We are not keeping ourselves in the faith by our own power. It is God who is keeping and preserving us.

Chapter Three

Relationship of Wives to Husbands

3:1-6

3:1 *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the [behavior] of the wives.”* When Peter says “likewise” he is continuing his theme of submission to authority.

2:13 We are exhorted to “submit to every ordinance of man.”

2:13 Submit to the king supreme—the emperor.

2:14 Submit to governors, (magistrates, law officers).

2:17 Honour all men. Be gracious and respectful to all, even unbelievers.

2:17 Honour the king. (The emperor was a homosexual, and demented).

2:18 Servants are to be subject to their masters, even to the harsh and overbearing.

2:21-24 Even Christ submitted to the cross, to the cruel religious leaders, and to Roman soldiers.

3:1 *Likewise*, ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands.

5:3-4 Shepherds are subject to the Chief Shepherd and are not to be lords over the sheep.

5:5 The younger are to submit to the older ones.

5:5-6 All of us are to be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility.

While we are on the subject of marriage, the following should be prefaced by the fact that Peter himself was married, as were the other apostles (Mk.1:30-31, 1 Cor. 9:5). Many of their wives accompanied them on their travels, and this required much consecration.

“Be in subjection to your own husbands.” There is a reason Peter says “your own husbands.” Sometimes it seems easier to a woman to submit to someone else. This is because of that age-old illusion that someone else is more kind, considerate, and understanding than her own husband. Of course, it is a delusive perception, but one that ensnares many, especially in this adulterous generation. The fantasy of “being happier with someone else” is only because they do not dwell with them every day and see all of their humanness close up. When it comes right down to the truth of the matter, the one God gave us is the one that is best for us.

The Amplified Version reads like this: *“In like manner you married women, be submissive to your own husbands—subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt yourselves to them. So that even if any do not obey the Word [of God], they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives.”*

There are several important truths we should observe from this verse. The Word of God clearly encourages believing women to stay with their unbelieving husbands and not to divorce. This is substantiated by the Apostle Paul also (cf. 1 Cor. 7:10-14). It is taught by some that if one's spouse is not a Christian, they should divorce. However, the Word of God clearly teaches the opposite. Peter and Paul both teach that if a person has an unbelieving mate, they should do all they can to stay together. Thus, the scriptures stress the permanence of marriage. Also, the best way a woman can win a man to Christ is *not* by preaching to him, but by *a life* that exudes the sweetness of the Lord. Bad attitudes, grudges, independence, and ignoring what he is saying, drives a man yet further from the Lord. It causes him to blaspheme the Lord and His doctrine (cf. Titus 2:5).

3:2 “*While they behold your chaste [behavior] coupled with [reverence].*” When a wife respects, defers to, reveres, and honors her husband, this opens his heart to her and to the God she worships. On the other hand, if she preaches to him and then criticizes him, ignores his leadership, and refuses marriage relationships with him, he will blaspheme all the teachings of the Lord. He will abhor the religion she is seeking to advocate. Most men cannot respond to God if their wives are not in order with them. Unfortunately, many homes (Christian and non-Christian) are not in proper order.

Although this may seem biased, (and without discharging a man from his responsibilities), the greatest key to a marriage is the woman herself. She controls the climate and atmosphere of the home. She is “the neck that turns the head” as the saying goes. When she is content, thankful, and at peace, the home will be at peace. “Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish woman plucketh it down with her hands” (Prov.14:1). The attitude of the woman is the key.

God always addresses those under authority *first*, and then the authority. When it comes to marriage He says first of all, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18). Then He commands, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20). Then he speaks to the servants, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters” (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22). Both those who are *in* authority and those *under* authority are addressed, but God *always* starts with the attitudes of those *under* authority first.

Perhaps Queen Esther is best known for her ability to appeal to a husband who was about to make a disastrous decision. Her husband had signed a decree without knowing all the facts, and his decision would bring tragedy to many people. How would she approach a husband who was plainly misinformed and about to take a course of action that was in conflict with God's will? Did she lose control or become hysterical. Did she call him names or defame him by saying, “You fool, you idiot, don't you realize what you are about to do”? Such responses wound and close the heart of a husband.

Esther was different; she possessed self-control. Her soul was in subjection to her spirit and God's Spirit. This is the mark of a godly woman. First, she went to the right person for counsel, Mordecai. Then she began to pray and fast. At the correct time, she spoke to her husband, and without alarmism or hysteria, she invited him to an elaborate dinner in a comfortable setting. She had the peace of God and the anointing upon her life. After a nice banquet, her husband asked, “What would you like, dear.” Esther still did not mention her request. She asked him to come again to another evening dinner and then she would share some concerns with him. Her calm, godly attitude opened the heart of her husband and he was ready to give her anything she asked. Esther is the classic example of a pious woman who knew how to talk to a husband. This is an art that can be learned.

Emphasis On Inward Beauty More Than Outward v3-6

3:3-6 “*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair; and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*”

Verses 3-6 concerns the subject of *adornment*. Women major in three areas of outward adornment which Peter mentions here. The hair, the clothes, and jewelry. Peter is not saying that a woman should disregard her outward appearance. He is saying that the most important emphasis should be the adorning and trimming of her inner life, the hidden person of the heart. A woman should spend more time beautifying her attitudes before God than she does her outer appearance before a mirror.

In the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, Martha was more concerned with the house than she was with the condition of her inner life. She was anxious, angry, and accusatory. The Lord was more concerned with her inner state than with the house. He looks for a meek and quiet spirit, and this is the kind of woman He wants to dwell with. A man feels the same way about a woman. A man wants a woman who is at peace with herself. A meek and a quiet spirit makes a woman very attractive to God, and to a man. Ladies, is your main concern the outer person (clothes, hair, makeup, jewelry), or is it the inner person—a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great value?

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”

The holy women of old adorned themselves *with faith*, being in subjection to their own husbands. It requires a lot of faith to entrust your life to another human being, to a man. Yet the scripture says they “trusted in God ... being in subjection to their own husbands.” They *trusted God* to control their husbands. If a man is not worthy of trust, a godly woman can trust God to control and put limits upon her husband and the decisions he makes. Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him “lord.” She *trusted God* to control the actions of her husband. Are you ruled by faith, or by worry and unbelief?

Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” Ladies, you are Sarah's daughters only if you follow in her footsteps. If you allow God to do His special work in your life so that you are able to respond to life and your husband as Sarah did, then you are Sarah's spiritual daughters. Then you are women of faith. This means you have to conquer hysteria and alarmism as Sarah. She was a woman who was governed by faith. Fear and hysteria causes criticism, confusion, and the inability to be objective.

Titus 2:3-5 - There is a tremendous need in the Church today *for older women* who are able to teach the younger women to be self-controlled, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, diligent at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, so that the word of God is not blasphemed. Why do the younger women need to be taught to love their husbands, love their children, to be diligent at home, and obedient to their own husbands? Because they do not know how to. They need *a godly example* to model themselves after—the example of an older woman.

3:7 *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.”* Now Peter gives counsel to the husbands. He exhorts the men to “dwell with their wives according to knowledge.”

Understanding a Woman

Husbands are commanded to “dwell with their wives according to knowledge.” The Greek word for *knowledge* is “gnosis.” Gnosis is knowledge that is acquired by learning, effort, or experience. It requires time, effort, and experience to have this kind of knowledge and sensitivity. Men and women are very different. Each should study the other and know what constitutes the other spouse. Male and female think and respond differently to life situations. Their body chemistries are different, as well as their emotions, thought-patterns, and makeup. A man cannot expect his wife to react as a man, neither should a woman expect a man to react as she does. Men and women must dwell together in knowledge of these differences, and work at them. Otherwise there will be numerous misunderstandings and bitter feelings which will hinder their spiritual growth and their prayers.

Recognizing Her Needs - Helping Her

“Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker [partner], and as being heirs together of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.” Woman is called “the weaker partner.” This does not imply inferiority whatsoever. It means she is more delicate, physically and emotionally. She is more sensitive, and easily hurt or affected by little words and actions. Therefore, she struggles more with ill feelings and offenses. Also, a woman is more likely to suffer from guilt. A man has to more fully comprehend and be sympathetic to these needs in his wife and not be bitter against her (cf. Col. 3:19). Men tend to be bitter against their wives because they don't understand them.

Most wives have many fears, and need a patient and loving man who can seek God for wisdom to help her over her fears and lovingly bring her into submission. Fears, alarmism, and hysteria must be conquered because they lead to rashness and criticism of the husband and of God. Growing in faith, peace, joy, and the love of God will displace all fears. It will also be the key for good mental and emotional health. The Apostle John tells us, “Perfect love casts out all fear” (1 Jn. 4:18). As a husband loves his wife, and as a wife grows in her love relationship with God, all her fears will gradually dissipate.

Wives Must Allow Husbands to Protect Them

A woman is governed more by her soul (or emotions) than a man. Thus, she needs a man to help sort out her feelings. Feelings and emotions are very deceptive. Often when a woman is emotionally upset about something, her emotions urge her husband to take *immediate* action—action that he knows is not right! Women must allow their husbands to protect them.

Many pastor's wives have frayed nerves because they have tried to carry responsibilities and pressures that were only intended for their husbands to bear. A wife must stay in divine order and remain under the shelter and protection of her husband. Most women are not made for the pressures of leadership and that is because they are unable to handle the criticism and rejection that comes with that office. When a wife involves herself with everyone's problems, talks on the phone for hours, and is trying to have input into every issue, she is going to have a major breakdown and everyone is going to suffer. God only gives us grace (divine enablement) to carry out *His* agenda, not our own. Wives, allow your husbands to bear the load! They are anointed for that, you are not!

3:8 “*Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.*” In order to have compassion and mercy upon one another, we have to be closely involved with “one other” to know what our brothers and sisters are passing through. This verse suggests that we cannot be loners unattached to a body of believers. We have found that even church-goers who attend services regularly *often* know very little about the other members of that body. Perhaps we need to have our private lifestyles intruded upon by the Holy Spirit. Real Christianity involves us with others. We cannot come to Christian perfection without having one another (Jn.17:23). A mark of maturity and perfection is our ability to get along with others. Consider how many times the Scriptures include and comprise us together as “*one another.*”

Mark 9:50 - “Have peace one with another”
John 13:14 - “Wash one another's feet”
John 13:34 - “Love one another” v35 15:12
Romans 12:10 - “Be kindly affectioned one to another”
Romans 12:10 - “In honour preferring one another”
Romans 12:16 - “Be of the same mind one toward another”
Romans 14:19 - “Edify [one] another”
Romans 15:7 - “Receive [or accept] one another”
Romans 15:14 - “Admonish one another”
Romans 16:16 - “Salute [or greet] one another”
Galatians 5:13 - “By love, *serve* one another”
Galatians 6:2 - “Bear one another's burdens”
Ephesians 4:2 - “Forbearing one another in love”
Ephesians 4:25 - “We are members one of another”
Ephesians 4:32 - “Be kind one to another, tenderhearted”
Ephesians 4:32 - “Forgiving one another”
Ephesians 5:21 - “Submitting yourselves one to another”
Colossians 2:2 - “Knit together in love”
Colossians 3:9 - “Lie not one to another”
Colossians 3:13 - “Forbearing one another”
1 Thess. 4:18 - “Comfort one another”
1 Timothy 5:21 - “Without preferring one before another”
Hebrews 3:13 - “Exhort one another daily”
Hebrews 10:24 - “Consider one another”
James 5:9 - “Grudge not one against another”
James 5:16 - “Confess your faults one to another”
James 5:16 - “Pray for one another”
1 Peter 4:9 - “Use hospitality one to another”
1 Peter 5:5 - “Be subject one to another”
1 John 1:7 - “Have fellowship one with another”

I think God is trying to tell us something here. Are we involved with “one another?” Are we close enough to our brothers and sisters to know what they are facing and feeling? Or are we enclosed in our own little world and disconnected from the rest of the Body of Christ? How scriptural is your Christianity? Remember, Christian perfection is measured by how well we can flow with others.

