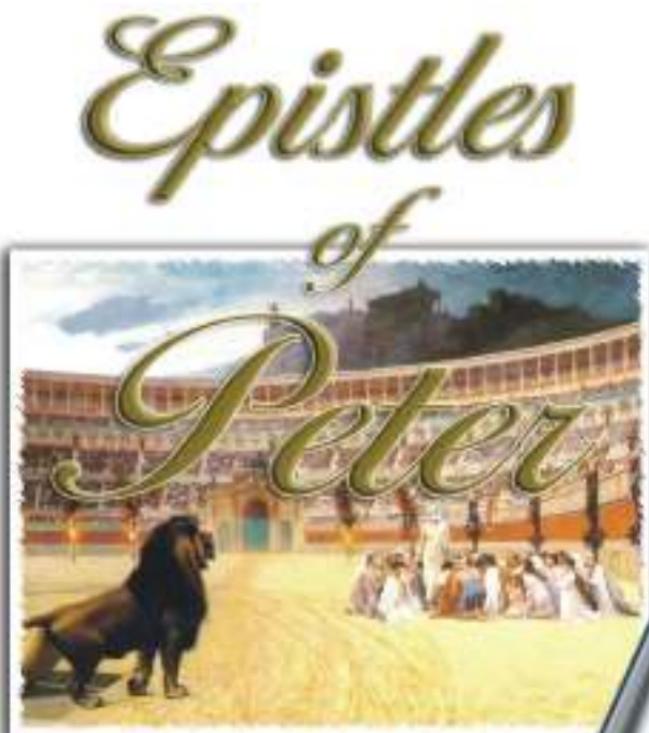


A COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES OF I & II PETER



*“...If you suffer as a Christian, do not be
ashamed, but praise God that you bear
that name.” – I Peter 4:16*

Ted Stewart

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

The Epistles
of
Peter

Ted Stewart
Instructor (Retired)
Sunset International Bible Institute



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This Book is Dedicated to

Ted & Dot Stewart

Ted was a long-time instructor in
the Sunset International Bible Institute.

Ted and Dot operated the “Bible Mart”
book store for several years faithfully serving
the student preachers at the school.



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A companion workbook on the study of the Epistles of Peter by Ted Stewart is available for purchase through the Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies: 1 (800) 687-2121

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This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a video taped course. The voice track of the video tape was first transcribed, then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, to Darlene Morris and the staff of Sunset Translation / Editing Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible

Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

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Introduction to The Epistles of Peter

Peter wrote two letters. Each of them is completely different, and those differences will be discussed later. Before beginning the study of his letters, one needs to become acquainted with the man who wrote these epistles.

Peter, the Man

The first book begins with, “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.*” The second letter begins with, “*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.*” First of all he was just Simon. The word Simon means one who hears, and Simon was one who heard and learned. Oftentimes he was speaking when he needed to be listening, but he was a very unique kind of person, one eager to hear.

Peter was a fisherman. Evidently, he lived in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. He had a fishing partnership with his brother Andrew and two of his friends, James and John, according to Matthew 8 and also Luke 5.

Peter was also a married man, and that will be significant when he gives instructions about how a person ought to be a good husband or a good wife. He also had a mother-in-law who he kept in his own house, and that says something good about Peter.

Peter, the Disciple of Jesus

Above all, Peter was a disciple of Jesus Christ. In 2 Peter 1:1 Peter said, “*I am a servant and an apostle.*” He put the word “servant” before he does “apostle.” Peter had to

become a servant of Christ before he could become an apostle of Christ. A servant of Christ could be equated with being a disciple of Jesus. There is a distinction between a disciple and an apostle. A disciple is one who learns. An apostle was one who was sent. A disciple is a student. An apostle was a preacher. There is a big difference between the two. Before someone becomes a preacher of the Word he must first become a disciple of the Word. Before one can go out and represent Jesus Christ, one must first learn at His feet and look at his life and imitate it. Peter was first of all a disciple.

Before Peter knew Jesus, he also knew John the Baptizer. In John 1 Andrew was listening to John the Baptizer when he introduced Jesus. John said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world*" (John 1:29). John the Baptizer was the one who introduced Jesus to Andrew. Andrew then found his brother, Peter, and introduced Jesus to Peter. That is the way Peter came to know Jesus.

Matthew 4 gives the impression that the first time Peter met Jesus was near the Sea of Galilee on the shore. Jesus was passing along and found fishermen mending their nets and said, "*Come, and I will make you fishers of men.*" A teacher one time said, "Oh, just the magic of His voice attracted them, and they left everything and followed Jesus," as if Peter made some kind of blind decision at that very moment just on the basis of an invitation. That is not the way it was because Peter first learned about Jesus through his brother Andrew, and then in Luke 4 and 5, the chronological events are given that preceded his being called to be a fisherman of men.

In Luke 4 Jesus began to preach throughout all of Galilee. He made Capernaum, Peter's home town, his base of operation. Jesus probably preached the sermon on the mount in this particular area, and Peter may have heard it. Jesus worked many miracles healing people and casting out demons. And Peter saw that. In Luke 4 Jesus came to the

house of Peter and healed Peter's mother-in-law. He was able to witness a miracle in his very own home.

Then in Luke 5 Peter and his partners, Andrew, James, and John, had been out fishing all night and had caught nothing. When Jesus finished teaching the people, He said to Simon, "*Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.*" Simon answered, "*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.*" They had already seen Jesus work miracles, and they had already heard Jesus preaching the truths that were from God. So they listened to Jesus. In this instance, Peter was a disciple. He was learning from Jesus. They went back out and cast their nets. They had so many fish that the nets were about to break! And another boat had to come along to help them bring in the fish.

At that time Jesus said, "*Come, and I will make you fishers of men.*" Then they realized that if Jesus could miraculously cause all kinds of fish to be caught, He could help men to become fishers of men. With that evidence and experience, Peter made the choice to leave everything and follow Jesus. He became a disciple of Jesus and followed Him wherever he went.

Peter, the Working Apostle of Jesus Christ

Peter became an apostle after first serving as a disciple. Luke 6:12 says, "*Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.*" Thus is the beginning of the apostleship of Peter. But he first had to be a disciple before he could become an apostle.

As learned from Jesus, Peter gained great qualities. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus said, "*Who do men say that the Son of Man is?*" The Apostles began to answer and then Peter said, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" And Jesus said, "*Blessed are you, Simon Barjonah (which means Simon the son of Jonah). Flesh and blood has not revealed this to*

you but my Father who is in heaven." He commands Peter for his deep conviction of his Messiah-ship and Sonship.

Then Jesus said the Son of Man must be delivered up to the scribes and Pharisees, be crucified, and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. "*Never, Lord!*" he said. "*This shall never happen to you!*" (Matthew 16:22). Peter, on one hand had deep conviction, on the other hand was impetuous. He made statements that he should not. He spoke without knowledge. And on this occasion, Jesus had to say to Peter, "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.*"

Later Peter is the one who is predicted to be sifted like wheat. In Luke 22:31 Jesus said, "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*" But Peter replied, "*Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.*" What was this sifting of sand that was to occur in his life? The night of His betrayal, Jesus said, "*I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.*" The Jews arrested Jesus and took Him before the authorities. Peter sneaked into the courtyard where Jesus was being tried. Three times on that fateful night, Peter denied his Lord. He even cursed and said, "*I don't know him.*" Peter was sifted like sand by Satan and, indeed, he failed. He failed miserably.

Peter was probably so ashamed of what he had done that he no longer felt worthy to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. In John 21 Peter was back in his boat fishing. Why did he go back to fishing? He no longer felt worthy to be a fisher of men. He had to go back to fishing. While he was out there, they fished all night again, but did not catch a thing. While they were out in the sea, they looked at the shore and saw a lone figure there. He cried out to them, "*Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.*" When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then Peter realized who that lone figure was

on the seashore. It was his resurrected Lord. Jesus had been raised from the dead. And there He was. He multiplied their fish once again, and Peter did not even wait for the boat to get to shore. He jumped into the sea and swam to shore and began to talk with his Lord.

Jesus asked him three questions: “*Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?*” Each time Peter would answer, “*Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.*” Three times Jesus asked him, just as three times Peter had denied him. Three times Peter confessed his faith and his love for Jesus Christ and each time Jesus answered, “*Feed my sheep.*” “*Take care of my little lambs.*” “*Feed my sheep.*” What was Jesus telling Peter? Peter, you have sinned. You have fallen, and terrible has been your fall, but God is not through with you yet. You can be forgiven, and you can again begin feeding my sheep as a shepherd. When man sins, he sees Peter in himself. No one is sinless. “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). In 1 John 1:8–9 the apostle says that, “*. . . if any man says he has no sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him.*”

Just as there was hope for Peter, there is hope for everyone. When a person slips and falls and sins, Jesus is kind and merciful and forgiving. He is willing to wash away sins in His blood, and once again allow that person to serve in His kingdom. That is good news, is it not, for all sinners. Jesus will forgive and Jesus will reinstate repentant sinners. Remember that just as Peter fell, others will fall, repent, and want to come back. Never be a barrier to their serving Jesus. Encourage them just as Jesus encouraged Peter on this occasion.

Remember that Simon Peter’s name is not just Simon. The word Peter means rock. The first time that Peter met Jesus in John 1:42, He said, “*You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter).*” “*You will be a hearer. But one day what you hear will become so settled within your heart that you will become a rock in God’s church, a rock of stability and strength.*” And that is what Peter became in the church. It

was Peter who preached the first gospel sermon of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand people obeyed the Gospel and became members of the Lord's body. It was Peter later who took the Gospel to the first Gentile, Cornelius, and helped the Gentiles to know Jesus and to become members of the body of Christ. Peter later began to travel. Peter traveled all over the world, and eventually, Peter came to the city of Rome.

In Rome, Nero burned the city and blamed Christians. The Apostles, Paul and Peter, were captured, and according to historical tradition, Paul was beheaded and Peter was crucified on a cross. According to this historical tradition, when Peter came to be crucified, he told the people who would crucify him, "Do not crucify me right side up as my Lord was. I am not worthy to be crucified as my Lord. Crucify me upside down." They consented to his wish and, as a result, Peter was crucified upside down.

During the time when Peter was walking with Jesus on the seashore, Jesus predicted Peter's death. John records the words of Jesus to Peter in John 21:18–19:

I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Peter said, "*I will die for you, Jesus.*" Then Peter denied Jesus three times. Later when he repented, when he recommitted himself to Jesus, he was willing to lay down his life for his Lord. He could have denied Jesus and lived, but instead he chose to be crucified on the cross upside down rather than deny his Lord again. And so Satan sifted Simon, and Simon, the hearer, became Peter, the Rock. Christians

can be grateful for the power of God that came into Peter's life through the forgiveness of Jesus .

Having looked at this man Peter, the author of these two letters, inspired by the Holy Spirit, perhaps it will give more meaning to this study. In some of the passages Peter will even use fishermen's language and use terminology that fits his background.

First Peter – A Letter of Grace in the Midst of Suffering

The Background of First Peter

First Peter is the first letter that Peter wrote. Most scholars date this letter at about 64 A.D. Historical background shows that Peter died about three years later in 67 A.D. Peter was getting ready to go through the most excruciating suffering that a person could experience. He was going to die a crucified death on the cross. Peter knew what he was facing. He knew that the persecution Nero would launch against God's people would not only be in Rome. It would spill out over into the provinces as well. People in Asia Minor and the area of modern day Turkey suffered from the persecution that Nero began against the church. Peter wrote his first epistle to prepare Christians for the coming suffering. He wrote this letter to prepare them for the terrible trial that they would soon have to endure.

The Situation and Purpose of the Letter

Peter wrote a letter of grace in the midst of suffering. First Peter 5:10–12 gives the theme of the letter:

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. To him be the power and glory for ever and

ever. Amen . . . With the help of Silas [he was his scribe], whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written you briefly encouraging you and testifying, that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

Notice that Peter tells what he wrote about. He said, “*I have written to you briefly that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*” Why? Because, he says, after you have suffered for a little while, God is going to give you glory.

First Peter is a letter of “grace” for a people who were suffering. Grace is exactly what every person needs when he is suffering. Peter knew that these Christians would soon go through the most terrible ordeal of suffering and persecution at the hands of Nero. In the books of Tacitus and Suetonius, these first century writers say that Nero would put wild animal skins on Christians, throw them into the arena, and let lions devour them. In addition to that, they say that Nero covered Christians with oil, tied them to posts, and set them afire to give light to his garden in the evening. What a terrible ordeal for Christians! Peter knew that Christians need the grace of God to be able to endure.

Christians do not have to go through that kind of gruesome experience today, but Satan can cause a person to suffer in other ways. Bodily afflictions, all kinds of diseases, including cancer, disabilities, and all kinds of illnesses are ways Christians suffer today. Is this really Satan causing people to suffer for Jesus? In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul said he had a thorn in the flesh. He said that “*thorn in the flesh*” was sent by Satan to try to tear him down. Paul said in verse 10, “*When I am weak, then am I strong.*” Why? Because he would rely on the grace of God. When people rely on the grace of God in times of suffering, that is when they can grow through the experience. They can grow stronger and become more like Jesus. Suffering can be a blessing. That is why Peter wrote this letter to Christians. He wanted to let them know that in spite of the suffering they had, they were going to have even more in increasing measure; they needed

to rely on the grace of God. Christians today can learn from the grace of God, and it will teach them how to suffer.

First Peter teaches a great deal about grace. There are different ways grace is presented. It is presented **as a hope to those who are suffering**. It is presented as **a privilege and a blessing** that Christians enjoy while suffering. But more than that, grace is presented **as a gift to share** with other people even while suffering. Grace becomes **a standard of how to treat the people who are causing suffering**. Christians today need to learn the lesson of grace to become more like Christ. These are four different ways grace is presented in this letter.

Suffering and grace are found all through this letter. For instance, in 1 Peter 1:2 it says, “*... Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*” In verse 6 Peter says, “*now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*” In verse 10 Peter talked about the grace that the prophets spoke about. “*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care.*” But in verse 11 he talked about the sufferings of Christ, “*Trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*” Then in verse 13 he said, “*Set your hope fully on the grace to be given to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Again Peter talked about the suffering of Jesus who died upon the cross for us, in verses 18, 19, and 20:

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

In 1 Peter 2:19 Peter wrote about grace and unjust suffering. Suffering and grace are together here. The NIV translates the word grace commendable, but in the Greek language it is the Greek word *charis*. It is “*grace*” if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. Grace and suffering are together.

In 1 Peter 2:23, Peter said Jesus suffered for us, leaving an example for us that we might follow in his steps: “*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*” In 3:7–9 he says that husbands should treat their wives with respect because they are heirs of grace – co-heirs with their husbands.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. . . .

In verse 8 he says, “*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*” Show grace toward other people, even when they mistreat you. In 1 Peter 3:14 he says, “*But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.*” Again suffering and blessing or grace are in the very same verse. And on and on it goes. 1 Peter 3:17 says, “*It is better if it is God’s will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*” Notice, grace is better if a person suffers. Grace and suffering go hand in hand. 1 Peter 4:1 says, “*Christ suffered for us.*” 4:10 says to be “*stewards of God’s grace.*” Peter says in 4:15, “*If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.*” And in 4:19, “*So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*” Why? Because He has the grace to sustain everyone who obeys Him.

In 5:12 Peter encouraged these Christians to stand firm in the grace. In verse 10 he talks about suffering followed by restoration, “*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*” In every single chapter of 1 Peter two ideas are found. Suffering is there, but with that suffering there is the grace of God. As a result, this entire series of 1 Peter is entitled, “The People of God’s Grace in the Midst of Suffering.” God’s people will be suffering, but God’s grace will be there to sustain them, to strengthen them, to teach them, and to bless their lives.

May this study cause each reader to gain great insight into suffering, and to rely on the grace of God as never before. May he actually experience grace in his life. And may grace become a standard by which he lives and the way he treats other people during times of suffering. Satan proves Christians when they are suffering perhaps more than at any other time. He uses suffering to try to draw godly people away from God. Peter shows that through suffering one can be drawn closer to God and have even a greater, more spiritual relationship with Him and can grow through the experience.

Outline of First Peter

The outline of 1 Peter shows how the people of God’s grace will be presented. 1 Peter 1:1–16, tells us that Christians are graceful heirs, heirs of eternal life, heirs of an inheritance beyond their fondest imagination. In 1:17–2:3 God’s people are presented as graceful children. What manner of love God has bestowed upon His children, that they should be the children of God! What grace He has given! What privileges! But with those privileges Christians have responsibilities as well.

First Peter 2:4–10 shows the reader that Christians are graceful priests, priests of God, priests to serve God, to worship God, and at the same time, priests to represent God

to the world. And what a privilege that is! At the same time, what a responsibility that is! Grace gives great privileges, and at the same time, grace teaches grave responsibilities. In 2:11–17 God's people are called graceful citizens. Christians are citizens of a kingdom of heaven, and at the same time, they are citizens of a kingdom on earth. And God wants them to conduct themselves as worthy citizens of heaven, and at the same time as good citizens of earth. Peter wrote that grace will teach Christians to be good citizens in the kingdom, in heaven, and on earth.

In 1 Peter 2:18–25 Christians are seen as graceful servants. Grace manifests itself by giving to others. And one of the best ways to give to others is to serve them in many capacities. This section shows God's people should be graceful servants.

In 1 Peter 3:1–7 Peter encouraged these Christians to be graceful wives and graceful husbands. Grace is the principle by which wives and husbands are to treat each other. In 3:8–12 being a graceful neighbor is mentioned. Christians are to treat other people in the community with grace. Those who live by the principle of grace will experience the blessings of joy and happiness.

In 1 Peter 3:13–16 Peter told the Christians to be graceful revolutionaries. Can a Christian be a revolutionary? Yes! But they should be a revolutionary of righteousness. The principle of grace shows how to fight against the world of sin and the world of Satan and do it in a graceful way. 3:17–4:6 shows how to be graceful sufferers. As one suffers for the cause of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he will see the grace even of salvation that will come into his life.

In 1 Peter 4:7–19, Peter told Christians to be graceful stewards. A steward is an administrator. He is one who shares the gifts given to him with other people. Christians are told how they can share their gifts with others. And at the same time a faithful steward of God is willing to suffer for God. In 5:1–4 being graceful shepherds is presented. These shepherds are the elders, the pastors, the bishops, whom God

has designed for His church. In times of suffering, these men need to be graceful shepherds and not neglect their duties. Peter addressed graceful sheep in the last verses of chapter 5. These are the sheep that should follow the shepherds and prepare themselves to live with God for eternity. This study shows the reader the importance of God's grace.

GRACEFUL HEIRS

1 Peter 1:3–12

Introduction

The theme of 1 Peter, as mentioned in chapter one, is “The People of God’s Grace in the Midst of Suffering.” In lesson two God’s people are shown as “graceful heirs” of God’s glory. This inheritance which Christians have in Christ Jesus will be examined.

What does it mean to be an heir? It means that a person will receive an inheritance. How does one get an inheritance? If a person is part of the family, a child in the family, then he will receive the family inheritance. It is the same way in the kingdom of God. To get an inheritance, one must be a part of the family. In First Peter 1:3, Peter wrote:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Christians have an inheritance because they have been born again into the family of God.

What does being an heir have to do with grace in the midst of suffering? As one suffers in this life, and remains faithful to God, that hope will encourage the person to continue. It is that hope that will cause people to suffer hardships and difficulties, knowing that they will eventually get their reward.

Christians Are Exiled Heirs

Christians are exiled heirs. An exile is a foreigner who has been expelled from his own homeland. 1 Peter 1:1 says, “*To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.*” These countries of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia are in modern Turkey. Who are these elect people of God who were scattered? Some people think they were the Jews who were scattered from Jerusalem and Judea and traveled to this particular area of the world. Ephesus, Colosse, and Laodicea are located in this region. They are called strangers because they are foreigners exiled from their homeland

Are these Christians called strangers because they are Jews or are they strangers because their citizenship is in heaven? In Philippians 3:20 Paul said, “*Our citizenship is in heaven.*” If Paul’s citizenship is in heaven, then he was a stranger or a foreigner on earth. Paul is a figurative stranger or foreigner. Peter wrote that the people to whom he was writing formerly did not know God, but they had come to know God. “*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*” (1 Peter 2:10). These people to whom Peter wrote would not be Jewish because Jewish people knew about God from infancy. The people that live in this particular area are mostly Gentiles, but a few are Jews. The people to whom Peter wrote were now part of the kingdom of God. They had been born again and became children of God. As children, they became heirs. These exiles were headed toward their Canaan land, which is heaven.

When the Jews came out of Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years before they finally got their inheritance, Canaan land. That was the property that they were promised as an inheritance. The Israelite believers were strangers or foreigners exiled from their homeland. While here on earth, the Israelite children of God were just pilgrims. A Christian’s inheritance will be heaven.

Christians are headed toward heaven, their promised eternal home. Christians, too, are strangers and foreigners awaiting a home in heaven with God.

Christians Are People Chosen by God

Christians are not only scattered aliens and heirs, but they are also God's chosen people. How do people become God's **chosen** people? 1 Peter 1:1–2 says:

To God's elect . . . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood.

There are four parts involved in being a chosen child of God. The foreknowledge of God is the first part in this process. God planned before the world began to choose those who would come to know His son Jesus and would become His children. He foreordained before the world began that the gospel should be preached to all nations and those who believe and accept the gospel should become his children. In Ephesians 1:4 Paul wrote, “*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world . . .*” God planned before the world began a way for people to become His children.

The second part involved in being chosen by God is through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The Spirit sanctifies in two ways. It sanctifies first through the Word of God. The sanctifying work of The Spirit first occurs, before one is saved, through the Word of God. Paul wrote that these Christians were called by the gospel of Christ and that this is the sanctifying work of the Spirit. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, “. . . because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” John 17:17 says, “*Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth.*” In John 16:13, Jesus said, “*The Holy Spirit will guide you into all the truth.*” The Holy Spirit

inspired the apostles to write. Thus, as they wrote and preached, it was the Word of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, the Spirit sanctifies a person when they obey the gospel and the Spirit enters that new Christian. God only chooses those who believe. The choice is by faith. God separates one from the world through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When a person hears the gospel, believes the gospel, and obeys the gospel, then God chooses him. The gospel is heard through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit sanctifies and the Word sanctifies.

There is a third part involved in being chosen by God. The Bible says that the foreknowledge of God and the sanctifying work of the Spirit is for obedience to Jesus Christ. The third part involved in being chosen by God is to hear the gospel preached and to obey. What does it mean to obey the gospel? One must first believe. “*... Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved . . . ,*” Paul told the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:31. One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Believing is the first way to obey. “*Peter replied, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). One obeys the gospel by repenting of sins, turning from ones past life and following Jesus instead. A person is baptized and their sins are washed away. At baptism the gift of the Holy Spirit is given. At baptism one is born again and becomes a child of God. The baptized believer has been chosen by God.

The fourth part involved in being chosen by God is perhaps the most important part, even though it is listed last. The foreknowledge of God and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is not only for obedience to Jesus but also for sprinkling by his blood. Jesus Christ is our Savior, The One who died on the cross by shedding His blood. It is that blood that washes away sins. Consequently, when a person hears the gospel, revealed by the Spirit, and obeys it, then Christ saves that person and the blood is applied. Romans 6:3–4 says that when one is baptized, he is baptized into the death of Christ:

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

When one is baptized, the blood of Jesus covers that person. It is not any effort that humans have done that brings salvation. It is not obedience that earns salvation. It is the merit of Christ's death upon the cross when He shed his blood that brings salvation. One becomes a chosen child of God when he obeys God. He becomes a chosen heir of God when the rebirth takes place.

In 1 Peter 1:3 God is praised:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Christians ought to praise God because they are children of God and heirs of God. All believers ought to praise Him. Christians became heirs through a new birth. Jesus said in John 3:5, "*I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.*" It is this new birth that makes one a child of God and an heir of God. Romans 8:17 says, "*Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, . . .*" It is in the family of God that one receives the inheritance of God. Through the rebirth process one obeys the gospel and is born again. The blood of Jesus washes away all sin. God's people should praise Him for the gift of the Holy Spirit that they receive during their spiritual birth.

When one is baptized into Christ, he drinks of the Holy Spirit which is sent into his body at baptism. 1 Corinthians

12:13 says, “*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body . . . and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*” At that time the blood washes away sin and God replaces sin with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The baptized believer is born again. The Holy Spirit of God dwells within the baptized person, and he becomes a child of God. 1 Peter 1:3 says:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Peter is praising God for His great mercy. Christians are saved because of the grace of God. The mercy of God prompted the giving of the gift of salvation. “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast*” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Believers have nothing to boast about. Jesus Christ is the one who lived the perfect life and died for sinners. Jesus Christ is the one who was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God. Jesus sits there as Mediator and as Savior. All the glory belongs to God. Man deserves none of the glory. Man has earned none of the glory; it is only through God’s grace that man is redeemed. Instead of boasting about salvation, man ought to be praising God. Because of His love, His mercy, and His grace sinners can become His heirs.

Christians Are God’s Glorious Heirs

Christians are not just chosen heirs and scattered heirs. They are newborn heirs and glorious heirs because of the inheritance that God has prepared. 1 Peter 1:4 says, “*. . . and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.*” If this inheritance cannot spoil, that means it is imperishable and cannot be destroyed. That is the kind of inheritance that the people of God have. The inheritance that the Israelites had in the land of Canaan

could be destroyed. They lost that inheritance. Armies attacked and devastated the land. The armies took away all the crops, the cattle and the people. Cities were destroyed. The inheritance that God gave the Jews was destroyed, but the inheritance given to Christians can never perish, spoil, or fade.

One day Jesus is going to return. 2 Peter 3:10 says that God is going to destroy the world with fire:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

One should never trust in an earthly inheritance because nothing on this earth will last forever. One day this earth and everything in it will be destroyed. A person should put his hope in an everlasting inheritance. This heavenly inheritance will last forever and ever. What a superior inheritance that will be. Not only will this inheritance not perish, but it will not spoil. In the original language **to spoil** means that an item will be defiled or spotted with sin. This superior, eternal inheritance will never get dirty. It will always be clean, pure, and beautiful. That is not the way things are in life. Almost everything gets dirty and ages. A new car will soon have dents and other damage. That is what happens to anything that is of this earth. This earth is under a curse and is defiled. Sin defiles. The consequences of sin have defiled the earth. There are earthquakes, hurricanes, and tidal waves that damage the earth. This earth does not have that beauty and perfection that a heavenly inheritance will have.

John wrote of the eternal inheritance that is so gloriously beautiful. He describes streets of gold and gates of pearl in Revelation 21:21. "*The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.*" In Revelation 21:11 John wrote that this New Jerusalem looked

like a jewel sparkling in the sky. “*It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.*” Heaven will be the most beautiful place that man has ever seen. That is the kind of inheritance reserved for heirs of God. Peter wrote that this inheritance will not perish, be spoiled, or fade away. Those streets of gold, gates of pearl, sparkling jewels will not fade away. Almost everything beautiful ultimately fades away. As a beautiful woman ages, the wrinkles usually come and the beauty fades away. A beautiful house will eventually look older. Everything earthly ages, but Peter wrote that the superior inheritance will never fade away. This eternal inheritance, the gates of pearl and streets of gold, will always be beautiful. Beautiful flowers fade, wither, and finally die, but the beauty of the eternal inheritance will never fade away.

The glorious inheritance from God is worth any needed suffering. A child of God must be willing to suffer or endure hardship in order to obtain the glorious, eternal inheritance. Peter wrote that Christians are shielded or protected by the power of God until salvation is revealed. “*Who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Peter 1:5). The salvation that is coming is so superior that it does not even compare to the suffering in this life. 1 Peter 1:6 says that believers will be joyfully awaiting salvation while here on earth. “*And in this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*” Joyful heirs await that inheritance while suffering grief and trials on this earth.

Paul wrote in Romans 8:18 that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that people of God shall receive. “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*” Earthly bodies get weak, sick, and they die, but Paul also wrote that resurrected bodies will never die. “*. . . The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.*” Resurrected bodies will be strong, powerful, and will live

throughout eternity. A new body alone should be incentive for one to endure suffering. People suffer following surgery knowing that the pain will be worth the end result. That is the way it is with the Christian life. Even though there is suffering in this life, it is worth the cost because of the ultimate reward. One should be willing to endure and be happy, even while suffering. Christians should rejoice even during grief and all kinds of trials.

Peter wrote that trials act as a furnace to refine faith, to make it purer and stronger. Consider his words in 1:7:

These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

When difficulties and suffering come, faith is put to the test. When faith is put to the test, it will either get weaker or stronger. Relying on the grace of God during these times, a person's faith will grow stronger and will be more valuable than gold because it will bring salvation. 1 Peter 1:8–9 says,

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Salvation comes when one's faith is purified by suffering. That suffering strengthens a Christian's faith so that a heavenly reward will be obtained when Jesus Christ is revealed.

What kind of assurance is there that salvation really is going to occur? What kind of assurance is there that Jesus is really coming back? What kind of assurance is there that

God really has a place prepared that is far superior to anything on earth?

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10–12).

There are three statements in the previous verses that give assurance that hope of a future inheritance is steadfast and sure. First of all, because the prophets had predicted these things. The prophets predicted the coming of Jesus Christ. They predicted His sufferings on the cross. They predicted His resurrection. And they predicted His final coming, as well. They predicted our reward. Did you know that there are some three hundred prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament? I want you to think about those Old Testament prophecies. Those prophecies concerned His life, where He was to be born. They concerned His genealogy. They concerned His activities and miracles that He would work. They concerned, finally, His rejection by His people and the sufferings that He endured on the cross. You can read Isaiah chapter 53, and there you can see the crucifixion of Jesus in detail. All the prophecies have come to fulfillment. Every one of them occurred.

The following example illustrates the improbability of the prophets correctly predicting over three hundred times and events. If hidden targets were placed different distances from forty archers with three hundred arrows what do you

think the odds are of those arrows hitting the target every time? Possibly one or two arrows might hit the target, but all of them are unlikely to hit the target? The prophets predicted three hundred different details of the life of Christ, and all of them have been fulfilled. Only God can write history before it occurs! Knowing that the prophets predicted accurately every detail about the life of Christ gives assurance .