On Meekness Again - Especially With Our Tongue

3:9 *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”* (cf. 2:23). Our natural reaction to insult and injury is to return the same. Virtually every motion picture produced in Hollywood is based on getting even. Proverbs 24:29 warns: “Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.” This is the natural way, but our heart always becomes hardened when we try to even the score with those who have offended us. Vengeance belongs to God (Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30). If we take matters into our own hands, God cannot deal with our enemy. We are commanded to do good to our enemies, and inherit God's blessing for doing so. Remember, meekness is the key to good mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Peter learned firsthand from Christ that we are to forgive our offender seventy times seven.

3:10-12 *“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him [shun] evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and [pursue] it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”* These verses are quoted from Psalm 34:12-16.

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” How we use our tongue will determine whether or not we have a good life. Peter remembered the deceit in a fellow minister named Judas and how in the end he committed suicide. Those who are closest to Christ in eternity have no guile in their mouth (Rev. 14:1-5).

If we want a good life, we must turn from all evil and do good. We must seek peace and actively pursue peace. Avoid being in demonstrations, marches, and protests. I am just as conservative as anyone else, but I know that society never changes until people's hearts are changed by the power of God. Politics alone cannot do this! We must face *the cause*, not the effect. The real problem is the sin in the Church (cf. 2 Chron. 7:14; Isaiah 58:1; Jer. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:17).

God Only Hears and Defends the Righteous

“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” God will only honor a Christian who is living right. The Psalmist declared, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18). Sin brings guilt, and guilt diminishes our faith. We cannot pray with a double mind and a heart of unbelief and expect God to answer us (Jas. 1:6-8). Let us ever seek for the approbation of God for then He will cause His face to shine upon us and give us peace (Num. 6:24-26).

3:13 *“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”* Who is going to harm us if we are zealous followers of good? When we do right we have God's favor and He is on our side. God puts limits on anyone who seeks our harm. The angels of the Lord surround those who fear God (Psa. 34:7). Right living is also the surest way to prevent self-induced troubles.

3:14-17 *“But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify [or set apart Christ as Lord] in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear [gentleness and respect]: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you as of evildoers, they may be ashamed [who] false accuse your good [behavior] in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”*

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.” God puts limits on what our enemies can do to us, but even if God calls upon us to suffer for righteousness, He will always make every injustice work in our favor (cf. Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). When Peter and the apostles were publicly disgraced and beaten for the cause of Christ, “they departed from the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:40-41, cf. Acts 16:23-25). The joy of the Lord was their strength. There was no self-pity or gloom here. They were full of the Holy Ghost, and joy. “If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.” It is a great privilege.

Remedy for Fear

“And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify [or set apart Christ as Lord] in your hearts.” Christians have no reason to be afraid of the threats or rage of any of their enemies. Our enemies are God's enemies, and *his face is against them*. His power is above their power. They are the objects of His curse and can do nothing to you but by His permission. Instead of terrifying ourselves with the fear of men, we should sanctify the Lord in our hearts (v15) and let Him be our fear, and let Him be our dread (Isa. 8:12-13). Christ taught the disciples (Peter included), not to fear those that can only kill the body, but to fear Him that can destroy both body and soul (Lk.12:4-5).

We should never be afraid of the future, especially when we think of persecution or martyrdom in the last days. We are told repeatedly not to fear. Christ told Peter and the apostles, “See that ye be not troubled” (Mt. 24:6); “be not terrified” (Lk. 21:9; cf. 2 Thes. 2:2). If we are ever called upon to suffer persecution or even to give our lives, there will be grace given to us *at that time*. God is not going to give us grace for something 20 years before we need it. Christ taught us to live one day at a time in Matthew 6:34. This is a key for victory over fear. Do not worry about tomorrow, or next week, or next year. We only need God's supply of grace *for today*. When tomorrow comes, start all over. He will give us divine enablement at the time we need it. Also, God will give us the right words to speak *at the time we need them* (Mt.10:17-20; Lk. 21:12-15).

“And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear [gentleness and respect].” When we give our testimony, our attitude must always be one of meekness, gentleness, and courtesy. We must be like a lamb and not angry or vindictive. It would totally defeat the purpose of Christ to call down fire from heaven upon our persecutors (Lk. 9:54-56, Acts 7:60).

“Of the hope that is in you.” Hope is a sign of regeneration. A real Christian is filled with hope. It is a sign that we have new life within us. Unbelievers do not have any hope in their hearts.

“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you as of evildoers, they may be ashamed [who] false accuse your good [behavior] in Christ.” To make sure our testimony is effective, we must have a good conscience. If our conscience is good and our behavior is right, it will cause those who are bringing false accusations against us to close their mouths (cf. Prov.16:7; 2 Cor.10:6).

“For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.” Peter keeps bringing up this subject of “suffering for the right thing.” Much suffering in the life of a Christian is self-induced. Many torments and pressures stem from unresolved conflicts within ourselves. Peter brought many trials upon himself as a young man. He suffered for his faults. There is no reward for this. Thus, Peter warns us repeatedly to make sure that we are suffering only for well doing, not for evil doing. We must be sure we are suffering for *God's* cause, not our own.

3:18 *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

Christ died *once* and for all for our sins. He did not have to keep dying over and over. When Moses struck the Rock twice, it signified (in type) that Christ would have to die more than once. For this reason Moses was disciplined severely for not controlling his spirit. At the time Peter wrote this epistle, there were many believing Jews who were still clinging to the Old Testament rituals. They continued to sacrifice animals, and observe feast days in Jerusalem. Paul also wrote to the Hebrews and exhorted them regarding this matter. He reasoned that Christ had made *one* offering forever (Hebrews 9:26, 9:28, 10:12, 10:14). To keep sacrificing animals was to minimize the blood of Christ. To do so was to say that the blood of Christ was not sufficient.

“The Just for the unjust [the Innocent for the guilty], that He might bring us to God.” As we have mentioned earlier, there is no life or power released unless someone has made a great sacrifice. The most innocent Man of history suffered the most abuse, but it released life and brought us to God. We also are called to walk in His footsteps. If we want to bring life to others, if we want to bring others to God, we will have to suffer injustices and pressures (see 2 Cor. 4:10-12; 1:5,6,8).

“Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” Christ was put to death in His body, but was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit three days later. While his body was in the grave those three days, His spirit descended into the lower parts of the earth with certain missions to accomplish. He performed all of these by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3:19-20 *“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”*

What is it like in the lower parts of the earth? The story of the rich man and Lazarus gives us many meaningful insights (Lk.16:19-31). We must bear in mind that this is the era *before* the cross. Before the cross, heaven was not opened. When people died, their spirits descended into the lower parts of the earth. The righteous spirits were in one designated area, and the wicked were in another region. The righteous were in a resting area, but the wicked were tormented. There was a great chasm between these two places in the underworld. When Christ rose from the dead, the scripture says that “he led captivity captive” (Eph. 4:8-10). Christ released all the righteous from their resting place beneath, and they ascended with Him into heaven. Today when a believer dies, he goes directly to heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-8).

During Noah's time, while the ark was being prepared, there were many warnings being given about the coming flood. Actually, there were many who believed the message. You would not get that impression if you only read Genesis 6:5. Many did believe, and it restrained them from totally following the course of that age of corruption. Scripture says they were “sometimes disobedient” whereas all the others were completely corrupt. The “sometimes disobedient” represent many believers today whom we would term “carnal Christians.” When Christ was in the lower parts of the earth, He preached to these *believers* who had drowned in the flood, but whose souls were saved. Only eight people were preserved bodily in the flood. Let us not be carnal believers, unprotected from the great tribulation today, but let us pray to be accounted worthy to escape these things.

Three Types of Believers

There have always been three different levels of believers! There are many series of “threes” in Scripture. In First John 2:12-14, we have three stages of believers: “Little children, young men, and fathers.” *Little children*, spiritually speaking, know that their sins are forgiven. They are infantile in their understanding of the Father. *Young men* are strong, the Word of God is developed in them, and they have overcome the Wicked One. *Fathers* are those who know God. This is an intimate and mature knowledge of God.

In Noah's time, there were three different groups of believers represented. Enoch was *translated* before the flood. Noah and his family were *preserved* through the flood. And then there was the group mentioned in First Peter 3:19-20 who were “sometimes disobedient” while the ark was being prepared. They *drowned* in the flood, but their souls were redeemed. They were genuine believers who lived on the perimeter of what God was doing and saying in their time. They believed judgment was coming but probably thought it would not happen in their time.

These three groups correspond to our day and age. In Revelation chapter 12, we have three similar groups of believers. There is a Manchild (a group within the Church) who is birthed from the Woman and translated into heaven. This is a group of people who do not go through the great tribulation. They have already been purified. The purpose of the tribulation is to purify the saints (cf. Rev. 7:14). Gold that has been purified does not need to put back into the furnace over and over again. The Woman (or Church) is preserved through the tribulation. But the Remnant of her seed is exposed to persecution and wrath. This group answers to the carnal believers in Noah's time who did not heed the message of the hour, and were exposed to the judgments of God upon the earth. These three groups are seen also in Abraham's time.

Three Groups of Believers			
	HOLY OF HOLIES	HOLY PLACE	OUTER COURT
1. Before the Flood	Enoch <i>Translated</i>	Noah and his family <i>Preserved</i>	Sometimes disobedient <i>Drowned but redeemed</i> <i>I Peter 3:19-20</i>
2. Abraham's Time	Isaac <i>“heir of all things”</i>	Sarah <i>Type of the Church</i>	Abraham's other sons <i>Had gifts, but amounted to little (Gen. 25:5-6)</i>
3. Our Time Revelation 12	Manchild <i>Translated before Tribulation</i>	Woman <i>Preserved Through Tribulation</i>	Remnant of her Seed <i>Exposed to Tribulation</i>

Importance of Water Baptism

3:20-21 “... *Eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*” Noah's flood is symbolic of water baptism. The old world of iniquity was buried and put to death by the waters, but Noah and his family of eight emerged from the waters to walk in newness of life. The number 8 means “resurrection or new beginning.” The same waters that judged the flesh, preserved believing Noah and his family.

When we are baptized, we are being baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In water baptism the old life and its ways are “buried.” Then we are to walk in newness of life in Christ. Peter was quite strong on the importance of water baptism (Acts 2:38, 10:46-48). It is a command of the Lord (Mt. 28:19; Mk.16:15-16). Water baptism itself does not save us. We are saved by new birth, not by a ritual or ceremony. However, water baptism is important. It is the [seeking] of a good conscience. It is an act of obedience.

Rebaptism?

As ministers, we should not rebaptize unless: 1.) The person was not converted when he was first baptized; or 2.) The candidate was only sprinkled. Baptism literally means “immersion.” In the original Greek it means “a ship that has been sunk” or a garment that has been thoroughly inundated in dye. Every part of us should be buried with Christ, and raised in newness of life. It is not possible to be buried with Christ in baptism when we are sprinkled.

What Formula?

Do not argue over a formula. This can be a hobbyhorse and leads to “vain jangling” or bickering. The important thing is one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord told us to baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son (Jesus Christ), and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19).

Christ - Seated at the Right Hand of God

3:22 “*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*” Jesus is now in heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. We are told that He is seated at the right hand of God at least twenty times in the New Testament alone. Thus, it must be very important. Angels, powers, and authorities are all made subject to Him.

Peter was an eye-witness of Christ's appearance to the apostles after the resurrection when He declared, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18). The Apostle Paul confirms this in Colossians 1:16-19. The more we become connected to Christ and aligned with His will, the greater power we will possess. All power in heaven and earth have been given to the Son by the Father. At the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and tongue confess His Lordship—by those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:9-11). Even the inhabitants of hell will be compelled to acknowledge His Lordship.

Chapter Four

Purpose for Suffering

4:1-2 *“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin [or willingly ceases from sin]; That he no longer should live the rest of his [earthly] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”*

Jesus not only suffered for us on the cross. He also suffered in His younger years to be *made* perfect (mature, entirely fit). cf. Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9. As a human, Jesus became perfect by the things He suffered. This truth applies to us, too. We will become mature and entirely fit for the task, and perfected by painful lessons and disciplines.

“Arm yourselves with the same mind.” “Arm yourselves” is a military expression. Having the right mentality about suffering is like arming ourselves with a lethal weapon. This armor is the mind of Christ. Christ suffered to be brought to perfection, and so must we suffer. When people are told that there are no battles to be won as a Christian, they will be mortally wounded when trouble comes.