If the prophets were true about everything, do you not think they would be true about our inheritance as well? Isaiah wrote of the resurrection of the righteous and the future reward in heaven. In this passage in Isaiah 25 he pictures a veil over the entire earth. Isaiah 25:6–8 says:

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. And on this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.

This prediction by Isaiah, the same man who predicted the sufferings of Christ, foretells the exultation of Christ going to heaven. Isaiah wrote that one day the shroud or sheet that covers the earth, which is the veil of death, will be removed; death will be destroyed and all tears will be wiped away from people's eyes as they will receive a glorious blessing on the mountain of God.

Paul quoted Isaiah 25:6–8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54 and said that when the resurrection comes, when Jesus returns and the dead are raised, then will come about the fulfillment of this passage in Isaiah 25 that death will be destroyed and swallowed up in victory. The Faithful will have incorruptible bodies, bodies of glory, and will enter into a mountain of joy and feasting forever. Since the prophets

were correct on all of the prophecies about Jesus' birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection, then there can be assurance that they are correct in predicting that death will be destroyed and that Christians will get an eternal inheritance.

The assurance of salvation is important because the prophets predicted it. The word of the prophets in the Old Testament is given and the word of the Apostles is also given. The Apostles are preaching through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. The apostles saw Jesus, observed the miracles He performed, heard the teachings from His lips and heard His promises. The Holy Spirit came to guide them to write and to teach the things they had seen and heard. Three of the apostles even saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain. They saw Him transfigured into glory. These are the men who tell us that one day God is going to raise the Christian's body to glory as well. Believers not only have the words of the Old Testament prophets, but they have the words of the New Testament apostles as well. The Apostles were eyewitnesses not only of Jesus' life, but of his death and resurrection. That resurrection proved that He is the Son of God and that everything He said is true.

The third reason to have confidence in eternal life is because Peter wrote that even angels look into these things. Even angels are concerned about salvation. God gave His angels responsibility to execute His will and to serve those who are going to be heirs. In Hebrews 1:14 it says, "*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*" The Old Testament prophets, the New Testament apostles, and the Angels of God give assurance of an eternal reward in heaven to those who will inherit salvation. A Christian must remain faithful in order to inherit salvation.

GRACEFUL CHILDREN OF GOD

1 Peter 1:13 – 2:4

Introduction

Continuing the study of 1 Peter, graceful children of God will be studied. In chapter two being graceful heirs was presented. There is a close relationship between being an heir of God and being children of God. 1 Peter 1:13–16 says:

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’

Peter wrote that Christians are to be obedient sons, obedient children of holiness.

Heirs Are Redeemed, Obedient Children

What is the relationship between being an heir of God and being a child of God? Paul wrote in Romans 8:17:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in

his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

One must be a child of God to get the inheritance because the inheritance is only for the family. If an individual is not in the family of God, then he will not get the inheritance. A person must be a child of God in order to be an heir of God. There is a relationship between 1 Peter 1:13–16 and Romans 8:17. What kind of child must one be in order to get the inheritance? These scriptures say that one must be an obedient child. How does a person become an obedient son? Obedience begins in the mind.

First Peter 1:13 reads, “*Prepare your minds for action.*” in the New International Version. The New American Standard Version reads, “*Gird your minds for action.*” In the original language it means to tightly tie a robe. Before a man went to work, he would tie his robe so it would not encumber or hinder him. The first thing a believer must do to become an obedient child is to get his mind prepared. One must tie up the loose ends. A person cannot be scatterbrained and be a Christian. One needs to get all his thoughts together. Once a person gets his thoughts together, then he can concentrate.

Not only should a Christian have his mind prepared, but he needs to be self-controlled, “*. . .be self-controlled and set your hope fully on the grace to be given you*” (1 Peter 1:13). In the Greek the word “self-control” means **to be free of wine**. A Christian’s mind must not be in any way hindered by alcohol or drugs. One must be alert and clear-minded so that he can set his mind on the hope of the grace that is coming. This coming grace is the expected inheritance. There is a relationship between being a child of God and receiving the eternal inheritance. To be a child of God, one needs to keep his thoughts on the hope, the future inheritance. When a child of God has his mind clear, alert, prepared, and set on the goal of heaven, his entire life will be affected. When a Christian gets his/her mind off heaven and onto things of the world, he loses sight of the goal. The

result is that one gets sidetracked and does not do the will of God. In order to be obedient, one must first be alert, self-controlled and have his mind set on the future inheritance.

To be obedient, a Christian needs to examine the heavenly Father and imitate Him. 1 Peter 1:15 says, “*Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy because I am holy.’*” The goal of a Christian is to get to heaven. By imitating the Father who is in heaven, a Christian can reach the heavenly goal. Most children want to imitate their earthly father even though he is imperfect. Christians have a perfect Father to imitate! He is holy, innocent, pure and sinless. Therefore a person needs to look to Him. “*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance*” (1 Peter 1:14). If you think of the world, then you will become like the world, with all its lusts, desires, corruption, and ignorance. One cannot get in its grasp. A Christian must learn about God and Jesus Christ and imitate their holy lives. By doing that, he will become an obedient child of holiness.

Heirs Are Redeemed Sons of Respect

The second characteristic is that one should be redeemed sons of respect.

Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Peter 1:17)

Notice it says that Christians have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Christians are redeemed from their past vain manner of life. Consequently, one needs to

have respect for the Father who redeems, the Father who paid the purchase price, so that all men could be redeemed.

To be a redeemed child means to have been purchased by God, to have freedom purchased by Him. Slaves were redeemed. When a person was captured and sold into slavery, another person had to pay the redemption price in order to free the slave. The redemption price is whatever price is set in order to free a person from bondage. When the children of Israel were in Egyptian bondage the price for their freedom was the death of the firstborn. Every firstborn child in Egypt died. It was that death that finally convinced Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go. The purchase price to free a person from sin is also the death of the firstborn, the death of Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of God, the Son of God. He shed His blood and died upon the cross so that all men could be redeemed, freed from slavery, not Egyptian slavery but from slavery to sin.

This redemption was not with perishable things from the manner of life inherited from our forefathers. Peter instructs us in 1 Pet 1:18:

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.

This empty way of life was handed down from our forefathers. As a person grows up in the world he learns the ways of the world. Fathers oftentimes teach in the wrong way. Things are learned that should not be learned. I remember a young man in Brazil, when I was a missionary, who told me that his father told him that he had to commit sexual fornication or he would go crazy. This father said that a young man who did not commit fornication would go crazy. This father taught his son incorrectly. This is certainly not what the Bible teaches. The Bible does not say that one will go crazy if he does not express himself sexually. It is the mind that controls the body. If the mind is controlled by

God, then the body will be under the control of God. If the mind is pure, then the body will be pure as well. Christians have been freed from ignorant, erroneous ideas that capture people in sin.

The psychologist Freud said that people are simply a product of what their parents made them. Freud taught that people cannot escape their upbringing. There is some truth in that teaching because children oftentimes become like their parents. But a man does not have to continue to follow his parents' ignorant ways because the blood of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to break the chains of the past. One does not have to follow incorrect traditions. If your family traditions were correct, then follow them. If they were wrong, break the chains of the past by giving yourself to Jesus Christ and trusting in His blood. His blood will free you from that vain manner of life. A new life can begin, not a life that follows the world, but a life that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ.

When was Jesus chosen to shed His precious blood? Peter tells in 1 Peter 1:20–21:

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Jesus Christ not only redeems by His blood, but His resurrection gives a reason to believe in God. There is power in the blood to free anyone from every evil way. Consequently, if a person gives his life to God, He can free that person from sins as well as give power to live the new life that God wants.

Heirs Are Purified Children of Love

Peter wrote of another phase of sonship, becoming purified children of love. “*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart*” (1 Peter 1:22). This verse says that a person is purified by

obeying the truth. What does it mean to be purified? The blood of Jesus Christ purifies from all sin. John wrote in 1 John 1:7, “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*” Peter wrote that one is purified by obeying the truth. Previously, this study showed that when a person obeys the gospel, they must believe in Jesus with all their heart, turn from sin, and be buried with Him in baptism. At that time the blood of Jesus purifies, makes the person’s heart as white as snow.

After ones’ heart has been purified, what should happen next? Peter wrote to love one another deeply, with a sincere love from the heart. The word “sincere” literally means in the original language **not hypocritical**. A hypocrite in early Greek times was an actor. This actor pretended to be someone he was not. Sincere love for one another should not be acting or pretending to love one another. Sincere love is genuine love from the heart. Brothers in the Lord should love one another. When one obeys the gospel, he is born again into the family of God. There are people who only want to have a relationship with God the Father, but they do not want to have relationship in the church with their brothers. The church is the family of God. Brothers and sisters in the Lord are the church. When a man obeys the truth and becomes a child of God, he takes on the responsibility of a relationship not only with the Father, but also with brothers and sisters. What is the main responsibility of that relationship? It is to love one another.

Peter wrote about two kinds of love: **philo** love, which is love for brethren, and **agape** love, which is a deep love from the heart. Both of these kinds of love are commanded. A Christian’s best friends should be brothers in the Lord. Fellow Christians should be given brotherly love. Agape love is a love that is given even when it is not deserved. Jesus loves the unlovable and the ugly. He loves those that others do not like, and he wants us to love them, too. When a person obeys the gospel and is added to the church, he may be weak, have personality defects, or be hard to love. Our

Lord Jesus loves them so Christians must love them, too. Christians are commanded to love with both of these types of love.

Peter wrote that this love from the heart must be deep. It should be a fervent love that is sincere, not hypocritical. “Fervent” comes from a Greek word which means **stretched out**. Fervent love is love that is stretched out. It is a love that agonizes or suffers. Jesus stretched out to touch people and to heal them. When Peter walked on the water and was about to drown, Jesus stretched out his hand, caught Peter, and lifted him back up into the boat. That is the kind of love Christians need to have for each other. It is easy to love people when everything goes well, but when people are unkind, it is more difficult to show them love. That is when our love is tested. A love that is willing to suffer for others is the deep love from the heart that God wants all Christians to show to others.

Oftentimes, a husband or wife love each other fervently until one of them gets sick or develops a personality disorder. When these type of problems develop in a marriage, love is put to the test. Will love be shown when one of the marriage partners is unkind to the other person? A deep love from the heart is the kind of love that needs to be given. God wants His people to bear one another’s burdens and suffer for one another in all circumstances.

There is an additional attribute of this love – it is an abiding love. *“You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God”* (1 Peter 1:23). This verse begins with the word “for” which means “because.” Why is a person to have this deep love from the heart for another person? When a Christian is born again of corruptible and imperishable seed, God’s Word is planted in the heart and endures forever. If God’s Word abides in the heart, it should continue to produce love for fellow brothers. This sincere, fervent, deep and non-hypocritical love should become an abiding love. This love should never end. It should be a love that keeps on loving no matter what happens.

This is the kind of love that holds marriages together. Some couples get divorces while other couples remain married until death. The difference is an enduring, abiding love. It is a love that continues even when mistreated. That is the kind of love that Jesus has for all people. He will never abandon or forsake His faithful. Children need this abiding, enduring love from their parents. Deep, sincere, abiding love from the heart is what Christians should have for all men.

Heirs Are Begotten by the Powerful and Enduring Word of God

Peter wrote about the rebirth through the Word that the Holy Spirit reveals. When the Word is planted in a man's heart, accepted, believed, and obeyed, he is born again. When this man repents of his sins and is baptized, he is purified and becomes a child of God. The Word that the Holy Spirit revealed is imperishable. 1 Peter 1:24–25 is a passage that gives assurance that God's Word has been preserved and will last forever:

For, all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.

Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6–8 in these verses. He wrote the same message that Isaiah wrote. They both wrote that the living Word of God lasts forever. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*" Jesus' words give assurance that God's Word will never pass away. God will preserve the Bible forever. His Word will continue to have an effect upon the lives of people forever.

One time some Egyptian men went into one of the pyramids and found some wheat that one of the pharaohs had put in his tomb. The men planted the four thousand year old

wheat and it still produced the same wheat. That is the way God's Word is. It produces Christians today just as it did two thousand years ago. When the Word is planted in the hearts of men today, it can produce a child of God just as it did in the first century. Christians need to share His Word today so others can turn to God.

Heirs Are Newborn Children of Christian Growth

Peter wrote about the evil characteristics that new babes in Christ need to get out of their lives in order to grow in their salvation.

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:1–3).

Notice that Peter used a different figure for God's Word in chapter two. God's Word is like a seed when it is planted in hearts, and it produces a Christian plant, a new born babe. Just as a human comes from a seed planted in the womb of a woman, God's Word produces children of God. Peter wrote that the Word is not only like a seed, but it is also like milk that a newborn baby craves. When a person craves the Word of God like a newborn baby craves milk, then he will grow up in his salvation. Spiritual growth only comes when a person reads the Bible, studies the Bible, and imbibes the Water of Life. The Spirit of Life only comes from the study of His Word.

A Christian needs to constantly be studying the scriptures to learn more about God and His will. That is the only way a new babe can grow. New Christians are like newborn babes. A newborn baby cries if he does not get his milk. If he does not get his milk, he will die. That is the reason that Christians need to drink of the milk of God's

Word. Christians will die spiritually without spiritual food. Notice that there is something that needs to be done before one drinks the Word. Peter wrote that Christians are to rid themselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. A newborn baby must have his diapers changed. When his diapers get dirty and are never changed, they can cause the child to get diseased or even to die. Peter wrote that Christians are to replace these sinful attributes with love. Christians need to love one another. If one continues with these sins of hate, slander, and malice, they can kill a person spiritually the same way a dirty diaper can destroy a newborn baby.

One time some parents of a young child hired a babysitter to stay with the child while they went on their vacation. When the babysitter did not arrive, they put a sign on the door that said, "We have gone on our vacation. Come in. The baby and all of the things that you need are here." They came back, I think, about two weeks later and the babysitter had never arrived. They came home and that little child was still there. Its diaper had never been changed. It had never received any milk. It was still alive, but it died within twenty-four hours. Those parents were charged with criminal neglect. Because that little child did not have its diapers changed or get any milk, it died. And that is what will happen to a Christian who does not repent of sin and drink of the Word of God.

Graceful Priests of God

Children of God are like living stones built into a spiritual house, graceful priests of God who offer acceptable sacrifices to God. What a glorious concept! 1 Peter 2:4–5 says:

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering

spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

A Holy Priesthood

Notice that in this relationship Christians are to be a holy priesthood. That means they are priests of God not only sons. Christians are a special people that have been given a special office, the office of priest. What did priests do in the Old Testament? A priest offered sacrifices to God in praise and glory to Him. Priests also represented the people to God and taught people about God. As priests of God, Christians are to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. They are to represent God to the world and teach the world about Him.

A priest's chief work is in the temple. He burns incense and makes sacrifices to God in the temple. Peter wrote that Christians are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. Christians are not only priests, but they form the temple. This temple is the church of our Lord, the house of God. Paul says that the church of God is the house of the living God. *"If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15). Christians are being built like living stones into a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices to God.

A Spiritual House

God's church is not made of bricks and stones. It is made of God's people, Christians. They make a spiritual house. Oftentimes the place where Christians meet is called "the church," but that is not really the church. The church is composed of the people who meet in that building. Christians are the church of the living God. The church can grow spiritually and at the same time it can grow numerically. Notice the foundation stone upon which this temple is laid. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:6–8 that it is a chosen and precious cornerstone.

For in Scripture it says: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,’ and, ‘A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’

This stone that the builders rejected, but God accepted and was precious to Him, is identified in Matthew 21:42:

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

Jesus said that this stone is Himself. Jesus Christ came to be the chief capstone upon which people would build their lives, but what happened? The leaders of the Jews rejected Jesus as their stone. They would not accept him as the capstone for a new temple of God. As a result, God took the kingdom away from them and gave it to another nation. “*Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit*” (Matthew 21:43). The nation of Jews was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans. The Jewish nation lost their temple, their city, and their identity as a nation. God rejected them. He made a new temple composed of Christians from all nations—Jews, as well as Gentiles, who believed on His Son and built their lives upon the Rock.

Jesus said that the church would be built upon the Rock, the Son of the Living God. “*You are the Christ, the son of the living God . . . On this rock I will build my church*” (Matthew 16:16–18). Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus said that the church would be built upon the Rock, Peter’s confession. When men build on that Rock,

they will never be disappointed. Peter identified that Rock in his sermon in Acts 4:11–12:

He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Peter preached about the Rock that was rejected by men but chosen by God. Peter said that Jesus is the Rock and salvation is found in no one else. It is sad that some people have built their lives on Peter rather than on Jesus. Never forget that Peter said that Jesus is the Rock. People need to follow Peter's instructions to build their lives on the name of Jesus Christ and not on the name of any man.

GRACEFUL CITIZENS

1 Peter 2:5–25

Graceful Priests of God

A Holy Priesthood

Priests have two functions. They make sacrifices to God, and they teach the world about God. 1 Peter 2:5 says:

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Christians should be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

How do Christians offer spiritual sacrifices? When Christians assemble as a congregation, they lift up spiritual sacrifices to God by praying, singing, partaking of the Lord's Supper and contributing of their means. Paul wrote in Philippians that their contribution to his ministry was an acceptable sacrifice. “. . . now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18). Christians can also offer up individual sacrifices through the week. For instance, Paul wrote that people of God should present their bodies as living sacrifices. Romans 12:1 says:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Everything Christians do and say can be a sacrifice to God. “*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased*” (Hebrew 13:16). A person’s entire life can become a worship to God and a sacrifice to God.

Paul wrote that when he converted the Gentiles, they were an acceptable sacrifice to God. “*... so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 15:16). When Christians win other people to Jesus, they are acceptable sacrifices to God. It is marvelous that a person can be taught the Gospel and give his life to Jesus! When the person makes that decision, the teacher is responsible for motivating him to give himself to the Lord as a sacrifice. The teacher is acting as a priest of God.

A Royal Priesthood

Peter wrote that Christians are also a royal priesthood.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

What does a royal priesthood mean? A royal priesthood belongs to a king. Priests of God are kings and princes, heirs to the throne itself. “*...and from Jesus Christ, ... the ruler of the kings of the earth ... has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father ...*” (Revelation 1:5–6). Jesus is the ruler of the kings on earth. By His great mercy, He has made Christians to be a kingdom. There’s a King in heaven and a High Priest, Jesus Christ. Priests of God should serve Him, worship Him, praise Him, and tell the world about Him.

Do Christians represent God to each other? No, they represent God to the world. That is one of the purposes of priests. That is why Paul wrote that Christians should be able to proclaim the praises of God who called them out of

darkness into His wonderful light. Since Christians are priests of God, they have the responsibility of being a light to the world, of telling others about God. Priest should represent God to the rest of the world. That is the reason Jesus said, “*You are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hid*” (Matthew 5:14). Christians are to shine in this dark world and let others know of the Savior Jesus Christ. That is another responsibility Christians have since they are priests of God.

A Chosen Priesthood

Christians are also chosen priests. “*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*” (1 Peter 2:10–11). Even if Christians did not know God in the past, that does not disqualify them. Even if a person’s parents did not rear them in the way of the Lord, that does not disqualify them. If a person hears the gospel, believes it, obeys it, and is born again, he becomes as much a priest of God as anyone else. In the Old Testament the priests were the Levites, the sons of Aaron. They represented the rest of the people of Israel to God. They taught them about God.

In Christianity every Christian is a priest. There are not just certain people who are priests. It is not just the preachers or the elders that are priests. Men, women and children that have been born again are chosen priests of God.

Graceful Citizens

Citizens in Three Different Senses

The next study in “The People of God’s Grace” is about being graceful citizens. Christians are citizens in three different ways. Christians are citizens of heaven because their citizenship is there ,and they belong to the kingdom of heaven. This is a spiritual citizenship. Americans are citizens of the United States of America. That is a national citizenship. Christians are also world citizens because they

have descended from Adam. Peter wrote instructions in all three of these areas: heavenly citizenship; national citizenship; and worldly citizenship.

Heavenly Citizenship

Peter again calls Christians aliens and strangers in the world. *“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). Remember, that Peter wrote in the first chapter that the Christian’s citizenship is in heaven. Christians are just wandering on this earth temporarily until they get home to Canaan land to receive the inheritance. Christians are like the Israelites because like the Jews wandered in a wilderness going toward their promised land, so Christians are dwelling in this world, traveling toward their Canaan land.

While people of God are headed toward Canaan land, what should they do? They need to war against lusts and sinful desires. As the Jews, the children of Israel, traveled in the wilderness, other nations tried to kill them. The devil tried to starve them by not giving them sufficient food and water, but God provided for all their needs. However, many of those Israelites fell in the wilderness. They gave into temptation and sinned. As a result, of those who left Egypt, only two men were allowed to go into the land of Canaan. Only Caleb and Joshua entered the promised land. Only those two men, of all of the adult Israelites that came out of Egypt, made it to the Canaan land. Why did the others not get to go? They sinned and fell in the wilderness. They did not maintain their faith and trust in God. As Christians travel across the wilderness toward Canaan land, they are going to have a warfare. There is going to be a war against sin. The way to fight this war is by abstaining from sin, by running from it.

Consider Joseph’s experience in the house of Potiphar in Egypt. When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife to commit adultery, he ran from her presence. She grabbed hold

of him, but he refused to sin against God and against his master. He fled from her very appearance, and that is what Christians need to do. Flee from youthful lusts. Flee from sin. There is a time to run, and that is when a person is facing temptation. God promises that He will provide a means of escape. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

The best way to conquer sin is to get away from it. Abstain from the very appearance of evil.

Why should Christians abstain from sin? Peter wrote that pagans would see the good deeds of believers and glorify God. “*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us*” (1 Peter 2:12 cf Matthew 5:16). “Good lives” comes from a Greek word that means **excellent** or **beautiful**. In other words, God wants our lives to be so beautiful that they attract other people to Jesus. The more Christians are like Jesus, showing humility, purity, dedication, and commitment, the more others will want to become Christians. Consequently, people can be brought to Jesus because they see Him living in Christians.

Notice, Peter wrote that the purpose of godly living is so pagans will glorify God on the day He visits. The visitation of God can either be for salvation or for judgment and punishment. Since pagans are to glorify God on that day, obviously they have been converted. God will come to visit them just as He comes to visit all Christians. When a person obeys the gospel, the Holy Spirit comes into the person’s

body. Living good lives persuades others to become Christians and receive the Holy Spirit.

National Citizenship

Christians are not only citizens of heaven, but they are also citizens of a nation. Peter wrote instructions in 1 Peter 2:13 on how one should relate to governments:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

Notice that Peter wrote that a Christian's first duty to his nation's government is submission. God wants His children to submit to every governmental authority just as He wants them to submit to His supreme authority. That means that a Christian should be a good citizen, a law abiding citizen, not one who breaks the law or transgresses the ordinances of his country. A believer should not be a revolutionary trying to overthrow his government. He should be submitting to the government even when the government is not doing all that it should be doing. Do you know who the king was at the time Peter wrote this letter? The king was Nero. There was not a more despicable ruler than Nero. He threw Christians to the lions and burned them at stakes to give light to his garden? What a horrible person he was. He burned the city of Rome and blamed Christians. Yet Peter told Christians to submit to that king.

Why should a person submit to an evil king like Nero? It is because of the principle of grace. Remember that this is a letter of grace. Grace is a gift that is given even to undeserving people. Christians are to show respect even when a government does not deserve it. They are to submit

even to evil governments. A believer should never say, “I am not going to submit to the laws because I do not respect the rulers.” One is showing grace when he submits to the authorities instituted among men.

On the other hand, instructions are given as to how nations should conduct themselves. Nations are set up to punish evil doers and to praise those who do what is right. When a nation begins to punish the righteous and praise the evil doers, that nation will soon be brought down by God. That is the reason that a man like Hitler did not remain a leader of his nation very long. He began to punish the righteous and to praise the wicked. As a result, God took his kingdom away from him. God will do the same thing to any nation that rises up against Him.

God will use his own ways to bring a nation down. Christians are to submit and show respect for authority as God commanded. Paul wrote in Romans 13:1–2 that governing powers are ordained of God:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

God is the one that ordains every civil authority; He put them into power. For that reason Christians need to submit to those civil authorities.

On one occasion Jesus Christ used a denarius to teach respect for the Roman government. Inscribed on that denarius was a Roman Caesar. The Jews tried to trap Jesus by asking if it was right to pay taxes to Caesar. “*He said to them, ‘Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s’*” (Luke 20:25). Jesus meant they should show respect to the Roman government by paying taxes. Being a

law-abiding citizen is the way a Christian shows respect to the government and to God.

World Citizens

Peter gives further instructions to show how Christians should behave as world citizens. Being of one blood, through Noah, Christians should have respect and love for all of mankind. Peter wrote that Christians should love as God loves. “*Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king*” (1 Peter 2:17). God loves all men so much He gave His only begotten son. That is that kind of love that drives Christians to take the gospel of Jesus to all men, knowing that they are lost sinners. That love for mankind compels men to carry the gospel all over the world. “*God desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4). Christians need to have God’s desire that all men be saved.

Graceful Servants

Submission with Respect

Having seen our responsibility as graceful citizens, let us see our responsibilities as graceful servants. “*Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect . . .*” (1 Peter 2:18). The word “slaves” is not the best translation because **dulos** is normally used for slaves. The word **oiketai** which means “house servants” is used in this verse, not the word **dulos**. A house servant did not necessarily have to be a slave. He could be an employee. This verse gives instructions for servants who may or may not be employees, but the principles are certainly applicable to an employee as well as a slave. Notice that Peter wrote, “*Submit yourselves to your masters.*” Slaves and house servants must submit to their masters, just as a Christian should submit to his boss. He must do what the boss says. This principle can be limited by another principle. Luke wrote that God’s law is higher than man’s law. “*We must obey God rather than man*” (Acts

5:29). If the government makes a law that would cause one to disobey God's law, God's law ought to have the priority. This is the only time that a Christian can disobey a law of the government. If a boss tells a person to do something that is wrong, then a Christian must obey God rather than the boss. In all other matters, a Christian employee must obey his boss.

What if a boss is terrible, cruel, unkind, and does not deserve obedience? Should a Christian obey him? The next part of 1 Peter 2:18 says, "*Slaves submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.*" Why are Christians to submit to a bad master? 1 Peter 2:19–20 says:

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable, before God.

This word "commendable" in the Greek language is *charis* which is everywhere else translated "grace." A better translation of this verse would probably be, "*For this is grace if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.*"

It is grace that helps a Christian slave, who is beaten by his master, get up, chop the wood, wash the dishes, clean the floor, and do everything his master tells him to do and even go beyond by doing extra things for his master. Why would he go beyond the line of duty? Most servants would not, but a Christian servant would do extra things for his master because of grace. Most people retaliate when they are treated harshly or cruelly. Most people get even, slander, fight, run away and do not submit when they are mistreated. A Christian is kind and submits. He repays the evil that is given to him with good because he is a graceful servant.

Is that not the way that our Lord Jesus Christ treated people? When those who called out, “*Crucify him! Crucify him!*” He said, “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:21). They cursed Jesus. He blessed them. They condemned Jesus. He asked that God forgive them. Jesus is a wonderful example of grace, unmerited favor. Did those Jews deserve to be forgiven after they crucified our Lord? No, they did not, but Jesus loved them still. This is the way He said Christians ought to live. This is a new standard of conduct. Jesus is a perfect example of grace. Treat people not as they deserve to be treated, but treat them as Jesus treats people. Treat not others as they treat you, but treat them as Jesus treats people. This is a superior golden rule, a diamond rule. Jesus treats people with grace, with a blessing they do not deserve. If a person treats those who harm him with grace, that can be the most powerful factor in leading them to Christ. Love is the most powerful force to change a person’s life. God wants Christians to live with grace to change the lives of other people. That is the reason Peter wrote to tell believers to be graceful servants.

Peter wrote of Jesus’ beautiful example for servants in 1 Peter 2:21–25:

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

This is a beautiful example of a servant of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, who returned evil with good. Notice that Paul wrote that Christians have been called to suffer just as Jesus suffered. Again suffering and grace are united.

When someone causes another person to suffer by calling him a bad name or mistreating him, what is the tendency? The natural tendency is to lash back, to get even, to retaliate. That is the way the people of the world act. People of the world want an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Their motto is: "you hurt me and I will hurt you." Some do even worse. Their motto is: "you hurt me, I will kill you." But the motto of a Christian is: "you hurt me, I will do something good back to you." Jesus says that, "*If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also*" (Luke 6:29). Do not get even. Do good back to people. "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44). Christians are to treat people with grace because that is the way that Jesus treats people.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, did not deserve to die on the cross. Peter wrote that He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. He was a perfect person. Why did He die on the cross? He bore our sins in His body. He suffered for all people. He showed grace. "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). Jesus laid down His life for all men. He died in our stead. He took the punishment that you and I deserve. What unparalleled love! What grace and mercy!

What would you think of a man in a courtroom who is willing to give his life for the murderer of his son? The father knows that the man who murdered his son is sentenced to die. The father holds up his hand to the judge and says, "Judge, do not kill this man. Kill me instead. Let me go and pay the penalty for him." Do you think that would ever happen? It would probably never happen. Yet it has happened. Jesus Christ did that very thing. Though He was innocent, he died for his enemies. Romans 5:7–8 says:

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What marvelous love and grace. Because Jesus died for His enemies, Christians need to treat other people with the same kind of love. There is nothing more that will put a Christian to the test. Try it.

Paul wrote that God will avenge all wrong. “*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord*” (Romans 12:19). Christians are not to take revenge when they are mistreated. They are to do good and to overcome evil with good. Love triumphs over evil. Grace will always triumph. And the most likely result, of showing love to an undeserving person, is that the person will change. If a Christian heaps coals of fire upon the head of an undeserving person that will cause him to be ashamed of what he did and change his behavior. Love is a powerful, transforming force. That is the reason God wants people to treat one another with grace and love. This letter of grace is written to encourage Christians to practice love so people will turn to God.