“For he that hath suffered in the flesh [willingly ceases from sin].” Pain destroys evil in our nature. A person may be extremely sincere and desire God's very highest for his life. In spite of his great sincerity, he might have to face particular bents to sin in his life such as pride, anger, self-pity, deceit, or inordinate affections. These iniquities can be so powerful and dominating that God may have to keep a Christian under intense pressure for a long time in order to destroy these deeply ingrained propensities to sin. For this reason, God may *delay* a healing. He may allow a serious irritation or problem to continue in our lives until something very unyielding and hard begins to soften and change. Remember, “he that has suffered in the flesh willingly ceases from sin.” Delays are because He loves us.

Utilize Your Time Wisely

“That he no longer should live the rest of his [earthly] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” The result of suffering in the flesh is freedom. God does not want us to be a slave to these evil propensities all the rest of our lives on this earth, but rather that our whole life may be freed from iniquity and given to the will and purposes of God.

4:3-5 *“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the [living] and the dead.”*

Peter is saying that we have already spent enough time in our former life doing what the unsaved Gentiles are doing presently. Before we came to Christ we walked in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, revelling, and detestable idolatries (cf. Titus 3:3). Now that we are born again, the world thinks we are peculiar because we are not practicing the same excesses. Thus, they speak evil of us. But the children of darkness who are speaking against us and living abominably are going to have to give an account to God who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

4:6 “*For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are [now] dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*”

God will judge the living and the dead. For this cause the gospel was preached (past tense) to those who are (now) dead. The dead will be judged according to how they lived their lives in the flesh during this life. Their spirits are alive unto God, even though their bodies are dead. Death does not mean oblivion. It simply means “separation.” At death, the spirit is separated from the body, according to James 2:26. The spirit never ceases to exist.

After death, there is no longer any chance for salvation. All decisions have been made. Everything is final! We will all be judged according to the deeds we have done while we lived in this body of flesh (2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl.12:14).

When is the End of Time?

4:7 “*But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*” The end of all things is near. Peter exhorts every believer to be self-controlled and clear in his mind so that he can pray effectively. Life is short! Time is running out, and we are all going to give an account to God for how we have used our time and our life! The first century apostles spoke as if time would come to an end in their era. This is the way every succeeding generation was to live. When we breathe our last breath, the end of time and the end of the world has come for us. Therefore, the end of time has come for every generation. When Peter said “the end of all things is at hand” he only had one year to live. Let us use our time wisely and make it count for eternity (Psa. 90:12).

Love - The Evidence of Christian Perfection

4:8 “*Above all things have fervent [love] among yourselves: for [love] will cover the multitude of sins.*” Peter had been reduced to the most important thing in life—love for God, love for others. Paul said that love is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). It is the evidence of Christian perfection. Love covers a multitude of sins. When we have the love of God in our hearts, we can overlook, forgive, and disregard the offenses of others. In this verse, Peter is alluding to Proverbs 10:12.

Proverbs 19:11 says it is to a man's glory to pass over a transgression (or an offense). It is to a man's praise and honor when he can overlook offenses. Love produces this quality. Peter had a forgiving nature. He had grown to full stature in Christ. People who have not been perfected in love require vindication for every offense or slight sent their way.

Hospitality Without Grudging

4:9 “*Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*” Many people do not like to entertain others in their home. It is a great inconvenience for them and they do it *grudgingly*. Hospitality must be shown graciously, cordially, and without complaining. Peter and his wife traveled extensively, lodging in many homes. They could sense whether or not hospitality was in the hearts of their hosts. Peter knew it was a problem for some. That is the reason he says, “Use hospitality without grudging.” Are we too particular about our homes, our new carpets, our routine, our privacy? Are these things more important than people? If so, perhaps we could ask God to enlarge our hearts and adjust some of our priorities.

Know Your Gift - Use Your Gift

4:10-11 *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”*

God gives every believer a gift or ability. This gift is given to us by grace, and operates by grace. Yet, we must *use* our particular gift. Peter instructs us to use whatever gift God has given to us. Every gift or ability we have is given, not just for ourselves, but to bless and edify others. In using the gift (singing, preaching, helping, giving, serving, encouraging), we are also blessed. Paul said that as we use our gift, we profit withal (with all). See First Corinthians 12:7. If we neglect our gift or ministry to others, we are not only robbing others of a blessing, we are robbing ourselves too. In using our gift, we bless others and ourselves, and Jesus Christ is glorified. Jesus Christ is very sensitive to the needs of each member of His Body. He wants to make sure that every person is cared for, and every need is met.

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (or as one who speaks the very words of God). The Lord desires to separate any mixture in our lives that is not of Him so that every word we speak comes directly from Him. When God speaks through us, something happens. When God spoke through Peter to Ananias and Saphira, they fell down dead (Acts 5:3-11).

Anything we do should be performed with the ability God gives us, that He may be glorified. All our actions should be born of God. When we are prompted by God, then our efforts will be done in the Spirit, and we will have good results and good fruit. Stay in the vocation to which God has called you. Find out which gifts or abilities He has given to you, and flow in them. Do not try to get into some other avenue of service to which God has not called you or anointed you. As a young Christian, Peter tried to do things for God that He had not purposed for his life. Therefore, there was no grace or anointing, and he failed. Stay in your calling, and you will prosper.

Do Not Panic When the Unexpected Comes

4:12 *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. Do not panic when a trial beyond your understanding comes into your life. Trials are necessary and their purpose is to purify us. If we understood our trial, it would not be a trial. Do not think that your circumstances are extraordinary or unusual. Peter understood these things very well, and tells us again in 5:9 that the same afflictions are being accomplished in the lives of all our brethren around the world. Paul tells us our trials are *common* (1 Cor.10:13).*

4:13 *“But 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.”* It is a privilege to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings. If we accept them, we will also be a partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Also, we will have great joy. To the degree that we suffer with Christ, to that same degree we will have His glory (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:18). The Apostle Peter speaks much on the subject of glory. Peter had experienced glory, but first he was fully identified with the reproach of Christ.

4:14 “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” Peter was not afraid of reproach (see Acts 5:41). He was glad to be “counted worthy to suffer shame” for the name of Christ. This attitude is very healthy. God's presence is with us when we are being reproached for His sake. God is glorified if we keep our attitude right. But remember, we can only keep our attitude right by relying on His grace.

Do Not Suffer for the Wrong Things

4:15-16 “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” It is a privilege to suffer on behalf of Christ and for His cause. However, there are other forms of suffering that must be avoided, such as suffering for disobedience, as well as other stresses that we bring upon ourselves.

- Do not suffer as a murderer. There are many ways to kill. It does not require a gun, a knife, or poison. We can kill people with our words, looks, attitudes, or neglect. Parents sometimes go to an early grave because of the behavior of their children. I have seen people die prematurely from high blood pressure and strokes because of the stress others have put upon them. Do not ruin your testimony because of a violent temper. An outburst of wrath can be deadly to others. According to the words of Christ in Matthew 5:21-22, anger and hatred in the heart are *the source* of murder and He commands us to deal with the source. Murder begins in the heart.
- Do not suffer as a thief. Many believers do not have financial integrity. Dishonesty in taxes, food stamps, and not paying bills, are all stealing. Let us avoid buying things we do not need, and not abuse the use of the credit card. Money that is *too easily accessible* lures us into a snare of debt.
- Do not suffer as an evildoer. Drugs, gambling, child-molesting, and other criminal activities must never blemish the testimony of a believer. If you go with the wrong crowd, you will start doing what they are doing. I know too many Christians who are sitting in prison today for the crimes just mentioned.
- Do not suffer as a busybody in other men's business. We must not pry into the private affairs of others. We must mind our own business, unless God involves us. King Josiah meddled with a quarrel involving two men. God told him to stay out of it. He did not heed the warning and died prematurely (2 Chron. 35:20-23). This is unnecessary suffering that we bring upon ourselves.

Self-Induced Stress

Much stress that we suffer is brought upon us *by ourselves*. Most of our real problems are *within ourselves*, and are not what someone else has said or done. Unresolved conflicts in our own heart deplete us mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Many anxieties are because of *unbelief*, or *taking matters into our own hands*. Perhaps we set *deadlines and goals* which are impractical and unrealistic. When we are unable to meet the deadlines, we are stressed out, emotionally drained, and angry. Can you imagine what this does to a marriage relationship! A perfectionist cannot be happy unless everything is just the way he wants it, but life does not allow us to have everything the way we want it. Are you trying to *be* or *do* something God has not purposed for your life? This will bring on tremendous stress. These are only a few examples. Your own list will be the most important! Ask God to show you precisely what those stresses are which you are bringing upon *yourself*.

Judgment Must Begin at the House of God

4:17 “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if [it is hard for the righteous to be] saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Judgment must begin at God's House (Isa. 4:3-5; Acts 5:3-11). God must judge and cleanse His own house first. Then others can come into the Church, and He can judge the world. God is ready to revenge all disobedience when obedience in the Church is fulfilled (2 Cor.10:6). Today, the Church is filled with disobedience.

- There is a moral breakdown and compromise in many of its ministers. (Many does not imply most)
- Discernment of good and evil is on a very low level (Ezek. 22:26), and worldliness pervades.
- Standards on divorce / remarriage are ignored. The divorce rate is now almost as high as the world's.
- Homes are out of order.
- Children are rebellious. (Christian schools / home schooling does not work if parents are not genuine.)
- Fornication, adultery, and other forms of immorality are rampant in the Church.
- Much of the Christian music industry is worldly and sensual. (Some of the package covers are Satanic.)
- Many are in financial bondage or lack financial integrity.
- There is much disrespect for authority on every level, and a general spirit of independence.
- The Church copies the tactics and trends of the world—demonstrations, protests, causes, etc.
(There are tremendous evil forces over this nation; marches have no power at all to move them.)
- Sociology, psychology, politics, and worldly philosophies permeate many of our theological schools.
- The Church (for the most part) is prayerless, passive, powerless, and satisfied (Rev. 3:15-19).
- There is a general lack of vision of coming revival; therefore, people live carelessly (Prov. 29:18).
- Many churches prefer *entertainment* to truth. The message of the cross is often shunned.
- In short, much of the Church is just like the world. It is no example to the world.

This is the reason judgment must first begin at the House of God. God must cleanse His own house first. If the Church wants to reach the nations of the world, it must have revival. Politics will not change society. Psychology and intellectualism can never meet the real needs of the heart. This only patches up the old nature. The spirit of repentance (an anointing and a gift of God) is the only thing that changes the mind, and breaks down resistance in the heart. Unless we are changed in our spirit by the power of God, nothing will ever change. With all of the clinics, therapy, support groups, and endless counseling sessions, nothing ever changes until an individual has had a meeting with Christ. I am not talking about new birth here. I am speaking about meeting God in each issue and problem we face in our lives. Today, the Church is following the world's methods in nearly everything. This is the reason she is the tail and not the head (Deut. 28:13). When the Church returns to the commandments of the Lord, she shall be the head, and not the tail. Presently the Church is not a good example to the world. By her very lifestyle she *denies* that Christ is truly the answer to the problems of the world and of man.

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if [it is hard for the righteous to be] saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” If it is difficult for the righteous to be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly be?—in eternal judgment! It is not only sufficient to believe in Christ, we must *continue* to be faithful to Him (Rom.11:22). There are pressures to overcome in order to gain eternal life. Jesus exhorted, “He that endures to the end shall be saved” (Mt. 24:13).

What About Those Who Have Never Heard?

“Where shall the ungodly and the sinner be?” Those who have not obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ will be lost for all eternity. People in heathen nations who have never heard the gospel are lost also. They are in another kingdom, and they are under the power of Satan (Acts 26:18). Their sins are not forgiven and their uncleanness is not purged. This is the reason we must preach the gospel to every creature under heaven (Mk.16:15; Rom.10:13-15).

If those who have never heard the gospel are saved, why should we preach the gospel to them so that they may make a decision and be lost? Ignorance of the truth never saves anyone! Many Christians are not really convinced that the people who have never heard the gospel are lost. Their rationale is that they were never given a chance. But such is not the case. When nations reject God and murder the missionaries who are sent to them, God gives them over to strong delusion and bondage. God chooses their delusions (cf. Isa. 66:4). Yet, God has selected *some* in every country who will be made into kings and priests (Rev. 5:9-10).