Peter wrote “*. . . by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*” (1 Peter 2:24–25). Why does a person return to Jesus, the Shepherd? A person returns to Jesus because of His love. Why does a person love Him? “*We love because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). What is it that attracts a person to him? It is His love. It is His grace. It is His attitude. “*Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’*” (Luke 23:34). Jesus came to this earth, served people, gave His life, and extended forgiving grace, even to His enemies. This love attracts men. That is the reason Jesus said, “*But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself*” (John 12:32). It is that powerful, attractive force of the cross of Jesus, that symbol of God’s grace, that

causes a person to love Jesus. He lived as no other man has ever lived. He changes lives and makes people want to live the same way. That is the reason Christians return to Him as the Shepherd of their soul and learn to treat others with grace as He did. To offer grace to others is very powerful.

GRACEFUL SPOUSES AND NEIGHBORS

1 Peter 3:1–12

Introduction

In this chapter the reader will learn how to conduct himself in all relationships of life. Chapter five explains the responsibilities and duties Christians have toward their spouses and neighbors. It is imperative that the people of God demonstrate the principle of grace in these relationships.

Graceful Wives

Peter wrote instruction to Christian wives concerning submission to their husbands. “*Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives*” (1 Peter 3:1–2). The first responsibility of a Christian wife is to be submissive to her husband. Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians that wives should submit to their husbands. “*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord . . . so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything*” (Ephesians 5:22–24). As the Church is to obey Christ, so a wife is to obey her husband, submit to him. A Christian wife is to submit even to a husband who is not a Christian. The purpose of this submission is to win him to Christ.

A Christian wife once said that she was not going to submit to her husband because he was not worthy of her submission. She told of his defects, his bad points, and his sins. He was not worthy of her submission, but she was advised to treat him with grace. Christians give people what they do not deserve. Christians treat people the way God would want them to be treated, not the way they deserve to be treated. God does not treat His children the way they deserve to be treated. He gives grace in spite of the fact that no person is worthy of His grace. Christians are saved by grace. Praise be to God for His grace and mercy.

A wife should give her husband respect. She should be submissive even when he is undeserving. If a wife wants to win her unbelieving husband to Christ, she needs to treat him with love. Loving a husband is the way to change him. When a man is treated with justice, his actions may change, but his heart will not change. His heart will probably change when grace is given. The husband will likely do what is right when a wife is submissive to him. Peter wrote that the conduct of servants toward cruel masters and wives toward unbelieving husbands will produce powerful results. Husbands can be won over without a word. Showing love and grace can cause an unbelieving husband to become a Christian.

Peter wrote that an unbelieving husband can be won over without words. Does that mean that the husband does not have to know what the Bible says? No, he has already heard the Word, but has disobeyed it. A woman should show her husband the truth in God's word. If he will not obey, then she should not nag him. Instead, the wife should live in such a way that her husband will want to become a Christian. When he sees his wife's purity and reverence, he may be won over without words.

If a woman tries to win her husband's heart by attractive hair styles and beautiful clothes, they may attract him physically, but not spiritually.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of

gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight (1 Peter 3:3–4).

To change a husband's heart, the Christian wife needs to have inner beauty. She should not be boisterous, harsh, vindictive, or loud. Instead, she should have a quiet, serene, submissive, loving, and caring spirit. These qualities in a wife will touch a man's heart, change him, and make him want to become a Christian. By showing love and grace, a Christian wife may win over her husband.

There are a number of examples of holy women in the Old Testament who put their hope in God to make themselves beautiful. Peter speaks of this in 3:5–6:

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Sarah showed respect and submission to her husband, Abraham. She obeyed him and called him lord and master. She became an example to all who want to be her daughters. When a wife is submissive to her husband, it pleases the Lord Jesus Christ and has a transforming effect on a husband.

While the author of this book was a missionary in Brazil, a new convert came to him with a problem. Her husband was an alcoholic. Every night he would come home and drink until he fell into a drunken stupor. Sometimes he would not even go to bed. The husband's behavior was really bothering the wife. She talked to her husband every day about his drunkenness, but he did not change. When she became Christian, she decided to leave her husband, thinking

it would cause him to change. She took the children and went to a friend's house. She thought this action would disturb him deeply, and he would change. When the husband discovered that his wife had left him, he was frantic. He called many people trying to find her. He even called the police to have them look for her. When she showed up, he was furious. He told her he thought the people in the Church of Christ had encouraged her to leave him.

She was confused when she came to the missionary for advice. They read Peter 3, concerning the treatment of an unbelieving husband. The new Christian was told to treat her husband with gentleness, kindness, love, and submission. The preacher suggested that she not talk to her husband about his drunkenness. Instead, the preacher suggested that she make a list of all her husband's good qualities. She had difficulty thinking of any good qualities, but she eventually wrote seven. He cared for his children; he took them to sporting events and other activities. He earned sufficient money and paid the bills. He was faithful to her; he did not run around with other women. She finally enumerated a number of good qualities. The missionary asked the wife to thank God for a different quality each day and then compliment her husband for that quality. After only a month her husband became a Christian. The wife was amazed by her husband's transformation. Two of their sons became preachers because she learned to treat her husband with grace.

Graceful Husbands

Peter also wrote instructions for husbands. "*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers*" (1 Peter 3:7). Peter only wrote one verse of instructions for husbands, but he wrote six verses for wives. Perhaps wives are more important so Peter gave more information for them. There is only one verse given for

husbands though many husbands mistreat their wives. This one verse contains meaningful instruction.

Paul wrote that a husband should show consideration to his wife. The word “*considerate*” means to live with a wife according to the knowledge of God’s Word and the knowledge of her needs. A husband needs to know his wife’s emotional, physical, social, and psychological needs. The husband has the responsibility of knowing and providing for his wife’s needs. He can ask her what she needs. The couple must communicate.

One of the chief complaints that women have is that their husbands do not communicate with them. Some husbands come home after work, read the newspaper, watch television, work out at the gym, but seldom talk to their wives. If a husband does not talk to his wife, he cannot know or satisfy her needs. He will fail as a provider. The financial responsibility of a man is not the only way to provide for his family.

A husband needs to let his wife know that he loves her. “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*” (Ephesians 5:25). Christ loved the church so much that He was willing to die. A husband is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the church.

Peter wrote that husbands are to treat their wives with respect “*as the weaker partner*.” The Greek language does not have the word “partner”. The original language has the term “a weaker vessel” or “weaker vase.” A beautiful, ornate vase is a weaker vessel. It is usually very valuable and expensive. A pan or an iron skillet is a stronger vessel. A pan can be placed under the sink, but one would not place a delicate vase under the sink. A weaker vessel should be treated with care and respect. Husbands should treat their wives with care and respect. Wives should be treated as a valuable vase would be treated.

Some wives feel like they are not worth anything because their husbands do not tell them that they are valuable. Some women are getting secular jobs because they are not appreciated at home. They do not think what they do

at home is important. Wives need to be told that they are precious. Wives and mothers should be shown appreciation for what they do. Taking care of a child is much more important than taking care of cows on a ranch or typing a letter. Molding a child is one of the most important works ever given to any human being. A husband should respect his wife.

A husband should be considerate to his wife so that his prayers will not be hindered. He is to treat her with respect so God will hear his prayers. Spiritual lives can be hindered and family lives destroyed by an inconsiderate husband. To improve communication with God, a husband should improve communication with his wife. It is important for a husband to treat his wife with grace even when she is undeserving.

Graceful Neighbors

God desires that Christians be graceful neighbors. They should be loving, compassionate, and humble.

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you might inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:8–9).

Peter wrote that Christians should “*live in harmony with one another.*” The word “*harmony*” means to think alike or to be of the same mind. To be harmonious, Christians sometimes need to compromise. A person who will not compromise is self-willed. A self-willed person always wants his way. He is obnoxious, not harmonious. An obnoxious, self-willed person gripes, complains, and causes division. A person who is not harmonious is egotistical, proud, stubborn, and unwilling to change. A Christian should not complain or cause division. A child of God should be

willing to listen to others and compromise, not in matters of truth, but in matters of judgment. A graceful neighbor should be harmonious.

A graceful neighbor is “*to be sympathetic*.” The word “*sympathetic*” means to suffer with other people. When a person hurts, a Christian hurts with him. When a person rejoices, a Christian rejoices with him. When a person has emotional or physical pain, a graceful neighbor suffers with him. Christians should be concerned about other people. They should show love to their brothers, their fellow Christians.

People of God are “*to be compassionate*.” The word “*compassion*” means to show mercy. Jesus showed compassion during His earthly ministry. “*When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*” (Matthew 9:36). Such compassion can only come from a tender, loving heart. Graceful Christians should show compassion like Jesus did. When a person is discouraged, a compassionate Christian will show mercy. When a sinner repents, a compassionate person will show forgiveness. A Christian can show compassion by caring for a sick person.

Graceful neighbors are “*to be humble*.” The word “*humility*” means to think low of ones self. It does not mean that a person should have an inferiority complex. Paul wrote that Christians are to think more highly of their brothers than they think of themselves. “. . . but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). A graceful Christian values and respects a person whether he is rich or poor. God’s children should show humility to all people. Paul wrote that “*he could do everything . . .*” His words sound egotistical without the rest of the sentence. “*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13). Admitting that God is greater and depending upon Him, shows Paul’s humility.

In this world there are people who are evil and insulting. God desires that His children not repay these people with evil, but with a blessing. The Christian way of grace is to

bless a person when he is insulting. The best way to overcome evil is with good. Christians are to treat their neighbors with grace.

Motivation To Fulfill These Duties

Peter gave the results of treating a neighbor with grace. *“For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech’”* (1 Peter 3:10). Every person desires to love life and see good days. A person who loves life is a happy person. The person who quits speaking evil of others and tells the truth will fulfill his desire to see good days. A Christian should not engage in slander, backbiting, complaining, or lying. A Christian should control his speech. The person who speaks a blessing instead of a curse loves life. A child of God speaks truthful and kind words to other people. Evil and deceitful words do not solve difficulties. When a person extends grace words to other people, he will be joyful. Blessing others with pure, truthful speech is a powerful way to live a graceful life and to see good days.

Peter wrote Christians telling them to turn from evil, do good, and seek peace. *“He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it”* (1 Peter 3:11). Christians should do more than flee evil; they are to do good. Paul wrote Timothy to flee evil and pursue righteousness *“But you, man of God, flee from all this [the love of money], and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness”* (1 Timothy 6:11). Christians should flee evil and strive for righteousness. Christians must seek peace and pursue it. God wants His children to be peacemakers. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God”* (Matthew 5:9) Being called “sons of God” is a very good reason to be a peacemaker. Paul wrote that Christians are called to peace and peace should rule in their hearts. *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. . .”* (Colossians 3:15). God’s children should be graceful

neighbors by turning from evil, doing good, seeking peace, and pursuing it.

Peter speaks of a strong motivation for showing grace toward one's spouse and neighbor. "*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil*" (1 Peter 3:12). By doing the will of God, a Christian can be assured the Lord will listen to his prayers. The Lord will open His heart to a Christian who shows deeds of kindness and returns a blessing for evil. On the other hand, the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. When a person takes vengeance, hurts other people, and curses, the Lord will be against the person. God will not bless or prosper those who do evil. A Christian should be a graceful spouse and neighbor so God's gracious eyes will be watching and His ears will be open to prayers. Consider the list of abominations found in Proverbs 6:16–19. Notice how many are the direct opposite of how graceful Christians are to be:

There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

The Lord hates a proud look and a cold heart that thinks evil of others. Abusing the innocent is detestable to Him. Sowing discord by murmuring and complaining is abominable in God's sight. Christians are to be humble, compassionate, tender-hearted, and of one mind. They should be graceful spouses and neighbors who turn from evil, do good, and seek peace so they will see good days.

GRACEFUL REACTORS TO A HOSTILE SOCIETY

1 Peter 3:13–22

Introduction

The recipients of this epistle were experiencing or would soon experience persecution. Peter wrote this letter to prepare Christians for the coming suffering. Satan makes every effort to bring harm to those who try to follow the will of God. Peter wrote that blessings would come as the result of suffering. God supplies grace and power to Christians who suffer for doing what is right in a hostile society.

Graceful Suffers for Christ

Peter wrote that Christians are to be **righteous** revolutionaries. “*Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?*” (1 Peter 3:13). The word “eager” in the Greek language is **zelos**. The word **zelos** means to be zealous. Since the word is a noun rather than an adjective, the sentence should be translated: “*If you are zealous of what is good.*” In New Testament times a zealot was a Jewish revolutionary. His intent was to overthrow the Roman government by force. Simon the Zealot was one of the apostles of Jesus (cf Luke 6:15). Simon was formerly a part of those Jews who wanted to overthrow the Roman government with violence.

Jesus is the king of peace, the king of righteousness. (cf Hebrews 7:2). He is a righteous revolutionary. A person who is eager to do what is good is a zealot of righteousness. When Christians do good, they are zealots of righteousness.

and are sometimes harmed. “*But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God*” (1 Peter 2:20). God’s commendation should encourage Christians to be righteous revolutionaries.

Peter wrote that blessings would come through suffering. “*But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed*” (1 Peter 3:14a). Nero burned the city of Rome a few years after 1 Peter was written, and he blamed Christians. Christians all over the world suffered, but God blessed those who remained faithful. There are a number of ways God will bless a person who suffers for what is right. Christ protects Christians during persecution, and the Holy Spirit comforts them. Through suffering a Christian’s faith is increased. A Child of God can persuade other people to become Christians by being faithful and courageous. Ultimately, God will give a heavenly home to His children who suffer for what is right.

Christians would soon be persecuted so Peter wrote not be fearful or frightened. 1 Peter 3:14b says, “*Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.*” Soon after 1 Peter was written some Christian were threatened with death by lions in the arena if they did not deny their Lord. The people of God who suffered fearlessly built endurance and faith. Christians continue to be threatened, insulted, and tempted to deny the Lord. A boss may tell his Christian employee do an evil deed or be fired. An unbelieving husband may encourage his Christian wife to forsake the worship assembly. Christians who do what is right will be blessed. Jesus said that Christians should fear God rather than men in Matthew 10:28. “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*” Do not be afraid of people when they threaten. Instead, be afraid of God and do what is right.

Sanctify the Lord in Your Hearts

Practice the lordship of Christ (cf. Isaiah 8:13). “*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord*” (1 Peter 3:15a). To “set apart Christ as Lord” means a Christian knows that Jesus is Lord because He protects and cares for all Christians. Jesus is the one who will give strength to endure

suffering. Jesus is the one who will bless a person who does what is right. Whenever there is suffering, hardship, persecution, or difficult times, set apart Christ as Lord. Seek Him, go to Him in prayer, and rely on Him. Honor and revere Christ. There will be no fear because the Lord Jesus Christ is all-powerful. He is King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. 1 Timothy 6:15). He can help anyone in need. That is the reason Paul said: "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13). Christians who set apart Christ as Lord will not be afraid.

Be a Prepared Revolutionary

A Christian should always be prepared to give a reason for the hope he has. As a revolutionary for Christ he must be able to defend his belief. "*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have*" (1 Peter 3:15b). The phrase "*give an answer*" means "*give a defense*." A Christian should be able to defend what he believes and why he believes it. To defend Jesus Christ as Lord, a Christian should be able to show evidence of the truth of the prophecies that predicted His birth, life, death, and resurrection in order to confirm Him as the Son of God. A child of God should be able to show evidence for the existence of God and his belief that God created the world. Evidence exists that indicate humans are divinely designed and do not merely evolve. A Christian needs to study to be prepared to give a defense. He needs to spend time studying and meditating on the Word of God and learning from other people. As a worldly revolutionary is well prepared by rigorous training to develop a strong body that can use weapons of war, so a Christian needs to learn to use his weapon, the Bible, to be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks him about his belief.

Revolutionaries of grace do not want to overthrow a government, but they use gentleness and respect to set apart Christ as Lord. "*But do this with gentleness and respect*" (1 Peter 3:15c). A Christian should show respect to other people when there are religious disagreements. A Christian

should never belittle, ridicule, or make fun of other people. Rather, he should show respect by being gentle and kind. If respect and kindness are given, they will be received in return. A Christian needs to be tactful, kind, and courteous when defending our Lord Jesus Christ and Christianity. Correct other people, when they are wrong, with gentleness, respect, and meekness.

A Christian needs to live the principles he is teaching. *“Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander”* (1 Peter 3:16). People of the world look closer at the way a child of God lives than what he says. If a Christian’s life is not the same as his teaching, an unbeliever is not going to listen to what is taught. A holy, pure life is the best answer to false accusers. Nobody lives a perfect life; everyone sins and falls short of the glory of God (cf. Romans 3:23). No person lives perfectly what he teaches. A Christian should confess his sins, and God will purify him from all unrighteousness (Cf. 1 John 1:9). When God purifies His child, he will have a clear conscience, and those who speak maliciously about him may be ashamed.

Being revolutionaries of grace is closely tied to being graceful sufferers. A revolutionary of righteousness does not usually suffer, but if he does suffer, God will bless him. Peter wrote the golden rule of suffering: *“It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil”* (1 Peter 3:17). There are two reasons why it is better to suffer for doing good. First, it brings salvation to other people when Christians suffer for doing good. Second, it leads a Christian to a better life.

The Suffering Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is an example of the golden rule of suffering: *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit”* (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus did what was right because He is an example of the just suffering for the unjust, the righteous

suffering for the unrighteous. Jesus Christ is the only sinless person who ever lived on earth (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21, John 8:46). Since Jesus is sinless, He did not die for His own sins. Jesus died to bring the unrighteous to God. A righteous person died for the sins of the unrighteous. The unrighteous deserve to die, but Jesus died in their place. What marvelous grace! What love! Suffering will save other people. Jesus died on the cross to reconcile sinners to God. God will justify those people who trust and obey Him, and He will count them as righteous. God's righteous children will live with Him eternally. Jesus has given Christians an example of suffering. Christians should suffer for doing good to bring the lost into a relationship with God. Suffering can win people to Jesus and save their souls. What an unselfish purpose!

When Jesus suffered for doing good, He was blessed. "*He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*" Some translations say, "*made alive in the Spirit.*" Whether "*in the Spirit*" or "*by the Spirit,*" either way, Jesus was blessed. He suffered and died on the cross. His spirit went to Paradise when His body was buried. Jesus told the thief on the cross, ". . . *today you will be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). Jesus' spirit went to a heavenly abode of comfort and peace because He suffered for doing good.

Jesus was blessed when he was in the spirit realm. Jesus was "*made alive by the Spirit*" means He was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit. The capital "S" indicates it was the Holy Spirit who raised Him.

Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit, who also lives in a Christian, raised Jesus from the dead: "*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you . . .*" (Romans 8:11). While Jesus was in the spirit realm, separated from His body, He was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit.

When a Christian suffers for doing good, he too will be raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit. Luke wrote about the after life of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19–31.

Lazarus suffered on earth while the rich man lived in luxury. When Lazarus died, the angels carried him to the bosom of Abraham where he rested in peace and comfort. When the rich man died, he was taken to Hades where he was in torment. The rich man suffered in the spirit realm for doing wrong while Lazarus was blessed for doing good.

Example of the Ante-diluvians

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus preached to the spirits in prison. 1 Peter 3:18–20 says that He was:

. . . made alive by the Spirit through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.

Some people teach that Jesus preached between His death and resurrection to the spirits of the people who died in the flood during Noah's life. Jesus would not preach to some of the spirits but not to all the spirits in Hades. Jesus would preach to all people not just those who were disobedient during Noah's time. Jesus could not have preached salvation because it was too late for the people who had lived and died during Noah's lifetime. A man has only one opportunity to prepare for eternal judgment and that time is during his life in the body. "*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27). At judgment a man is judged by the deeds done in the body, not in the spirit. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). There is nothing that Jesus could have preached to the spirits in prison that would change their destiny. God told the rich man that there is a great chasm fixed so no one can pass from one part of the spirit realm to another part (cf. Luke 16:26).

The Holy Spirit filled the Prophets so they could predict the coming of Christ. The Spirit of Christ filled the prophets.

Jesus preached through the prophets, predicting His own coming. In the same way, Christ preached to the people of Noah's day through the Holy Spirit which inspired Noah, a preacher of righteousness, (cf. 2 Peter 2:5) to preach while the ark was being prepared. The Holy Spirit dwelt in Noah. The Holy Spirit of God revealed to Noah, as the Holy Spirit revealed to the Old Testament prophets, the way to warn sinners.

The greatest sermon Noah ever preached was in building the ark. People must have ridiculed Noah as he built a ship on dry land before there was rain. Noah warned the people that God was going to destroy all the people who did not repent. When the people disobeyed Noah's message, they were disobeying Jesus because the Spirit of Jesus was preaching through Noah. The people were destroyed in the flood because they refused to repent, and they became spirits in prison.

It is better to suffer for doing what is right than what is wrong. When a Christian suffers for doing what is right, they may suffer in the flesh. Dying on the cross was as painful as dying in a flood. Jesus suffered on the cross. The people of Noah's day suffered in the flood, but that was not the end of their suffering. They are still suffering in Hades. When Jesus went to Hades, He was comforted, raised from the dead, and now sits at God's right hand in heaven. It is better to suffer for righteousness because the reward is salvation, comfort, and peace.

People who do what is wrong suffer in the flesh and suffer in the spirit, as well. It is better to suffer for doing what is right than for doing what is wrong. There are some scholars who think Jesus preached to the spirits in prison, changed their destinies and saved them. That interpretation would not fit the golden rule of suffering: "*... it is better ... to suffer for doing good than for doing evil*" (1 Peter 3:17). The people suffered because they disobeyed the message of Noah to repent. They suffered in the flood and are still suffering in the spirit. One day they will be raised from the grave and will suffer an eternal judgment. Jesus denounced

the cities in which His miracles had been performed because the people did not repent (cf. Matthew 11:20). The suffering for doing evil does not end in this life or in the spirit realm or at the final judgment.

Noah is an example of one who suffered for righteousness. Noah probably suffered ridicule and scorn when he preached that a flood was coming and the disobedient would be destroyed in the water. 1 Pet 3:20–22:

. . . who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

The Lord said that man's days would be 120 years (cf. Genesis 6:3). God waited patiently 120 years in the days of Noah for the people to repent. It would be discouraging to preach for 120 years and have no one listen to the message except for eight people. Only Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives were saved because they believed the message of Noah given through the Spirit of Christ.

Noah is an example of one who suffered for righteousness and was saved from the flood. The ark of safety lifted him above the waters, and he was saved through water. The Scriptures say that Christians are also saved through water in 1 Peter 3:21:

And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism saves Christians and water saved Noah and his family. The water that saved Noah destroyed sin from the earth. In the water of baptism God destroys the man of sin so he may live a new life.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:3–4).

Through the waters of baptism the old man is put to death just as God destroyed the sinful world with water during Noah's life. In baptism Christians are united with Jesus into His death. When a person goes down into the water, he is buried with Christ Jesus. There the old man of sin is destroyed as men of sin were destroyed in the waters of the flood. The water lifted the ark so Noah was separated from the destruction of the sinful world. In the same way, a baptized believer is lifted to live a new life. Jesus said, "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved . . .*" (Mark 16:16). When a person is lifted from the waters of baptism, he is lifted from the destruction of the earth that will one day occur. In the water of baptism Jesus Christ becomes the Christian's ark of safety. Jesus will lift up a baptized believer into the ark of safety that will separate him from the coming destruction of the world caused by sinful men.

Baptism is the dividing line between the old life of sin and the new life of righteousness. The flood was the dividing point between Noah's old life filled with sinful men and his new life of righteousness. Christians begin a new life as Noah did. As the flood was the dividing line between Noah's old life and new life, so baptism is the dividing line between a Christian's old life of sin and his new life of righteousness.

In baptism a Christian is putting his trust in Jesus to save him. Peter wrote ". . . baptism that now saves you also."

Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote that baptism saves a person. There are many people who say baptism does not save people. The belief of these people contradicts what Peter wrote. Other people say that Jesus Christ saves, not baptism. To a certain degree that statement is true. Notice the relationship of Jesus to baptism. Baptism is not the removal of dirt from the body. Salvation does not occur by washing dirt off the body during baptism, but it is the pledge of a good conscience toward God. The pledge of a good conscience toward God. This word “*pledge*” in the Greek language means “*a request*” or “*an appeal*.” This verse is translated “*an appeal to God for a good conscience*” in the New American Standard Version. In baptism a Christian is putting his trust in Jesus to save him. The believer is asking God to cleanse him of sin, to cleanse his conscience. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse the conscience. “. . . *the blood of Christ . . . cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*” (Hebrews 9:14).

It is in baptism that God applies the blood to the soul, washes away sin, and gives the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost Peter told the Jews that were “*cut to the heart*” the way to be saved. Acts 2:38:

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Ananias told Paul how to have his sins washed away: “*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name*” (Acts 22:16). Paul was told to call on Jesus’ name when he was baptized. When one calls on the name of the Lord at baptism, he is asking the Lord for salvation. In baptism Christians are saved by the death and suffering of Jesus Christ.

GRACEFUL CHURCH MEMBERS

1 Peter 4:1–19

Introduction

True followers of the “Prince of Peace” must remember that the Kingdom is spiritual, and, therefore, not expanded through carnal means (cf. John 18:36). Keep in mind the words of Jesus: “. . . *for all who draw the sword will die by the sword*” (Matthew 26:52).

Christians have weapons with which to fight a true struggle. They are engaged in a spiritual struggle, both without and within (cf. Ephesians 6:12). Christians have an arsenal of weapons that are “*divine in power*” (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3–5). In chapter seven the reader will learn that Christians must arm themselves with the attitude of Christ to overcome persecution. The way grace enables the proper relationship among fellow Christians will be studied.

The Christian Armed With The Mind Of Christ

The Power to Endure Suffering – A Willing Mind

Christians should arm themselves with the attitude of Jesus. “*Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin*” (1 Peter 4:1). Jesus was willing to obey God even to the point of suffering. The writer of Hebrews wrote that Jesus learned obedience by the things which he suffered. “*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered*” (Hebrews 5:8). Christians, also, learn obedience by the things which they

suffer. They need to be willing to serve God even to the point of suffering.

Baptism marks the point when Christians decide to quit living in sin, start living for God, serving Him, and suffering, if necessary. Paul wrote that those who were baptized were freed from sin.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? . . . our old self was crucified . . . anyone who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:1–7).

At baptism the old man of sin dies, and a new man is raised to begin a new life of service to God. A Christian should be willing to suffer for Jesus when he begins the new life of service. He should be willing to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus (cf. Luke 9:23).

Reasons to Endure Suffering

Peter wrote that a Christian needs to be willing to suffer when he leaves a life of sin. 1 Peter 4:2–4:

As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

When a Christian leaves a life of sin, previous friends may ridicule or make fun of him. The old friends will be surprised

that he is not participating in his previous sinful life. A Christian may be mocked and ridiculed in the same way that Noah was (cf. Genesis 6). A Christian may be mocked and ridiculed in the same way that Jesus was (cf. Luke 22:63). When a Christian suffers the derision of his friends, he suffers for Jesus. He is suffering for doing what is right.

A Christian should be willing to receive insults and injuries for the cause of God like Jesus and Noah did because suffering eventually brings eternal salvation. When a Christian is willing to suffer with Jesus, then God will be willing to raise him to Glory with Jesus. “*Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory*” (Romans 8:17). If a Christian does not take up his cross, he will not receive an eternal crown. Children of God should be willing to suffer ridicule, even to the point of death, for God in order to be blessed in Paradise and in the Resurrection.

The Enduring Power While Suffering

Wicked people of the world who laugh and ridicule Christians will one day have to face God. Consider what Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:5–6:

But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

The wicked people will have to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. The Gospel was preached so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body but live according to God in regard to the spirit. Again Peter wrote that Jesus preached to those who are now dead, the dead spirits in prison. Jesus preached to

the sinful people of His day while they were alive the same way that He preached through Noah to the evil people that were alive. The Gospel was preached “*to the dead*” while they were still alive. Peter wrote “*so that they might be judged according to men in the body.*” The Gospel is preached so that a Christian will be willing to suffer at the hands of men in order that in the spirit he may be blessed. The reason the Gospel is preached is so that a Christian will be willing to suffer for God in this life and be blessed by Him in the life to come. Those who judge, condemn, ridicule, and laugh at Christians will have to give an account to God in the Day of Judgment. It is better to accept suffering on earth and be blessed at the hand of God rather than to be blessed on earth and then suffer for eternity.

Graceful Church Members

Graceful Stewards

Peter wrote that Christians should pray because the end was near. “*The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray*” (1 Peter 4:7). The end of all things is near; it is at hand. Persecution and suffering are coming soon to the recipients of this letter. The day of judgment was also near. Paul wrote that salvation was nearer than when the Christian first believed.

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:11–12).

Salvation is drawing closer and closer. In God’s eyes, the Christian dispensation, from the first coming to the second coming of Christ, is a short span of time. “*But do not forget*

this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8). The final judgment is as close as one's death. Man's life is short in God's eyes. "*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes*" (James 4:14). A person's life is fleeting away, and after death comes the judgment. "*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27). All people need to be ready because no one knows when Jesus is coming back (cf. Matthew 24:36). Christians need to be faithful stewards of the gifts God has given them. Paul wrote to Timothy to tell him how to conduct himself in the house of God, the church of the living God (cf. 1 Timothy 3:15). Realizing that the end of the world is near, Christians need to be faithfully serving God.

Peter wrote "*be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray*" (1 Peter 4:7b). Praying is the first thing that a child of God's grace should do. God's manager should pray to be in communication with the Owner of the House, the Church, to know what the Owner wants done. The manager should study God's will, pray to Him, and ask for wisdom to direct His house. In James 1:5 Christians are instructed to ask God for wisdom: "*If any man lacks wisdom let him ask of God.*" Christians need to be in constant communication with the Master. As a Christian goes to God in prayer, he needs to be clear minded and self-controlled. A Christian needs to be wise when he speaks to God. The word "*self-controlled*" means "*free from wine.*" When a person's mind is clouded with drugs or alcohol, he cannot think or talk clearly. Plan prayer time before beginning to pray; use sound judgment and be of sober spirit.