Suffering in the Will of God

4:19 “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.” Again, Peter reminds us that all suffering should be in the will of God. We should not bring about our own suffering because we are headstrong and unteachable, or because of our folly. For those of us who suffer affliction in the will of God, we should remember that we are in good hands. We are in God's hands. A faithful Creator will only allow us to be in a trial for *exactly* the right amount of time. The temperature of the fiery furnace will not be too hot. He is standing with us in the crucible.

At some time in our lives, circumstances that are unfair will surround us. This is inevitable! Yet, God will surely vindicate us, whether it be in this present life or in the one to come. When Christ was treated unjustly, He committed himself to Him who judges righteously (cf. 2:23). He did not seek vengeance or become bitter. He placed Himself into the hands of His Father. And we are told to do the same by Peter in 4:19.

A Reward - Only if Our Heart is Willing

In Christianity, our attitude means everything! We should not only *do* the will of God, we must *delight* to do His will (Psa. 40:8). I am bringing up this point now because of an episode recorded for us in the Gospel of Mark. Mark's Gospel is in actual fact a record of the words of the Apostle Peter. While Peter preached at Rome, John Mark was his interpreter. The Romans asked Mark to write down the words of Peter, and the *Gospel of Mark* is the result.

In Mark 15:21, we find that Simon, a Cyrenian, was *compelled* to bear the cross of Christ. This account is found also in Matthew 27:32 and Luke 23:26. Simon was seized and forced to carry a cross *against* his will. Simon was given the privilege of helping Christ on the Calvary Road, but he resented the burden of the cross. This is a divine lesson we should never forget. There is no reward for bearing a cross against our will. Paul stated that he was called to the ministry, but that he would only be rewarded if he carried out his ministry *willingly*. If he did it *unwillingly*, there would be no reward (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16-18).

Chapter Five

A Charge to the Leaders

5:1-4

5:1 “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*” Verses 1-4 is a charge to the elders (leaders, pastors). Peter himself was a chief elder in the Early Church. He was an instructor of leaders. He was more experienced and had gone on further in Christ, and now he is instructing the younger elders and leaders.

Peter was not only a witness but a *partaker* of the sufferings of Christ. He also tasted of the glory. We will have glory and power to the degree that we partake of the sufferings of Jesus. There is a future glory also in the resurrection.

5:2 “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*” “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” This is the same charge Jesus gave to Peter 35 years earlier (Jn. 21:15-17). Jesus told Peter, if you love me, feed my lambs (the younger believers), and feed my sheep (the older believers). In order to have sustenance to give to the flock, we must go through necessary processes and experiences in life. Jesus was actually saying to Peter: “Give yourself completely to my call and purpose for your life. This is how you can prove your love for me. Then you will have the sustenance to feed and nourish my people.” If we refuse the processes, we will have little or nothing to preach.

“*Taking the oversight thereof*” (or serving as overseers). The leader or pastor must take his place. He must lead, not follow. Although pastors must serve people, the people are not their master.

“*Not by constraint but willingly.*” A pastor should assume his responsibility, not because he has to or because it is an obligation, but because it is a privilege. Pastoring should be considered a joy and privilege. Remember, there is no reward if we are *forced* to bear our cross or do our duty. Remember Simon of Cyrene.

“*Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*” A minister must not be greedy for money, advantage, or profit. He must be willing and eager to serve the people of God. Peter had very pure motives with respect to money (cf. Acts 8:18-21).

5:3 “*Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*” A minister must never be dictatorial, overbearing, or domineering over those whom he is in charge. It is God's Church, not ours. We must be tolerant, gracious, and also firm. We should be an example to the people and live in such a manner that it causes others to want to follow us. Lead the sheep. Do not drive them. Paul refused to be dominant over the people, but was a helper of their joy (2 Cor.1:24).

5:4 “*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*” Although leaders are shepherds, Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and all shepherds are subject to Him. Christ called himself “The Good Shepherd” in John 10:11. He is the perfect Model for all shepherds to emulate. There is a special crown that awaits every *faithful* shepherd.

5:5 *“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”* The younger in the Lord (lesser in spiritual rank) should have humility and listen to the older ministers and spiritual guides of the Church. Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the older men and listened to the younger ones (1 Kg.12:13-14). The older men were more mellow in their judgment but the younger ones were very rough. Usually age makes us more tolerant and merciful to others. Rehoboam divided the congregation because he would not listen to the older counselors.

Submission is For Everyone

“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” No matter what our rank, we must consider our actions and words to everyone. A husband has to take into account how his decisions are going to affect his wife and children. Actually, decisions should be prayerfully made together.

“And be clothed with humility.” Our minds are filled with pride (Rom.12:3, Gal. 6:3). Humility is a spiritual covering. Peter had this spiritual garment. He had passed through many refining fires. Having a humbling experience does not mean we possess humility. We will need many breakings before it rubs off on us. Ask God to clothe your mind with humility. By nature we are “confident in the flesh” and we think we can work things out, but we are mistaken.

Dangers of Pride / Blessings of Humility

“For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” God opposes and frustrates the proud, because the proud resist and oppose Him. Instead, He gives grace to the humble. Receiving grace is the key to going on in our Christian walk. It is the *only* key to change. Nothing ever changes if we do not receive new grace from God. He only gives grace to the humble (cf. Jas. 4:6). There is a reason some receive grace and others do not. God has no favorites. He only gives grace to the humble.

5:6 *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”* “Humble yourselves.” We have a part in this. Our will is involved here. We must cooperate with God. The Lord wants to do a deep and penetrating work in our lives so that He can commit great things into our trust. He desires to “exalt us in due time.” This is the purpose of difficulties: that God may bless us and use us. Unless we allow God to pass us through the wilderness of humbling experiences, we will not be able to handle His power and authority. Power is the most corrupting thing in the universe. We must have great humility worked out in our hearts in order to receive power and authority from God.

Give Your Burdens to Christ

5:7 *“Casting all your care [or anxiety] upon him; for he careth for you.”* We have to *learn* how to give our cares to Jesus. We are programmed to work matters out on our own. According to Isaiah 53:4, Christ has already borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. On the cross He made provision for all our sorrows, hurts, disappointments, and even the mourning we have when we lose a loved one. Although He has made provision for all our concerns upon the cross, we must learn to roll them onto Him. If we do not actively pray these things through, we will carry them ourselves.

Resisting Satan

5:8-9 *“Be sober; be vigilant [cautious and alert]; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*

As a young man, Peter had not been alert and cautious. Christ had warned Peter that Satan was on the loose and desired to “sift him as wheat.” Satan saw some chaff in Peter and was going to test him on his bold declarations. That same adversary is at large today and is looking for an opportunity to pounce upon anyone who is walking in self-strength, pride, and carnality. When we walk in self-strength and pride, we are on our own. We have removed ourselves from the protection of the Lord. God only protects those who rely on Him and walk before Him in humility.

“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” Verse 9 comes after verse 8 is put into practice. When we are living soberly, cautiously, and in humility before the Lord, then we can resist the devil. This is confirmed by James 4:7. James tells us to submit ourselves first to the Lord, then we can resist the devil, and he will flee from us.

“Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” We are not alone. All our Christian brethren around the world are facing the same onslaughts and temptations from the adversary. Knowing this gives us strength. It also turns the focus away from ourselves and helps us not to retreat into our own little world of self-pity. The truth is, everyone struggles with the same frustrations and pressures we do! Overcome moods. Moods are unlike Christ and they hurt and afflict others. Self-pity and moods are results of the fall.

All Sufficient Grace

5:10-11 *“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.”*

“The God of all grace.” Grace is divine enablement. God is able to give us grace to face anything that comes into our life. He is the God of *all* grace. His grace is more than sufficient. If you have a special need in your life, there is an abundant supply of grace in Christ Jesus to meet your need. Do not give up! Apply yourself in prayer until you receive your answer. Many times we do not receive our answer because we have not prayed long enough. There are vials in heaven that have to be *filled* with our prayers first, and then God comes on the scene (cf. Acts 10:4; Rev. 5:8).

The Call to Eternal Glory

“The God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” Peter again mentions the subject of glory. The subject of glory is mentioned 16 times in this epistle. Peter had tasted of the glory of God on the Mount of Transfiguration, and many times after that. We are called to *eternal* glory also, not just a glory here on earth. Sin is defined as coming short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). Let us not come short of anything God has purposed for our lives.

“After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” These four words describe the work the Holy Spirit is performing in our lives while we are suffering. He is perfecting, establishing, strengthening, and settling us. “Stablish, strengthen, and settle” are masons terms in the original Greek. *Suffering* grounds and establishes our lives, and brings us to perfection. When Peter was strengthened and “converted”, he was able to strengthen others.

God Has Everything Under Control

5:11 “To him be glory and dominion [power, authority, rule] for ever and ever. Amen.” Peter ascribes all power and authority to God. God controls everything, even our trials. There is an important reason God does not immediately deliver us out of a painful trial or circumstance. We are being perfected, established, strengthened, and settled (or grounded, as on a foundation.) Trials produce stability and take compromise out of our hearts. Because our emotions are unstable, we need to be brought to a place of self-control.

5:12 “By [the help of Silvanus], a faithful brother unto you, as I [regard him], I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.” Silvanus is believed to be the Silas who accompanied Paul in the Book of Acts. Peter is saying that with the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written unto you briefly. The Apostle Peter dictated this Epistle, and Silas acted as a scribe and wrote it down for him.

True Grace - False Grace

“I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.” Peter testifies to the whole Church, that what has just been written is the *true grace* of God wherein we stand. This signifies that in Peter’s time there was a false theme of grace being taught in the Church world, even as there is today (see Jude 1:4; Titus 2:11-12). Only true grace can enable us to stand. Anything else is sinking sand. Remember, true grace is a divine substance. It is imparted into the lives of those who are humble. Divine grace is power—power to use us, change us, and preserve us. Grace is the only thing that can truly change our lives. This is described in more detail in another course entitled, *True Christianity*.

Closing

5:13 “The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you: and so doth Marcus my son.” Babylon is a spiritual name given to Rome. Peter is writing from Rome. The church in Rome was sending their greetings to those in the area of Turkey. *Marcus* is John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark. Peter had taken Mark under his wing and became a father and mentor to him.

The Gospel of Mark was probably written at about the same time as First Peter, in A.D. 65. The Apostle Peter had been preaching in Rome with Mark as his interpreter. Peter’s hearers urged Mark to leave a written account of the doctrine which Peter communicated orally. Upon their request, Mark took of the words of Peter and recorded the Gospel with great accuracy, specially tailoring it to the Roman audience. We could say then that Mark’s Gospel was written by Mark, under the direction of Peter and of the Holy Spirit. Early Church fathers such as Papias, Eusebius, Clement, and Origen, attribute the authorship of the Gospel of Mark to John Mark. 5:14

“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

Peter tells the believers in the Middle East to greet one another with a kiss of love. A kiss was and is an expression of respect and love in that part of the world. In Western society, this is not the customary way of greeting. A handshake, smile, and “hello” are more appropriate, especially between men and women.

There are many themes in Peter's first epistle, but the outstanding theme is suffering—how to have victory in suffering, the purpose and rewards of suffering, and making sure we are suffering for the right thing. The words *suffer, suffered, and sufferings* are found 16 times. The word “glory” is also found 16 times. Suffering and glory are intricately related. Peter wrote this epistle to encourage suffering Christians. The emperor Nero was losing his sanity (if indeed he ever had any), and was beginning to persecute the Church. The wonder of Scripture, however, is that it has the ability to speak *directly* to the hearts of every generation. Let us immerse ourselves in the wisdom presented to us from one of the greatest men of all time, and one of the chief foundation stones of our faith, the Apostle Peter.

* * * * *

The Epistle of Second Peter

About the Writer: In this second epistle, Peter starts with his full name, “Simon Peter.” Simon, which was his name at birth (Mk.1:16; Acts 10:5), means “the hearing one.” Because Simon had an open ear to the Lord, God was able to transform his life. Names are often prophetic of one's character and destiny. When Christ called him into the ministry, He surnamed him Peter, or Cephas (Mk. 3:16; Jn.1:41-42). Cephas is Aramaic while Peter is Greek, and both mean *a stone or rock*. The name change was indicative of what God wanted to accomplish in his life. God desired to produce the stability of a rock in Peter who formerly was fickle, rash, and inconsistent. Then he would become an example and foundation stone for the lives of many generations to follow.