Deep love brings peace and harmony to the church. "*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins*" (1 Peter 4:8). To love deeply should be of top priority to a Christian. Paul wrote that love is the most excellent way (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:31b). "*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a*

resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). Love is of utmost importance to a Christian. When a Christian does anything for God and complains, he is not showing love. Place the word "*complain*" in place of "*have not love*" in 1 Corinthians 13:1. "*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but ‘complain,’ I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.*" God wants His children to love people because love never fails (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8) and covers a multitude of sins.

Christians are to treat fellow stewards with hospitality, kindness, and love. "*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling*" (1 Peter 4:9). The writer of Hebrews encouraged Christians to practice hospitality. The word "*hospitality*" means "*to be friendly to strangers*." Hebrews 13:2 says, "*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*" The body of Christ is a mobile group in many places so Christians need to be hospitable to new members, not just their long-time friends. Christians need to offer hospitality without grumbling. When people of God grumble, they are not showing love. Practicing hospitality may be inconvenient or cause some expense, but God will be pleased. God loves a cheerful giver (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7). God loves His children who give of their time as well as their money. Practicing hospitality should be a family affair so no one person has to do all the work and risk being a complainer.

God expects Christians to use the gifts He has given them. "*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms*" (1 Peter 4:10). In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 every man received some talent. The men with five and ten talents used their talents to gain more talents, but the man with one talent hid his talent because he was afraid. The master took the one talent from the servant and gave it to the one who had ten talents. Then the master said: "*And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matthew 25:30). Christians have different gifts (cf.

Romans 12:6) that God expects them to use to serve others. Christians should use their gifts without fear so God will be pleased. In the first century there were miraculous gifts given through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. The miraculous gifts ceased at the death of the Apostles, but there are natural gifts that continue to be given to all Children of God.

Christians need to be working, praying, serving, and using their gifts even when they are suffering. When a person is suffering because he is obeying God, the tendency is to quit serving Him. Satan tempts a suffering Christian to quit using his gifts. Satan uses suffering to divert a Christian from doing what he ought to be doing. Children of God need to be serving God in the midst of suffering.

The King James Version says that Christians should be “*stewards*” of God’s grace. A steward is one who administers the household of someone else. Rich men oftentimes put their entire house under one man. In Egypt Joseph was put in charge of Potiphar’s house because Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph. Potiphar entrusted to Joseph’s care everything he owned. (Cf. Genesis 39:4). Christians are stewards who administer the grace of God. The theme of 1 Peter is “graceful heirs in the midst of suffering.” People of God have been given grace in the form of gifts, talents, and abilities. They are to administer the gifts to serve other people and to glorify God. As stewards of God’s grace, Christians are to share grace with other people. God has given the gifts of teaching, encouragement, and serving one another. He has given His children grace so they can share it with others. God has saved Christians so they might help to save other people. Christians are to faithfully administer God’s gifts while serving Him.

Peter wrote about the way Christians are to use some of God’s gifts.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all

things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:11).

There are people who have the ability to speak, teach, and preach. When Christians use the gift of teaching, they need to make certain their teaching conforms to the Word of God. They need to diligently study the Bible so they will not teach error. When Christians use the gift of serving, they should do it with the strength God provides. They do not serve with their own strength, but with the strength God provides so He may be praised. As Christians use their different gifts they should always seek to glorify God.

Paul wrote that all parts of the human body do not have the same function. The nose, hands, ears, and eyes each have different ways they help the body to function. In the same way, Christians form one body, the church, but members have different functions. In the family of God members have different gifts (cf. Romans 12:4–6). Each member of the Body should determine the gifts God has given him and utilize the gifts to serve other people. Some Christians have the gift of making money, and they can help spread the Gospel by generously contributing to Christ's Church. They can use their gift to help the poor, send missionaries to the field, provide for abandoned children, and give support to ministry training schools. Some people of God are given the gift of encouragement, while others have the gift of leadership, and other people are given the gift of mercy (cf. Romans 12:7). Whatever gifts Christians are given, the ultimate goal is that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. Since Christians are to be faithful stewards in the midst of suffering, they should not grow weary of doing good. "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*" (Galatians 6:9). Continue to use God's gifts even while suffering. "*To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*"

Graceful Sufferers

Peter again wrote Christians to expect suffering. “*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you*” (1 Peter 4:12). The painful trials had not arrived, but they would occur soon. The persecution under Nero and Domitian started shortly after Peter wrote this epistle. Peter wrote this epistle to prepare Christians for the approaching trials. He forewarned them to not be surprised by the painful trial they would suffer. Christians were being ridiculed for their faith and having social pressures brought against them. Soon after this letter was written the Roman government severely persecuted the people of God. Many people were thrown to the lions, crucified, or beheaded. Christians were horribly mistreated.

Believers should expect to suffer for the cause of Christ; it is a privilege to suffer for Him. “*For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him*” (Philippians 1:29). Godly Christian will eventually suffer persecution. “*. . . everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Timothy 3:12). Blessings will come to the faithful who persevere under trial. “*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him*” (James 1:12). “*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:10). Paul wrote that he delighted when he suffered persecutions because he was brought closer to God. “*. . . for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:10). During persecutions people have their faith tested. When faith is found lacking, the weak fall away, but the faithful grow stronger. Christians prove how much they believe and love Jesus during times of suffering. God uses this period of suffering in the life of a Christian to make him a stronger person.

Peter wrote that suffering prepares Christians for glory. “*But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed*” (1 Peter 4:13). Graceful sufferers are heirs of eternal life according to Paul in Romans 8:17:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Through faithful suffering for Jesus a Christian is able to share in God’s glory, to be glorified with God. The purpose of suffering is to prepare graceful heirs for heavenly Glory. Christians can delight with Paul because suffering prepares a person for heaven. They can rejoice and be happy to participate in the suffering of Christ. Consequently, Christians should thank God for the privilege to share in His suffering.

Through suffering Christians are blessing because of the Spirit of Glory and of God. “*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you*” (1 Peter 4:14). The Holy Spirit comforts in a special way when a graceful suffer is insulted. The Holy Spirit gives comfort and strength. Jesus promised to ask God to send another Counselor to comfort believers. “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever*” (John 14:16). Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit intercedes in prayers and helps with weaknesses.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express (Romans 8:26).

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit that dwelt within them. Ephesians 3:16–17:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith . . .

The Holy Spirit knows when Christians are agonizing. He gives strength out of His glorious riches. The Spirit comforts, intercedes and strengthens joyful sufferers.

It is marvelous that the Holy Spirit helps Christians when they are suffering. “*If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler*” (1 Peter 4:15). Peter wrote that Christians should suffer for the right reason. They should not suffer because they have committed sin. Christians should follow the golden rule of suffering: it is better to suffer for doing what is right than what is wrong. Christian should not bring reproach upon the cause of Christ for stealing, committing sexual sin, or murdering another person. A child of God should not bring shame upon Christ’s Church by gossiping, being selfish, or getting drunk. A Christian’s motive for suffering is because he is following the example of Jesus.

Christians should praise God when they suffer because they bear His name. “*However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name*” (1 Peter 4:16). The name Christian was given by God. “*The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch*” (Acts 11:26b). The Greek language shows that Barnabas and Paul first called the disciples at Antioch “Christians.” The name “Christian” was give to them by divine revelation. Paul boldly spoke to King Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus about becoming a follower of Christ. “*Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’*” (Acts 26:28). Isaiah wrote that God’s people would one day be called by a new name (cf. Isaiah 62:2b), and that new name is “Christian.” The name Christian comes from the name Christ, the Anointed One (cf.

Psalm 2:2). Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism (cf. Luke 3:22). Paul wrote that Christians are anointed by the Holy Spirit, too. “*... He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts ...*” (2 Corinthians 1:21–22).

Peter wrote that judgment will begin at the household of God.

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” (1 Peter 4:17–18).

The household of God is the church of the Living God. Judgment begins with God’s church. Judgment comes in this life and will come in the life to come. Peter wrote about the judgment of suffering and persecution the Christians would soon go through. Judgment is a test to determine how much a person loves God. The test of suffering and persecution determines who will remain faithful and receive the eternal reward. If a heavenly home with God is difficult for the righteous to obtain, it is even more difficult for the wicked.

Graceful sufferers should be committed to the faithful Creator. “*So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good*” (1 Peter 4:19). Sufferers should live a righteous life. “*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires*” (Galatians 5:24). Christians are to follow Jesus example and be graceful, righteous sufferers.

GRACEFUL SHEPHERDS

1 Peter 5:1–13

Introduction

At all times, but especially during persecution, the people of God need good leadership. In His Divine wisdom, the Lord saw fit to organize His church in such a way that the condition He witnessed during His earthly ministry should not last long. *“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”* (Matthew 9:36). His plan calls for local congregations to be overseen by qualified men, known as “elders,” and whose responsibilities are to “shepherd the flock of God.”

Peter wrote elders in the Lord’s church to exhort them and to describe their work. The church, graceful sheep, has the obligation to submit to the leaders of the church. Graceful sheep are to be alert so they can resist the devil who is looking for someone to devour.

Graceful Shepherds

Peter’s Exhortation to Elders

Being good stewards or managers of God’s gifts was discussed in chapter seven. Perhaps some of the most important managers in God’s house are the elders that He has appointed over the other managers, the flock. Christians can be grateful that in God’s plan for the organization of the church He designated certain men to oversee His people.

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:1–3).

Peter wrote instructions for the shepherds of God's flock. Peter could have commanded the elders using his apostolic authority, but Peter chose to exhort them as a fellow elder. Peter had been an eyewitness of Christ's suffering. He had also been a personal partaker of the suffering of Christ (cf. Acts 5:40–41) and will share in the Glory to be revealed.

In this chapter the church is described, not as a household, but as a sheepfold. Christians are the sheep, and the elders are God appointed shepherds. Peter exhorts elders to be shepherds of God's flock that are under their care.

The words elder, bishop, overseer, shepherd, and pastor are terms that describe the same person, but different duties. The word "elder" tells his age, experience, and spiritual maturity while the words "shepherd" and "pastor" describe the work of caring for God's sheep. The word "overseer" is sometimes translated "bishop." An overseer or bishop is a supervisor, one who manages other people. Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church (cf. Acts 20:17). Paul warns the elders to be watchful shepherds because savage wolves would come in among the flock destroying the flock.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will

arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! (Acts 20:28–31).

Paul also warns the shepherds to be on guard because some members of the flock would distort the truth to draw away disciples. Shepherds need to feed the flock so the sheep will not be easily drawn away.

In the first century church there was a plurality of elders in every congregation. Luke wrote that Paul and Barnabas established the church in a number of cities during their travels and later went back to appointed elders in the churches (cf. Acts 14:23). The mature, wise elders were to oversee the congregation that met in their city. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church; they did not appoint only one elder for each church. Paul left Titus in Crete to complete unfinished business and to appoint elders in every town (cf. Titus 1:5). The concept of one or more elders, bishops or pastors over a plurality of churches is foreign to the New Testament.

Shepherd the Flock of God

Ezekiel prophesied about God's displeasure with the shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34:2–5:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally." So they were scattered because there was no shepherd . . .

The shepherds of Israel were more concerned about themselves than they were about the weak, the sick, and the lost; they ruled harshly and brutally. God was displeased with the way the Israelite shepherds acted.

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths . . .” For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I myself will search for my sheep and look after them” (Ezekiel 34:10–11).

Ezekiel wrote that God would rescue His sheep and shepherd them. The shepherds of Israel would be removed as shepherds and be held accountable for their evil ways.

The role of an elder is one of a servant, not a lord. Shepherds need to be with the sheep. They should visit the sick, strengthen the weak, care for spiritual needs, and feed the flock. They need to try to bring back straying Christians who fall away.

John wrote that Jesus appeared to his disciples after His resurrection and told Peter to feed His sheep (cf. John 21:1–17). Peter was considering becoming a fisherman again, but Jesus wanted him to become a fisher of men (cf. Matthew 4:19). Paul wrote Timothy that an overseer must be able to teach (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2). Paul wrote Titus that an elder must know the Message. *“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it”* (Titus 1:9). An elder must know God’s Word so he can encourage others and so he can recognize when error is taught.

The Character of Oversight

Elders should serve willingly with a cheerful heart (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7). They should take care of God's flock, not under compulsion, but because they desire to serve God and help His people (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1). A man cannot be appointed or forced to serve as an elder against his will. A man must desire to serve as an elder or pastor. If he loses the desire to serve, he should resign, for he will not be able to serve as God desires.

An elder may be financially supported for his work (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17–18). The motive for serving should not be for financial gain, but an eagerness to save souls. Elders are not to be "*greedy for money,*" but "*eager to serve.*" Some people in positions of authority and leadership in the church have become greedy for money and have used their positions to obtain money for themselves. During the third, fourth, and fifth centuries men began to be raised up to the position of bishop over elders of several congregations. As the men strayed from the Biblical teaching, they received huge sums of money for their office. An elder should not use his position to only make money, but to eagerly serve other people.

Peter wrote the elders to not "*lord over*" those who are entrusted to them. In the original Greek the word "*lord over,*" means to "*lord against.*" Jesus talked to the apostles and told them not to lord over each other as the Gentiles lorded over people. Luke 22:25–26:

Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

It is a sobering thought that elders are entrusted with the souls under their care and will give an account to God.

“ . . . They keep watch over you as men who must give an account . . . ” (Hebrews 13:17).

Being Examples to the Flock

A true shepherd will be an example to the flock. He will be a model servant. A shepherd does not drive the flock. He is in front of the flock leading them. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd. “*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep*” (John 10:14–15). Jesus knows His sheep as God knows Jesus. The Good Shepherd takes care of His sheep. He leads them to green pastures and quiet waters. He restores, comforts, and heals them (cf. Psalm 23). As sheep are best led, not driven, so it is with the people of God. Shepherds must be in front of the flock to be an example to them. Instead of giving orders, shepherds need to show the way. Qualified elders have fewer problems getting people to follow and to submit when they show the way. When elders are not examples of spirituality, the flock is likely to be dissatisfied with the leadership.

Motivation to Heed the Exhortation

Jesus had authority, but He used His authority as a servant. “*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28). When an eldership serves the church, they are following Jesus’ example of using authority as a servant.

Elders should not strive for material gain, power, or popularity; they should strive for the crown of life that will never fade away. “*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away*” (1 Peter 5:4). The term “Chief Shepherd” does not occur anywhere else in the Bible. In the sixth century the Roman church developed a chief shepherd who is called the pope. The phrase, “*When the Chief Shepherd appears,*” indicates that Peter wrote about Jesus. The word “chief

shepherd" means "*arch-shepherd*." The arch-shepherd is a ruler of other shepherds. Jesus, not the pope, is head of the church (cf. Colossians 1:18). Since Jesus is the head of the church, elders need to look to Him for guidance. Jesus has all authority (cf. Matthew 28:18) not some man on earth. Peter did not claim to be the Chief Shepherd. He wrote that he was a fellow elder (cf. 1 Peter 5:1). All elders are under the authority of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus.