To Whom: Chapter 3:1 begins, “*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you ...*” Therefore, it would seem reasonable that the second epistle was addressed to the same people as the first one. However, Peter would have had a wider range of listeners in mind when he wrote his second letter since the second epistle is more urgent, and contains his last words. In the first epistle Peter sought to fortify the saints who were undergoing persecution *from the world* during Nero's reign. In his second epistle, he warns against something far more dangerous—the perils of false teachers *within the household of faith*.

When and From Where: Both of Peter's epistles were written from Rome. The first one was written around A. D. 65, the latter in 66, just prior to his martyrdom (cf. 2 Pet.1:13-15). Peter had heaven on his mind; he knew he was going to die very soon. Christ had spoken to Peter about his death 36 years earlier (Jn. 21:18-19), and now the time had come. Peter's second epistle comprises his final words and “reminders” to the Church before he went on to eternal glory.

Theme: Peter was ready to pass from the scene. Prophetically, he warns his reading audience that a great sifting was coming. False teachers were going to arise in the Church and *many of the redeemed* would follow them (2:1-3). This had a fulfillment in the Early Church. Unfortunately, it will have a fulfillment in our times too, especially when the Man of Sin appears. Thus, Peter exhorts believers: “Make your calling and election sure” (1:10). In chapter 2:20-22 he makes it very clear that some who know the Savior will *turn* from the truth, become apostate, and be lost.

Although he warns repeatedly not to be swept away with the coming deceptions and delusions that would infiltrate the Church, he also encourages the saints that “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation” (2:9). Peter assures believers that “*we shall never fall*” if we add seven things to our faith and continue to flourish in them (1:5-10).

In closing, he forewarns us one more time (3:17) to “beware.” He is warning us ahead of time, before the apostasy comes, “not to be led away with the error of the wicked” but instead to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (3:18). Peter is doing everything he can before he dies to prepare the saints for a time of testing. The greatest danger of all is not persecution from the world, but *deception within* the Church itself. Remember, God allows false teachers and erroneous doctrines to sweep through His Church to test the hearts of His people (Deut.13:1-3; 2 Thes. 2:3-12).

1:1 “*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.*” Peter calls himself a servant first, then an apostle. The mark of a true servant is humility! Servants do not have their *own* agendas. They are dedicated to the will of another. Peter had learned to be a humble servant.

“*To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.*” The recipients of this epistle had the same faith as Peter and the other apostles. They had obtained “like precious faith.” This still holds true today. We do not have some “hand me down,” worn out kind of faith from past generations, but the same Spirit and the same faith as the first century apostles. This divine faith and anointing is just as fresh today as it was 2000 years ago. We do not have to say, “If only we lived back in the New Testament times, if only we could have the same faith Peter had, then we could have miracles, etc.” No, we have the same precious faith. Not only will we repeat the miracles of the first century, we will do greater miracles in these last days because God always saves His best until last (Jn. 2:10).

“*Through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.*” Every blessing we have comes *through the agency* of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a mortal man, Jesus Christ gained the victory and made provision for every need in man. The fullness of the Father's grace was poured into the Son, and we may now come to the Son to obtain this grace (cf. 2 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 4:14-16).

Grace and Peace - Through Superior Knowledge

1:2 “*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*” Grace and peace are given to us through *knowledge*. This is not referring to ordinary knowledge. The Greek word used here for “knowledge” is *epignosis* which means, “precise or further knowledge, knowledge through acquaintance; true knowledge.” Grace and peace are multiplied abundantly to us by (full, personalized, precise, correct) knowledge. Christians can lack grace and peace in their lives because they are void of *epignosis* knowledge.

Ordinary knowledge produces ordinary believers; superior knowledge produces superior Christians. This is the reason Paul wanted “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ” (cf. Phil. 3:8). The *rejection of knowledge* destroys a Christian (Hos. 4:6). The knowledge which Peter is making reference to in this passage is knowledge that will fortify believers when the Great Apostasy comes. Grace and peace will permeate the hearts through this knowledge, and they will not be shaken by the word or deed of the subtle ministers of deception (2 Cor.11:13-15; 2 Thes. 2:1-3).

The way to detect the counterfeit is by studying and knowing *the real* by heart. Bankers are trained to know the *real* currency. Then they are able to recognize the counterfeit immediately. This is very true in the spiritual realm. We should not spend our time studying false religions and doctrines. Just be intimately acquainted with the Truth. Then we can easily pick out the false.

Everything We Need - Through Experiential Knowledge

1:3 “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge [acquired by experience] of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*” Although God has already furnished us with everything we need for life and godliness, these blessings are not fully released unto us until they are woven into us by *experience*, by special meetings with God. Therefore, we must *go on* in our Christian walk in order to truly possess them.

These blessings are obtained through *knowledge*, as it says in verse two. This time, however, the Greek word for “knowledge” is *gnosis*—“knowledge acquired through *experience*.” This is not referring merely to information or head knowledge. This is experienced, personalized knowledge of God. These blessings belong to us by inheritance, yet we must *go on* in order to have them.

The Call to Glory

“*Who hath called us to glory and virtue.*” The Lord God has called us to glory and virtue (or excellence). We are called to show forth the excellent virtues of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:9). The subject of “glory” also is repeated numerous times in Peter's epistles (1 Pet. 1:7, 1:8, 1:11, 1:21, 2:20, 4:13, 4:14, 5:1, 5:4, 5:10, 5:11, 2 Pet. 1:3, 1:17, 3:18). Coming to glory involves at least five things:

- The ability to render to God the glory that is due His name in every circumstance (Acts 12:23, Rom. 4:20, 1 Cor. 10:31, 2 Cor. 4:15, Rev. 4:11, 11:13, 14:7, 16:9)
- Receiving the glory or approbation which God bestows upon us. (Jn. 5:44, 12:43, Rom. 2:7, 2:10, Heb. 3:3)
- Reflecting the glory of God by coming into maturity. (1 Cor. 11:7, 2 Cor. 3:18)
- Partaking of the consummated glory that is dispensed to the saints at Christ's coming. (Rom. 8:18, 1 Cor. 15:43, 2 Cor. 4:17, 2 Thes. 1:10, 1 Pet. 5:1, 5:4)
- Showing forth God's glory for all eternity (1 Pet. 5:10, Rev. 21:10-11)

There is always a counterfeit for everything. The counterfeit for the glory of God is the glory of man (1 Pet. 1:24, 1 Thes. 2:6). Whose glory are we seeking—God's, or our own? Are we trying to impress God or man? (cf. Jn. 12:43, Gal. 1:10). As a young man, Peter sought his own glory more than God's (Mt. 16:22-23). Many crushing experiences during his lifetime readjusted the motives and desires of his heart. What is the purpose for God's testing His Church by false teachers (in Peter's time and in our time)? It concerns the issue of glory! False teachers seek their own glory and man's glory. *Those they deceive* are also seeking their own glory, and the glory of the flesh.

Escaping the Corruption of the World Partaking of the Divine Nature

1:4 “*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*” In verse 2, Peter tells us that grace and peace are multiplied in our lives through correct, precise, and further knowledge of the truth. In verse 3 Peter expands upon the subject. He declares that God, by His divine power, has provided *everything* we need for life and godliness. Yet, these blessings are only released by knowledge that comes through experience. They are obtained by experiential meetings with God on the issues in our lives. Because of what God has made available, we have tremendous promises, hope, and added strength to overcome the temptations in the world. By these promises we are able to escape the moral decay that is in the world through lust and greed, and to become partakers of His divine nature.

Besides This - We Must Add Seven Things to Our Faith

1:5-7 “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.*” In addition to the divine promises, we should exert every effort to add seven other virtues to our faith. Walking with God and living a life of faith will develop these seven things in our lives. Unfortunately, much of today's faith message is incomplete. It emphasizes faith that heals, blesses, pardons, and supplies our needs, but usually it fails to emphasize faith that will take us through necessary purifying trials that produce character. If the following seven virtues abound in our lives, Peter assures us “we will never fall” (v8-10). Let us keep in mind that Peter is seeking to prepare the Church for a period of apostasy. Let us add the following seven things to our faith:

- **Virtue** (moral purity, moral excellence). Moral purity is often not preached in the Church today. In fact, it is even mocked by some. These will be some of the first to fall when the apostasy comes. To our faith we must *add* moral purity. Samson had faith but he did not add moral purity to his faith and he crashed. We must monitor the impurities of the body (1 Thes. 4:3; 2 Cor. 7:1, Dan.1:8).
- **Knowledge** (experiential knowledge). This knowledge comes by walking with God and becoming intimately acquainted with Him. It is a personal knowledge of the Lord Himself (Jer. 9:24). Paul prayed: “That I might know Him” (Phil. 3:10). The knowledge presented here is the kind of intimate knowledge that married people share. In the last days, they that know their God shall be *strong* and do exploits (Dan.11:32). Strength comes from experiential knowledge.
- **Temperance** (self-control, moderation, a check on all our appetites). Unto knowledge we must add self-control. It is absolutely imperative to be disciplined in our thoughts, affections, words, and deeds. Only those who are disciplined succeed in life. Discipline is one of the key components of life. Solomon had no self-control, and he had a disastrous fall (Ecc. 2:10). Temperance can save us from ruin, and it must be added to our faith.
- **Patience** (endurance in circumstances). This is divine endurance. When we have a particular pressure in our lives for a long time, it works out endurance. Paul declared, “tribulation worketh patience.” Delays work out something special in our hearts. Give thanks to the Lord for those things you have been *denied*, and also for *delays*. This produces tremendous strength of character, and great stamina. When the hour of temptation comes upon the earth to test all of the inhabitants, you will be able to stand (Rev. 3:10). This is because you are accustomed to keeping “the word of his patience.” If we obey His command to endure patiently and not try to get out of our circumstances, a deep work of grace will be wrought in our being. Endurance must be added to our faith.
- **Godliness** (piety, zealous in the performance of religious obligations). A pious person is devoted, not only to God, but to *the task* that God has assigned for him to do. He has a tremendous sense of responsibility and will never leave his post. Purposely he avoids being entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4) so that he is free and mobile to do the will of God. Peter himself was commanded by Christ to feed His sheep and His lambs. Thus, Peter gave himself continually to the call of God and did not shirk his duty (Acts 6:4). Paul warned Archippus: “Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.” This man was neglecting his call.

Neglecting the call of God is just as serious as *rejecting* it (Heb. 2:3). The result is the same—people are *empty-handed* before the Lord at the end of life. Somehow we think it is far more serious when a person is defiant and openly rejects the call of God. Yet the man or woman who coasts along through life politely evading and avoiding what God is saying is in equal trouble! People think in their hearts that because they have *a gracious attitude* while they are politely saying, “No” to God and missing His plan for their lives, that they will be excused. They are sadly mistaken!

Make a practice of doing the will of God. It will be a buttress against the time of the “great falling away” (or apostasy) mentioned in Second Thessalonians 2:3-12. If we are in the habit of obeying God in the smaller issues of life, we will have the strength and moral fiber to choose right when the bigger challenges come. People who are not in the habit of listening or obeying are easily deceived and led astray. We are not competent at what we do not practice. Let us prepare ourselves for the coming apostasy by making *obedience* a way of life. Let us add godliness (or piety) to our faith.

- **Brotherly Kindness** (practical good works to those in need). Christ taught: “Inasmuch as you have done this unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Mt. 25:40). This is sensitivity to the needs and hurts of others. Brotherly kindness is always linked with practical good works to those in need (Jas. 2:14-18). It is being like the good Samaritan and crossing all boundaries and denominational ties to help others. We prove our love for God by showing mercy to others. Brotherly kindness is obeying the commandment of Jesus to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mt. 22:39). Being tender and merciful to others and keeping bitterness out of our heart will also aid us when the great Apostasy comes. During that time, many will be “offended” and hardened. Many Christians will hate and betray one another (Mt. 24:9-10). The love of many will grow cold.

- **Charity (Divine Love)**. This is God's love perfected in us. Love is the bond of *perfection*, as Paul says in Colossians 3:14. Love is totally unselfish! Our goal is to come to this degree of love. Divine love is totally unselfish and is the fulfillment of 1 Corinthians 13. It is a love that dies for others. Love for God and love for others is the summation of all 31,102 verses of Scripture (Mt. 7:12).

If These Abound in You - You Will Never Fall

1:8-10 *“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall.”*

In conclusion, Peter says that if these seven qualities are in us and are increasing in measure, they will keep us from being barren (idle, ineffective) and unproductive in our knowledge of the Savior. Also, he is saying that *we will never fall* if these fruits are abounding in our lives. But if these seven virtues are not flourishing, it is because there are uncommitted issues in the heart. These issues make men *short-sighted*, so that instead of looking at eternity, they are only focused on this fleeting life here on earth. They “cannot see afar off” but have lost sight of the goal, the mark, and the prize. They have *forgotten* the real purpose of redemption. The ultimate purpose of redemption is to conform men and women into the image of Christ and prepare them for an eternal kingdom. Therefore, Peter warns those who are living on the perimeter to “make their calling and election sure.”

Make Your Calling and Election Sure

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall.” Christians are called the “elect.” Elect means *chosen*. When we go to the polls we are choosing someone for an office. God has elected or chosen us for eternal life but we must make our election sure. Someone might be elected for an office but not inaugurated. For example, a *president elect* or *senator elect* may be elected but still not inaugurated into that office. Just because we are elected does not mean we can be careless and live any way we wish. We may not be inaugurated into eternal life. Jesus warned that deception would be so strong in the last days that it would be possible for the very elect to be deceived (Mt. 24:24), and some *will* be deceived.

In chapter 2, Peter warns that a great apostasy is coming (cf. 2 Thes. 2:3). Paul says that there will be “a great falling away” before Christ comes. “Falling away” is better rendered *apostasy*. An apostasy is an abandonment or forsaking of the truth and going another direction. It is literally a rebellion. Peter tells us that many believers will follow the apostasy (2:3). However, if those seven virtues mentioned in verses 5-7 are flourishing in our lives, we will never fall. Let's review them:

- *Virtue (moral purity)*. Walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. The lusts of the flesh and alcohol harden and destroy the heart (Hos. 4:11). These cloud our discernment.
- *Knowledge (experiential knowledge)*, that comes from walking in a close relationship with God. When we know God, we will detect the false and be preserved.
- *Temperance (self-control)*. Discipline, a check on all our appetites. When we make it a habit to say *no* to wrong appetites and motives, we will be saved from deception when the apostasy comes.
- *Patience (divine endurance)*, which comes by delays and denials, and not leaving our post. Staying where God puts us produces character and strength. It will save us when the big test comes.
- *Godliness (piety)*. Obedience to God and diligence in doing our task, ministry, call. Being in the habit of obeying God and doing what He says will save us from deception.
- *Brotherly Kindness (practical good works to others keeps our heart tender)*. Many will be *offended* when apostasy comes and betray one another. Brotherly kindness safeguards against this.
- *Charity (Divine love)* is the apex of spirituality. Love is totally unselfish, and sacrificial unto death.

1:11 *“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* If we practice the things mentioned in the previous 10 verses, we will receive a rich welcome into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. An abundant entrance into heaven is better rendered, “a rich welcome.” Peter himself has heaven on his mind. He would die within the year.

Peter Foretells His Imminent Death

1:12-15 *“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it [right], as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my [death] to have these things always in remembrance.”*

Before his departure, Peter wanted to remind the Church one final time to be established in the truths they had learned because a great test was coming to prove them. Christ had showed Peter 36 years earlier about his death (cf. Jn. 21:18-19). The Lord did not tell him *exactly* when, but said; "...When thou shalt be *old*, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God..."

Peter was now around 70 years old. He was an older man, and he had finished his course in life. Christ foretold that Peter would "stretch forth his hands" and others would gird him and lead him where he would not naturally wish to go. The reference is to the cross. Church history says that when Peter was about to be crucified, he did not esteem himself worthy to be crucified as his Lord, and requested that he be crucified upside down.

His death "glorified God" because he laid down his life as a lamb without desiring vengeance upon his executioners. When Peter had tried "to go into prison and unto death" with Christ 36 years earlier, there was no grace given at that time, and he failed. To die for Christ was not the will of God for Peter at that time. Remember, grace is only given to accomplish God's purposes, not our own. Now that it was time for Peter to die, there would be all-sufficient grace bestowed upon him.

Our Body - A Tabernacle

"Yea, I think it [right], as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." Our body is the house we live in. Our spirit and soul are housed within the body. At death the spirit/soul departs from the body. The body is buried in the ground and awaits the resurrection. The soul and spirit go to heaven. At the judgment, we will give an account for the deeds we have done while we lived in this body (2 Cor. 5:8-11).

Mount of Transfiguration Recalled

1:16-18 *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."*

Peter now recounts the experience that he, James, and John, had on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Mt.17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-13; Lk. 9:28-36). He is describing what they *saw* on the holy mount—the power, glory, and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, they *heard* the audible voice of the Father saying to His Son: "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." They did not follow cleverly invented stories, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Peter, James, and John, literally saw Christ in all his glory. They audibly heard the voice of God the Father. They were not relying on handed down stories or traditions—they were eyewitnesses of these accounts and heard them firsthand.

Also they saw two prophets of the past—Moses and Elijah. This is amazing! Moses had died nearly 1500 years before, but was now resurrected. Elijah had been translated nearly 1000 years earlier. Both men appeared to Christ in splendor. They had been sent by the Father to strengthen Christ so that He would be able to go down to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world (Lk. 9:30-31). Thus, these two great prophets had a part to play in our redemption!

Something More Reliable Than Transfiguration's Glory

The Authority of the Scriptures

1:19-21 *“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy.” Although Peter, James, and John had heard the voice of the Father and saw the glory of God on the Mount of Transfiguration, there is an authority that supercedes *any* vision, dream, or extraordinary spiritual experience—the *sacred Scriptures*. Peter is saying that the holy Scriptures carry more weight than even hearing the voice of the Father from heaven. The prophetic word given by the prophets in Scripture are the highest authority, and we would do well to take heed to it. Remember, God has magnified His Word above His name, according to Psalm 138:2.

“As unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” God's Word is a light that shines in a dark, gloomy world. Christ Himself is the Word, the Light of the world (Jn. 1:1-9). As we meditate on the Word (Psa. 119:130), His Light dispels all darkness and discouragement and Christ rises up within us. *He* is the bright morning Star (Rev. 22:16).

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” No prophecy of the Scripture was determined, expounded, or self-originated by the writer. He was overshadowed and controlled by the Spirit. God caused the writers to record *precisely* what He wanted—no more, no less. Therefore, we can rely on the Scriptures. The prophecies did not come by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

Warnings Against Apostate Teachers

2:1 *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”* Peter is beginning to prophesy. Even as there were false prophets in the times of the Old Testament prophets, so also there shall be false teachers *among you*. “Among you” signifies they are in the Church. All of the prophets of old had rivals who contradicted and opposed their message. This is seen vividly in the life of Jeremiah.

Where do false prophets and teachers come from? Basically they come from centers of theological learning, though there are exceptions. They are trained in Bible schools and theological seminaries. All of the false prophets who opposed Jeremiah were peers who at one time had a genuine ministry but degenerated into a false anointing (Jer. 2:8, 23:11-14). False teachers and prophets generally know the scriptures very well and are educated in spiritual matters. Many times they start out all right but then because of unsundered motives, they drift into deception and another spirit overtakes them. Many of these have been born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit (Mt. 7:21-23).

“Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” Peter admonishes that false teachers will secretly and subtly introduce destructive heresies to the people of God. Jude the Apostle also alerted the Church, saying that “certain men had crept in unawares ... who were turning the grace of God into [lawlessness, wantonness, and immorality], and denying the only Lord and Master” (Jude 1:4).

The teaching of *false grace* is very subtle. It appeals to the frailties of the fallen nature. It sympathizes with iniquity and condones sin. Yet it leads to destruction. False grace is an exaggeration and distortion of the love message, and it sounds so rational! This teaching excuses those things that are abominable to God. The Gnostics of Peter's time taught that it does not matter how you live in the flesh, and encouraged the most vile and immoral of practices. They said a man was not complete until he experienced everything life has to offer, both good and bad. There were many in the Church who embraced the teachings of the Gnostics (cf. Phil. 3:18-19), and lost their eternal souls.

Most teachers of heresy never *openly* denounce or deny Christ. They undermine Him in more subtle, elusive approaches. Paul says: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient ...” (Titus 1:16). *True grace* teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). Another deadly theme of false grace is the assertion that God loves you unconditionally no matter how you live, as long as you believe in Christ. This belief contradicts the whole tenor of Scripture.

Many Will Follow the False Teachers

2:2-3 *“And many shall follow their pernicious [or destructive] ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and damnation slumbereth not.”*

Many shall follow them! This is a reference to those in the Church. With feigned words they shall make merchandise of *you*. Peter is not speaking to unbelievers here. Many shall follow their immoral, shameful, lascivious ways, because they will malign the truth. The coming Antichrist and his subtle ministers of unrighteousness (2 Cor.11:13-15) will rationalize and explain away all moral standards, and will justify uncleanness. It will sound so reasonable to the undedicated heart! Those in the Church who want to hear that kind of message will be very eager to accept it (see Jer. 5:30-31; Rom. 16:18). Actually, the purpose for God allowing Satan to present his man to the world is *to test the Church*. This will actually purify the Church because the Antichrist will draw all the wicked to himself, leaving a pure remnant. Remember, Paul said there *must* be heresies in the Church so that those who are approved of God (or disapproved) can be clearly recognized (cf.1 Cor.11:19).

“Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and damnation slumbereth not.” Jude 1:4 reiterates the words of Peter. These false teachers were known of God long before the beginning of time, and now their judgment will come swiftly, after they have accomplished their ministry. Jude says they were “ordained of old to this condemnation.” In other words, God determined to use these evil men long ago as instruments to draw the wicked out of the Church unto themselves, and then He would judge them. This is an awesome fact that every Christian should fully understand. God will use each one of us, either as an instrument of blessing or an instrument of judgment, depending upon what is in our hearts.

God Did Not Spare the Angels That Sinned

2:4 “*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment ...*” When Lucifer rebelled, he drew one-third of the angels with him (Rev. 12:4). He was dazzling in beauty, and possessed tremendous wisdom and power. Lucifer had such a charisma that he was able to persuade one third of the angels to turn against God and follow him. He divided the congregation in heaven. Because of the light they had, God did not choose to give them any recourse. These who once dwelled in the light are now reserved for eternal judgment. These creatures who were once *close friends* are now *bitter enemies* of the Lord. Past righteousness means nothing (Ezek. 33:12-13, 18:24). Our present condition is what matters to God.

God Did Not Spare the Old World

2:5 “*And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly ...*” Only Noah and his family were preserved in the flood. The rest of the world was destroyed.

God Did Not Spare Sodom and Gomorrha

2:6-9 “*And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly: And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*”

- God did *not* spare the angels who turned apostate.
- God did *not* spare the old world who turned apostate.
- God did *not* spare Sodom and Gomorrha who turned apostate.

- He *did* spare two thirds of the angels who remained faithful.
- He *did* spare Noah and his family who remained faithful.
- He *did* spare righteous Lot who remained faithful.

“*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*” The Lord protected Noah from the flood because he was godly. God delivered Lot from the fate of Sodom because he was righteous. And God can protect us from being deceived in the coming apostasy if we love righteousness and hate iniquity.

“*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.*” God can also keep us out of dilemmas if we please him. A dilemma is a predicament where all the alternatives are evil. Pray that God will deliver you from situations in which all the options are equally unfavorable. David had sinned grievously and faced a dilemma, but this was a judgment from God (see 2 Sam. 24:10-17).

“*And to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*” God even reserves the lives of the wicked until he is finished using them as an instrument of judgment. Then He punishes them in the lake of fire. Hitler was used as a rod of chastisement upon Germany and other nations. Evil leaders and dictators like Hitler cannot be assassinated until God has accomplished His purposes.

Traits of Those Who Lead the Apostasy

- 2:10 They:
walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness,
Despise government (or authority),
Are presumptuous and daring, Are self-willed and self-loving
Are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, but scoff and revile them
- 2:12 Are like unreasoning beasts (unteachable, without understanding, Prov.12:1, 30:2-3, Psa. 92:6)
Rail at things of which they are ignorant, and are dogmatic and arrogant
They will utterly perish in their own corruption.
- 2:13 These count it a delight to revel in the daytime - living luxuriously
Are spots and blemishes (God will remove spots and blemishes from His Church, Eph. 5:27),
Take great pleasure and delight in their deceptions
While they feast with you, (These are in the Church)
- 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery; they have an insatiable appetite for lust and sin
Beguiling, baiting, and luring the unstable
Hearts that are well trained and exercised in covetousness, lust, and greed
Children who are cursed (These never had their past generational bondages dealt with)
- 2:15 They have *forsaken* the right way (To do so, they had to *be in* the right way first.)
Going astray; they follow the way of Balaam (a man who loved honour and money)
- 2:17 They are “wells without water” (destitute of the Spirit). The Spirit has left them.
And will dwell in darkness forever
- 2:18 And utter loud boasts of folly
Beguile and lure those who are barely escaping from them (Rom.16:18, simple are deceived)
- 2:19 They promise liberty (as some evangelists do) but they themselves are bound with evil
- 2:20 They had once escaped the world through the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ
Now they are entangled again with sin, and *overcome*
Their last state is worse than before they were born again
- 2:21 It would have been better if they had never heard the gospel
- 2:22 They are like a dog who has returned to his vomit (and lapped it up again),
And like a pig who was washed, and returned to wallow in the mire

The Problem of “Unconditional Love”

There is a prevalent teaching today which insists that God cannot ever be offended at us, once we have accepted His Son as our Savior. It teaches that God loves us *unconditionally*, no matter what we do or how we live. It stresses that once we have experienced genuine new birth, it is absolutely impossible to lose God's favor, or lose our soul. Can you imagine the lifestyle this promotes when we are told that there are no battles to overcome in order to make our entry into heaven, and that even if we do *not* endure to the end or we even become apostate, we will still be saved!

Peter never taught such a concept! Neither did Christ, or any of the other apostles! Judas was a fellow apostle of Peter, a fellow preacher. Judas performed miracles and cleansed the lepers, just like all the others. He helped feed five thousand. The bread multiplied in his hands, just as it did in the hands of the other apostles. He anointed the sick and expelled devils. When Christ said “One of you shall betray me” no one suspected Judas. Judas walked with Christ for three years, but he held the truth in unrighteousness. He was a partaker of the anointing and ministry of Christ and walked with Christ. Yet, he became apostate and lost his soul. Remember, the greatest believer of all time is Satan, and he is not going to heaven, although he was once the closest friend of the Lord (see James 2:19-20).

Enduring to the End

New birth is a miracle; it is a sovereign act of God. It does not happen just by repeating a formulated prayer. It is a divine act, a supernatural quickening. Eternal life is God's gift to us; it cannot be earned. Nevertheless, after our new birth, Christ expects to see fruit in our lives. We must *continue* walking with Christ and living for Christ in order to reach our heavenly home (Heb. 3:6,14). It is like the story of Pilgrim's Progress. The Christian has to overcome criticism, temptation, rejection, fears, and other oppositions along the way in order to reach the celestial city. Life is a battle—we must *endure to the end* and not give in or give up. We are well able to do this by grace. A believer cannot turn from the paths of righteousness and live for Satan and expect to have everlasting life. In doing so, he has *insulted* the Spirit of grace and *resisted* grace (Heb.10:26-31) v29 (Heb.12:15).

- That divine light that is in him will become darkness, and great is that darkness (Mt. 6:23).
- His well is without water; the Spirit will leave him if he continues to live for Satan (2 Pet. 2:17).
- He is twice dead (Jude 1:12, 2 Pet. 2:20-22), dead in sins, alive in Christ, then dead in sins again.
- He is a withered branch cut off from the Vine to be thrown into the fire (Jn.15:2,6, Rom.11:22).
- He has departed *from* the faith (1 Tim. 4:1). This means he was once *in* the faith.
- He will abort the life of Christ within, that holy seed, the Word of God (1 Pet.1:23).
- His name will be blotted out of the book of life unless he is restored (Rev. 3:5).
(To have a name blotted out of a book means it must have first been written there).
- He has not made his calling and election sure. He was elected but not inaugurated (2 Pet.1:10).
- He will be judged with the “children of disobedience” unless he repents (Eph. 5:3-8, 1 Cor. 6:9-10).
- He has proved he does *not* love the Lord. Those who love Him keep His Word (Jn.14:21-24).
- He is not doing the will of the Father, but practicing lawlessness instead (Mt. 7:21-23).
- He is not enduring to the end, but has given up, been deflected, deceived, or offended (Mt. 24:24).
- He has chosen the wide gate that leads to destruction, and shunned the narrow gate (Mt. 7:13-14).
- He has tried to serve two masters and ended up serving the wrong one (Mt. 6:24).
- He has turned from righteousness unto iniquity, and none of his former righteousnesses shall be remembered (Ezek. 3:20-21; 18:24-27; 33:12-20). *Today* is what matters, not the past.
- He is like a dog that returns to his own vomit, or a sow to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:22).

Christ taught us that He is the Vine and we are the branches. His life flows into us as long as we abide in Him. Every branch “in him” (in Christ) that does not bear fruit, He takes away. “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned” (Jn.15:2,6). If a believer does not abide in Christ, he will be a withered branch without fruit and be thrown into the fire. This speaks of the fires of hell.

Christ also warned that *many* who call Him “Lord” and performed great miracles and wonderful works *in His name* would be denied entrance into the heavenly kingdom (Mt. 7:21-23, Lk. 6:46). This could only be a reference to born again, Spirit filled believers, especially ministers. It is not possible to do miracles and cast out demons *in His name* without being born again and filled with Holy Spirit. These are men and women who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

The teaching of *unconditional love* is dangerous. God's heart *can* close toward His people when they turn from Him and live for the Adversary. God is very gracious and patient with His people, and many who backslide do indeed return to Him. *Yet, not everyone is restored*. When Israel turned from God and worked wickedness before Him, after repeated calls to repentance and no response, eventually He had to destroy His own city, temple, and people (Ezek. 9:4-6; 2 Chron. 36:15-20).

Chapter Three

3:1-2 “*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your [sincere] minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.*”

Peter called this his *second* epistle. This shows he is writing to the same readers whom he addressed in the first epistle. He is writing to stimulate the people to wholesome thinking. He is telling them to remember the words of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the Chief corner stone (Eph. 2:20). Our faith is based on the scriptures they gave us. In verses 3-9, Peter admonishes us that the Second Coming of Christ will be generally disbelieved by most. The apostles and prophets had to contend with *unbelief* all the time. Unbelief is one of the greatest problems in man.

The Second Coming Will Be Generally Disbelieved

3:3 “*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.*” Moral impurity and sin bring a stupor. The mind becomes spiritually dull when people follow their own lusts instead of God. The prophet Daniel declares: “None of the wicked shall understand” (Dan.12:10). *Understanding* is granted only to the pure in heart (Mt. 5:8). People without understanding mock and scoff at those things which are not sensible to them.

3:4 “*And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*”

Man wants to sin but still have peace. Therefore, he hardens his heart and conscience and frames a case in his mind that justifies and excuses his lifestyle. Workers of iniquity have to explain *to themselves* and others why they are all right as they are. This is the reason man resorts to atheism, agnosticism, and other reasonings. They are looking for peace while they sin. The human heart rationalizes like this:

- The Atheist - If there is no God, then there is *no judgment* and no standard of right and wrong.
- The Agnostic - If we cannot be sure there is a God, we are *not accountable* for what is not clear.
- Other Excuses - The Bible is filled with contradictions.

There are too many different interpretations; who is to say which one is right?

It is only a myth! It is too mysterious. It is not literal, only figurative.

And if Christ really does come back, it will not be for hundreds of years.

(I have safely justified myself and excused myself from all obligations to God.)

Willful Ignorance

3:5 “*For this they willingly are ignorant of.*” This is the whole problem with man. Man pretends he does not know (or that it cannot be known for sure) what is true. In doing so, he thinks he has discharged himself of his responsibility and excused himself from judgment (cf. Lk.14:18-20). The fact is, man in general would rather not know the truth. Matthew 13:15 says: “... Their ears are dull of hearing, and *their eyes they have closed.*” This is an act of willful rejection of truth.

3:5-7 “*For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished: But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*”

Men and women are *willingly* ignorant of the story of creation by the Word of God. Irrespective of man's willful ignorance, the same Word that *created* the heavens and the earth still *keeps* them intact today. That same Word will dissolve the heavens and the earth at the appointed time (3:12). And by the same Word, Jesus will come again as He promised. Christ declared: “Heaven and earth will pass away but my words shall not pass away” (Mt. 24:35), and He is not slack concerning His promise.

By the Word of the Lord:

- The heavens and earth were created.
- The heavens and earth are kept intact today.
- The heavens and earth will be dissolved *at the end of* the Millennium (3:12).
- There will be a new heaven and new earth *after* the Millennium (3:13).
- Christ will come again as He promised. He is not slack concerning his promise.

3:8-9 “*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

God's timetable differs from ours. To God, a thousand years are like one day (cf. Psa. 90:4). The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some men understand slowness. He will come as He promised, and before we know it, life on this earth will be history for every one of us. The end of time and “the end of the world” has indeed come for every generation since the beginning of man. When Peter exclaimed, “The end of all things is at hand”, he only had one year to live (1 Pet. 4:7).

“... *But is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), though He knows all men will not accept His gracious offer of salvation. Man has a will. Anyone who perishes has chosen to do so (see Acts 13:46), because God is not willing that any should perish.

The Day of the Lord

3:10 “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*” The “Day of the Lord” is a phrase which invariably refers to *judgment*. It is the day of God's reckoning. This expression is found in numerous passages of the Old Testament. It also refers to the Second Coming of Christ, which indeed is a day of judgment.

3:11-12 “*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*” Although verses 10-12 have implications to Christ's Second Coming, they look ahead to the end of time, at the close of the Millennium when this creation is destroyed. See page 74.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

In actual fact, the earth is *not* dissolved with fervent heat when Christ comes again. Instead, there will be a reign of peace for one thousand years, although initially there are fiery judgments against the evil works of men. In the truest sense of the word, verses 10-12 are not fulfilled until the *end* of the Millennium. This is the end of time for man! This creation will be destroyed and there will be a new heaven and a new earth (cf. Rev. 21:1-2). See Chart on Page 74.

3:13-14 *“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.”* The promise of a new heaven and earth has been implied numerous times in history (for example, see Rev. 21:1-2, Isa. 65:17; 66:22).

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” Our life on earth is short; it is simply a preparation for the next one. Realizing the brevity of life and knowing that the whole universe is destined to pass away, how should we live our lives? Every effort should be made to be found in peace—at peace with God, ourselves, and others. Our hearts must be free of all anger and strife. And when we stand before God our spiritual garments must be without spot and blameless. Teaching on “The Day of the Lord” should promote holiness and godly fear in every child of God.

3:15-16 *“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation ...”* The longsuffering of the Lord is our salvation. He is slow to anger, slow in avenging wrongs, and slow in judging the world. He has been very patient with us but we must never test His patience.

Peter Knew and Revered Paul and His Writings

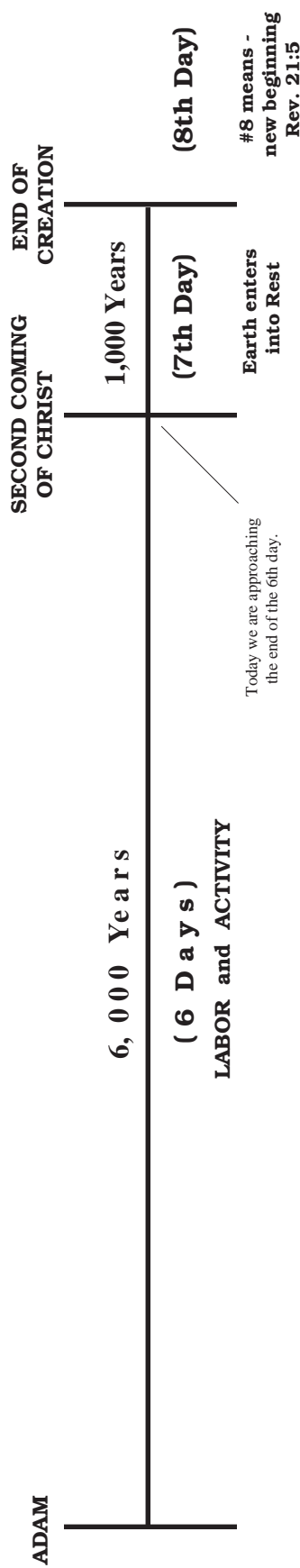
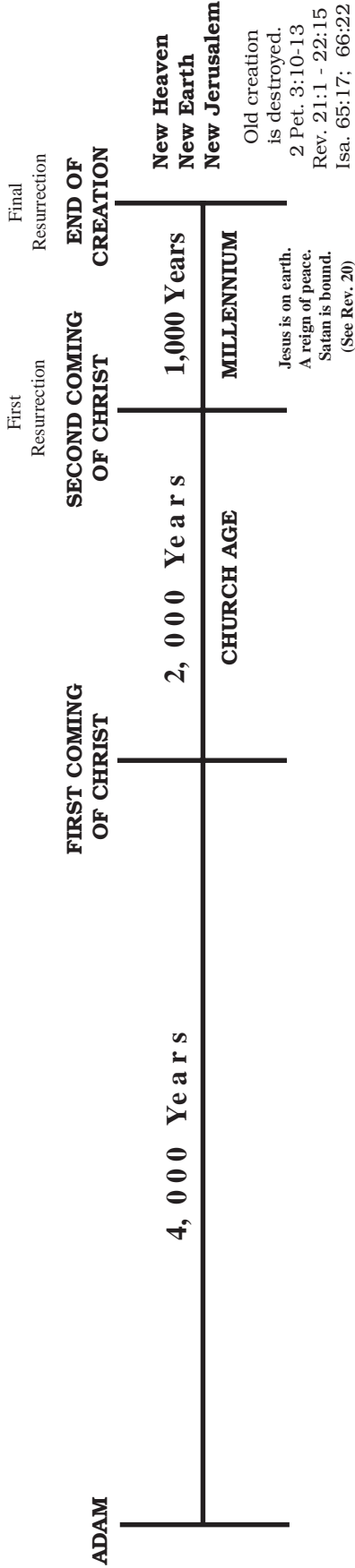
“... Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable [twist], as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction.”

Peter had great love and respect for the Apostle Paul. He recognized Paul's apostolic authority and wisdom. He equated Paul's epistles with *Scripture*, and acknowledged that some of his epistles were “hard to be understood.” Therefore, Paul was a little deeper than Peter.

“Which they that are unlearned and unstable [twist], as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction.” When people are not living right and have ulterior motives, they try to twist the Scriptures to make them say what they want them to say. People like this have disastrous ends.

Even in A.D. 66, when Peter wrote this second letter, Paul's epistles were esteemed “*Scriptures*,” not just letters containing good counsel and instruction. According to First Thessalonians 2:13, the people considered his teachings not to be the words of men, but in truth, the words of God. Around 90 A.D. all of Paul's epistles were collected and published in Ephesus.

The 7000 Years of Man



Scripture says “a thousand years are as one day.” (2 Peter 3:8, Psalm 90:4).

The seven days of Genesis chapter one are prophetic of the 7,000 years allotted to man.

There were six days of creation (labor and activity); the seventh day brought rest.

There have been nearly 6,000 years (6 days) of toil, sweat, and sorrow for man. When Christ comes, the *sixth* day ends, the *seventh* begins.

The earth will enter into rest. There will be a reign of peace, and no more wars. Satan will be bound 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

The Prince of peace will be on earth. The Lord of the Sabbath will be here. Earth will enter into sabbatical rest.

Also the Bride (Church) and the Bridegroom (Christ) will be united in marriage. The Bride and Groom enter into rest.

After the 7th day (or Millennium), Satan will be loosed for a short season to test the people born during the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-10).

Then the final resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15). Everyone (good and evil) will be raised here. The first resurrection is only for overcomers (Rev. 20:4-6).

This present creation will be destroyed and there will be new heavens and a new earth (Rev. 21:1 - 22:15).

Do Not Be Led Away With the Error of the Wicked

3:17-18 “*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*”

Verse 17 makes it clear that it is possible for a believer to be led away with the error of the wicked. The wicked are those who twist the scriptures in order to excuse and condone sin. Peter's final admonition before his death is to take heed not to fall from our own steadfastness. Remember, we will never fall if we continue to abound and flourish in those seven virtues mentioned in chapter one. May we ever *grow* in grace and in the (experiential) knowledge of our Lord.

The key to growth is actually quite simple. Growth comes by obedience (1 Pet.1:22). Each time we obey God, new grace is poured into our lives and we are changed! As we continue to respond to the Lord, we will become firmly established in the faith and become very strong. May our hearts ever respond to the Master Potter until we are shaped into His perfect image. Then when *the great test* comes, we will be able to stand uniform and erect.

* * * * *

The Second Epistle of Peter was one of the last books to be admitted into the New Testament Canon. (The Canon contains our present 27 books and was not complete until 397 A.D.) There were several reasons for this. First of all, it was a smaller letter and it was not as well known as many of the others; therefore it was slower to be accepted. Also, the literary style and vocabulary differ somewhat from that of First Peter. It is not quoted directly by any of the fathers before Origen (A.D. 250) who affirms Peter's authorship of his first epistle, but who seemed uncertain about the second, although he did not repudiate it. Nonetheless, the *internal evidence* of the epistle made it overwhelmingly accepted as an integral part of the New Testament Canon.

- The writer's name was Simon Peter (1:1).
- The writer said it was his second epistle (3:1).
- The writer was an eyewitness of the glory of God on the Mount of Transfiguration (1:16-18).
- The writer knew and revered the Apostle Paul and his epistles (3:15-16).
- The writer had Christ predict his death (1:13-14).

A Survey of the Life of Peter

Some dates
are approximate

Peter's Life is Recorded Primarily in:

- a.) The Four Gospels
- b.) The Acts (ch.1-12, 15)
- c.) His 2 Epistles (I-II Peter)

Birth/Background of Peter	Ministry of Jesus	Day of Pentecost	Gospel goes to the Gentiles	Jerusalem Conference	Peter's death
<p>4 B.C.</p> <p>The Apostle Peter and our Lord Jesus Christ were believed to be about the same age.</p> <p>All the apostles, including Christ, came from northern Israel (or Galilee). Acts 1:11, 2:7.</p> <p>Peter's hometown was in <i>Bethsaida</i> (Jn.1:44). It was near Capernaum where Christ made His headquarters during His ministry in Galilee.</p> <p>Peter was raised in a devout home, never eating anything common or unclean (cf. Acts 10:14).</p> <p>Named <i>Simon</i> at birth, Christ surnamed him Peter (Mk. 3:16).</p>	<p>26 A.D.</p> <p>Peter was with the Lord Jesus Christ during his 3 1/2 year ministry. He was the most dominant and outspoken of the twelve apostles.</p> <p>As a young Christian, Peter was very eager, devout, impulsive, energetic, self-confident, aggressive, and daring, but was also unstable, fickle, rash and inconsistent.</p> <p>Peter boasted that he was ready to go into prison, and even die for the sake of Christ. Yet, that was not God's plan for Peter at that time. God had 36 more years of life and ministry for him. Presently, God's purpose was to "feed his sheep." Later in life he would die for his Lord (Jn. 21:18,19).</p> <p>Peter tried to serve the Lord in his own strength, and by his own mind. Many crushing failures and difficulties taught him to have no confidence in the flesh.</p>	<p>30 A.D.</p> <p>Acts 2:1-41 - Only 54 days after his denial of Christ, Peter preached powerfully on the day of Pentecost. Also, he was able to explain to the multitudes what the new move of God was all about.</p> <p>Christ had reinstated Peter in the presence of his brethren after his bitter failure (cf. Jn. 21:15-17). Peter had been unable to forgive himself until the Lord rescued him and publicly announced: "Peter, feed my sheep."</p> <p>Peter became the main leader of the revival in Acts chapter 1 to 12.</p>	<p>40 A.D.</p> <p>Acts 10-11 - Peter and the apostles heard the Great Commission ten years earlier to <i>preach to every creature under heaven</i> (Mt. 28:19-20, Mk.16:15).</p> <p>After ten years they were only preaching to the Jews (Acts 8:4, 11:19). In Acts chapters 10-11, God dealt with Peter, showing him that the Gentiles also were accepted by God. The Jews and Peter still thought they were "<i>common and unclean</i>" and would not associate with them because of prejudice and tradition (see Acts 10:28, 11:1-3).</p> <p>Finally Peter and the apostles realized that the gospel was for all men (cf. Acts 11:18).</p>	<p>51 A.D.</p> <p>Acts 15:1-32 - This conference convened to consider what laws the new Gentile believers should observe.</p> <p>Peter recounts in 15:7-11 how God chose him to open the door of faith to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 10-11) eleven years earlier, and how God had accepted the Gentiles as they were, without circumcision or observing the Jewish customs.</p> <p>"God showed his acceptance of them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us" (referring to 10:44-48).</p> <p>Soon after the conference, Paul rebuked Peter for not practicing what he had just preached (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter still had instability.</p>	<p>66 A.D.</p> <p>In 65-66 A.D. Peter wrote his epistles of <i>I-II Peter</i>, in the maturity of his life and ministry, shortly before his death.</p> <p>Peter had become a polished foundation stone of the Church, and a perfect gentleman. All the subjects he writes about in his epistles were wrought in his own heart and had become his own experiences. Peter had:</p> <p>Joy unspeakable A good conscience Was without guile or malice Courteous, hospitable A partaker of coming glory Unfeigned love Was holy, stablished, settled Clothed with humility Sober, vigilant, blameless A good example to the flock Spotless, and much more.</p>

PALESTINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES



Cities of New Testament Times

Memorize the location of each of the following:

- Aenon - a place where John baptized because there was much water there
- Arimathea - city of Joseph, the godly counsellor who buried Jesus in his own sepulchre (Lk.23:51)
- Azotus - the city to which Philip was translated, after being in Gaza (Acts 8:26-40)
- Bethany - the town of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
- Bethsaida - in Galilee, hometown of Philip, Peter, and Andrew, near the place where Jesus fed 5000
- Bethlehem - where Jesus was born, the city of David
- Beersheba - the southern most part of Judea
- Bethabara - another place where John baptized
- Caesarea - Roman military base on the Mediterranean where resided Pilate, Cornelius, and others
- Caesarea Philippi - at the base of Mt. Hermon, where Peter confessed - "Thou art the Christ."
- Capernaum - Christ made his headquarters here (in Galilee) during his ministry, also Peter
- Cana - where Jesus performed his first miracle of turning water to wine at the wedding
- Chorazin - a city condemned by Christ because of the miracles they saw, but no repentance
- Damascus - oldest city on earth / place of Paul's conversion / 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem
- Decapolis - an area east of the Jordan River where Christ ministered
- Ephraim - a town northeast of Jerusalem (Jn.11:54) near the wilderness where Jesus abode awhile
- Gadara - a town near the Sea of Galilee where Jesus delivered the demon possessed man
- Galilee - a sea, also a large territory in northern Israel where Jesus and all the apostles came from
- Gaza - where Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch
- Hebron - one of the oldest cities on earth, yet never mentioned once in the New Testament
- Jericho - where Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus
- Joppa - where Peter had the vision at noon of God cleansing and accepting the Gentiles
- Jordan R. - beginning at the base of Mt. Hermon, going into the Sea of Galilee, to the Dead Sea
- Judea - This is southern Israel. Jerusalem was the capital. The temple was here - the center of Judaism
- Lydda - where Peter healed Aeneas, and all that dwelt in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord
- Machaerus - the site of Herod's castle where John was imprisoned and executed
- Mount Hermon - where Jesus is believed to have been transfigured
- Nazareth - hometown of Jesus, twenty miles southwest of Capernaum
- Nain - where Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead
- Peraea - the area directly east of Jerusalem, across Jordan, where Jesus ministered
- Phoenicia - area of Lebanon (Tyre) from which the Syro-Pheonician woman's daughter was healed
- Sycar - in Samaria, where Jacob's well was (Jn. 4:5-6) where Jesus spoke to the woman at the well

Especially fix in your mind the five main areas of Israel where Jesus ministered:

JUDEA

SAMARIA

GALILEE

DECAPOLIS

PERAEA