When Jesus appears, faithful elders will receive the crown of Glory. The crown will never fade away, perish, or spoil (cf. 1 Peter 1:4). Some elders and pastors want to put the crown on now, but the reward will be given when the Chief Shepherd appears.

Graceful Sheep

Graceful Submission

Peter wrote that young men are to submit to those who are older. 1 Peter 5:5 gives these instructions.

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

"*Those who are older*" may refer to the elders mentioned in the previous four verses, or it may refer to all older men. 1 Peter 5:5b is a quotation based upon Proverbs 3:34, and it is also quoted in James 4:6. A person with a humble spirit is highly esteemed by God (cf. Isaiah 57:15; 66:1–2).

Paul instructed Christians to be humble in their relationships with other people (cf. Ephesians 4:2). When Christians are arrogant and proud, they are displeasing to God. When there is division in the church, pride is often the cause. Paul wrote that Christians should practice humility.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

Submit out of Reverence

Christians need to learn to submit in all areas of life. Christians show grace when they are submissive. If first century Christians could submit to Nero, Christians can certainly submit to elders. God given grace enables a person to submit to others. Christians can cooperate with one another and carry each other’s burdens. *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2).

Humility is needed to preserve a proper relationship with God. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time”* (1 Peter 5:6). The word “*humble*” is the Greek word *tapeinōthēte* which means “*lowliness of mind.*” The command, **humble yourselves** could be translated “allow yourselves to be humbled.” Those who were suffering persecution for Christ’s sake could be encouraged by the fact that the same **mighty hand** that let them suffer would one day **lift them up** (cf. James 4:10). Humility is an important quality for a person desiring the attitude of Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:3–5) When a Christian humbles himself under God’s mighty hand, he is submitting to God’s providential workings in his life. A Christian should submit even if it means enduring persecution. Many first century children of God were persecuted and killed because they would not renounce Jesus as Lord. *“. . . Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10). A Christian will receive a crown of life if he submits to God and humbles himself.

Children of God should not fret or worry about things over which they have no control. *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:7). In the Greek language the word “*cast*” is a participle. Therefore, “*Cast*

all your anxiety" is linked back to "*humble yourself.*" A Christian humbles himself when he casts his anxiety on God. Jesus taught His disciples that they were not to worry about food, drink, or clothing. Jesus said that the pagans sought these things, but Christians should seek first His Kingdom, and there would be no need for worry (cf. Matthew 6:31–34). When a Christian depends on the Heavenly Father, he is showing humility. God will bless a Christian who admits his inadequacies and asks God for help. Because God is loving and caring, He desires that His children come to Him with their problems. This is Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28–30:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

God is ready to give rest and peace to the weary. Christians who desire rest for their souls need only to come to God in prayer. Christians who do not ask, will not receive His rest and peace. Weary, burdened children of God need to be a praying people. In times of persecution, graceful sufferers need to pray more than ever. Through prayer Christians receive God's peace, His strength, His power, and His comfort.

Watch Out for the Devil!

Christians have an adversary, the devil. "*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). The word "devil" is **diabolos** in the Greek language meaning "*one prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely.*" Some people teach that once a person is saved, he cannot fall away. If such a doctrine is true, why does Satan bother "*to devour*" those who cannot fall away?

The doctrine of “once saved, always saved” is disproved by this verse and other verses in the Bible. There are numerous warning in the Bible about forsaking God. One of these is in Hebrews 3:12–14:

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

A Christian should guard against an unbelieving heart that can turn away from the Living God. Instead, he should hold firmly to the Living God until the end of his life.

The greatest danger to a sheep is when he is in the field because he can stray away from the shepherd and be devoured by a wild animal. The sheep may stray from the flock as he eats and ignores his surrounding. Christians have to guard against straying from the Shepherd and the flock because that is when the devil can easily attack. Christians need to be alert to his schemes. The devil tempts through greed, lust, and pride. Christians have to be clear minded, watchful, and stay away from temptation. A young lamb is not aware of danger, but an older sheep has experience and knows to stay alert. When he sees a wild animal approaching, the older sheep gets close to the shepherd. In the same way, Christians need to stay close to their Shepherd.

Christians need to resist the devil by standing firm in the faith. “*Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings*” (1 Peter 5:9). Christians need to remain steadfast in the faith (cf. Colossians 1:21–23) knowing that the devil tempts them through suffering. James wrote that the devil will flee from

those people who resist him. “ . . . Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you . . . ” (James 4:7–8). A Christian needs to boldly stand against the devil not because he is powerful, but because Jesus is powerful. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). Christians are not alone in their struggle against Satan: “. . . If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Children of God will be victorious if they stand firm and do God’s will, knowing that “*brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*” Elijah thought that he was the only one in all Israel that had not fallen away from God (cf. 1 Kings 19:14), but God told Elijah: “*Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him*” (1 Kings 19:18). Elijah was not the only person who was suffering; there were seven thousand believers who had also not bowed down to Baal. The devil wants Christians to give up and leave Christianity. It thrills the devil when a Christians turns from Christ and loses his eternal salvation. Keep the faith and realize that other Christians are also sufferings. It is encouraging to know there are other people undergoing the same kind of suffering.

Jesus wants Christians to rejoice and be glad because of the great, heavenly reward they will receive. Jesus said: “*Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you*” (Matthew 5:12). Christians need to remember that God’s people of all ages have suffered persecution. God’s faithful can count it a privilege to suffer knowing they are with a special company who suffered for His cause.

God’s Grace

Peter wrote a beautiful promise in 1 Peter 5:10:

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a

little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

The word “*restore*” is a fisherman’s language meaning “*to mend nets that are torn.*” The same Greek word that is used in verse 10 is used in the King James Version when Peter, James, and John were mending their nets (cf. Mark 1:19). God mends lives that are torn apart emotionally from suffering. He heals the wounds and strength is restored. During a period of suffering Christians should remember that the suffering will not last forever, but Glory is eternal.. The God of all grace will restore those who are suffering and make them strong, firm, and steadfast. The purpose of the calling is to receive the Glory that awaits His faithful ones.

God’s grace is the solution for suffering.

“To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it” (1 Peter 5:11–12).

The first epistle of Peter was written to encourage Christians to be graceful sufferers for the all powerful and eternal God. Christians are to let their light shine before men so God may be praised (cf. Matthew 5:16). Peter concludes the first letter, mentioning Silas, his faithful brother and the traveling companion of Paul.

Peter wrote a collection of greetings: “*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ*” (1 Peter 5:13–14). “*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you*” is likely a congregation of the Lord’s people who send greetings. The church is either in literal Babylon, located in modern day Iraq, or in figurative Babylon, which could be a reference to either Rome or Jerusalem. “*My son Mark*” is

John Mark the nephew of Barnabas and the author of the Gospel of Mark. Peter exhorts the recipients of this letter to exhibit love. Peter concludes the epistle of grace with a prayer for peace for all who are in Christ.

May the example of Peter's confidence and hope, as well as his actual teaching in this epistle, serve to help the reader remain full of hope during his sojourn as a pilgrim of God! *"To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen"* (1 Peter 5:11).

Plan of Experienced Knowledge

2 Peter 1:1–21

The Author, Recipients, Date, and Purpose

Second Peter is a short but significant part of the New Testament. The second letter of Peter is so different from his first letter that some people do not think Peter wrote the second letter. The two letters have different subjects, styles, and vocabulary. There is a sixty-nine percent difference in vocabulary between 1 and 2 Peter.

I wrote my masters thesis on the authorship of 2 Peter. I studied the arguments of the scholars who claimed that Peter could not have written both letters. Then I studied the vocabulary of 2 Corinthians 1–6 which is comparable in length and subject matter to 1 Peter. Next I studied a passage in 2 Corinthians 10–13 that is comparable in length and subject matter to 2 Peter. There was a seventy percent difference in vocabulary between the two passages in 2 Corinthians. The percentage of difference in the two 2 Corinthian passages was higher than the difference between 1 and 2 Peter. The study shows that the subject matter determines the vocabulary. The style of a letter is also determined by the subject matter. 1 and 2 Peter have different subjects, styles, and vocabulary, but Peter wrote both of the epistles.

If anybody in the early church knew the importance of being alert, it was the apostle Peter. He had a tendency in his early years to feel overconfident when danger was near and

to overlook the Master's warnings. He rushed ahead when he should have waited (cf. Matthew 17:4); he slept when he should have prayed (cf. Luke 22:45); and he talked when he should have listened (cf. Mark 14:71). He was a courageous, but a careless Christian. Peter grew spiritually and wrote to help other people mature spiritually.

First Peter was written to people who were facing persecution, and they needed to rely on the grace of God during persecution. Peter's second book was written to people who were facing false teachers as well as persecution. Peter knew these recipients needed to be prepared with knowledge. 2 Peter was written to the same people who had received his first letter: "*Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking*" (2 Peter 3:1). Peter wrote to remind Christians of Christ's promise to return again and to answer the objections of false teachers concerning the delay of His return (cf. 2 Peter 3:1–10).

Peter wrote this second letter around 67 A.D., about the time Nero burned the city of Rome and blamed the Christians. Peter is near death (cf. 2 Peter 1:12–15) and may have been in prison when he wrote his second letter. Historical tradition places Peter's death in Rome about 67 A.D.

Introduction

Peter wrote to remind Christians to apply full knowledge to their lives so they would not fall away. In 2 Peter 1:1–2 he refers to himself as a servant and an apostle:

*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who through the righteousness of our God
and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as
precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in
abundance through the knowledge of God and of
Jesus our Lord.*

Peter wrote that Christians could have a faith as precious as his was. This statement gives hope and encouragement. Peter saw Jesus perform miracles, heard Him teach, watched Him die on the cross, and saw Him after He was raised from the dead. Could the faith of Peter be equal to the faith of Christians who had never seen Jesus? Jesus told Thomas that scripture was written so people who had not seen Him would believe and have life in His name. John 20:29–31:

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” . . . But these [miracles, ed] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Even though no one alive has seen Jesus, a person can read the testimony of men who were with Jesus. As a result, one's faith can be just as strong and precious as Peter's faith was.

In his first epistle, Peter emphasized the grace of God (cf. 1 Peter 5:12). His second epistle emphasizes the knowledge of God. The word “*know*” or “*knowledge*” is used at least thirteen times in this short epistle.

Grace and peace come through the knowledge of God. There are two words in the Greek language for “*knowledge*.” The Greek word ***gnosis*** means knowledge of facts. The other Greek word ***epignosis*** is knowledge that has been incorporated into one's life. A person gets ***epignosis*** when he becomes what he ought to be. To a certain degree ***epignosis*** is personified as wisdom. The word ***epignosis*** does not mean a mere intellectual understanding of some truth, though that is included. It means a living participation in the same truth that Jesus stated in the prayer to His father: “*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*” (John 17:3).

The coming false teachers will not only teach a false ***gnosis***, a false knowledge, but they will also live a false knowledge, ***epignosis***. Their lives will be corrupt, according to the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ. The false teachers will teach both by their words and by their actions. That seems to be the reason that Peter emphasized experienced knowledge. 2 Peter is called the letter of experienced knowledge. When people live what they know, they experience grace and peace.

This author's mother-in-law taught her parakeet to quote scripture. The parakeet could quote some of the Great Commission.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19–20).

Suppose the parakeet could quote the entire passage, he would still be unable to incorporate the scripture into his life. Some Christians are like the parakeet. They can quote scripture, but they do not obey the scripture. They have the head knowledge, ***gnosis***, but they have not made the knowledge of God and Jesus a part of their lives, ***epignosis***. A “parakeet Christian” does not have abundant grace and peace through an experienced knowledge of Jesus Christ. The basis of a person’s relationship to God and Jesus stands firmly on experienced knowledge.

The Plan of Full Knowledge

Gift of the Plan of Full Knowledge

God’s divine power has given His children everything they need through the knowledge of Him. His gift is great and precious. Peter indicates this in 2 Peter 1:3–4:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

“*His divine power*” is the source of the experienced knowledge of God. The substance of the gift is “*everything we need for life and godliness.*” Through an experienced knowledge, *epignosis*, God has given Christians everything they need. The Bible is complete so Christians have everything they need. Paul tells us this in 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles to write everything that is needed. Scripture provides everything Christians need for life and godliness when they read, study, and apply it to their lives.

God has called Christians “*by His own glory and goodness.*” Paul asked God to give the Spirit so Christians could know Him better in Ephesians 1:17:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.

God is merciful and forgiving (cf. Daniel 9:9). God is holy (cf. Psalm 99:9). God’s goodness and glory call Christians to be

merciful, forgiving, and holy. Christians should imitate God, live as He lives, and incorporate His attributes into their lives.

It is through His glory and goodness mentioned in the previous verse that the great and precious promises are given. 2 Peter 1:4:

Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Christians participate in His divine nature when they obey the Gospel by being baptized into Christ and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead, divine in nature. Paul wrote that Christians are God's temple, and God's Spirit lives in them: "*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*" (1 Corinthians 3:16). What a marvelous blessing that Christians partake of His divine nature!

Christians also partake in God's divine nature when they make His love a part their lives: "*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him*" (1 John 4:16). God's very nature is love. Children of God can partake of His nature by loving other people. Experienced knowledge is living the way God lives. It is showing His love, His mercy, His kindness, and His humility to other people. Since God is holy, Christians need to be holy in order to partake of His divine nature. The attributes of God's divine nature should permeate the lives of His children.

There is another way to partake in the divine nature. At the resurrection a Christian's body will be transformed into the likeness of Jesus' body. Paul tells us in Philippians 3:20–21:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under

His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Christians eagerly await Jesus' return to receive their citizenship in heaven, to experience the transformation of their bodies, and to escape the corruption of the world through an experienced knowledge of Jesus.

Growth in the Plan of Full Knowledge

Peter exhorts Christians to grow because of “*his very great and precious promises*” mentioned in the previous verse. Children of God are encouraged to make every effort to do their part to avail themselves of God’s blessings. 2 Peter 1:5–7 tells us:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

Christians should “*make every effort*” to add these seven attributes to their faith. The phrase “*make every effort*” means “*to be diligent, to put forth an earnest effort*.” Children of God have got to work at living the Christian life because it is not an easy thing to do. They have to make a sincere effort to become like Jesus. The same is true of marriage. To have a good marriage, couples have to put forth an earnest effort. Christians have to work at their relationship with God to become more like Him.

The word “*add*” comes from a Greek word that means “*to supply a chorus with its needs*.” The word choreography comes from this Greek word. The Greek word came to be used as one who “provides or supports others in abundance.” A believer is to “furnish, supply, or support” his life of faith with the seven virtues.

The graces which adorn a Christian's character are to be chorused into a symphony to the pleasure of Him who made him. Faith is the foundation from which all other virtues spring: "*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6). "Goodness" is "*moral excellence or the determination to do what is right.*" Goodness should be added to a Christian's belief in God. Paul wrote the Galatian Christians and told them to live by the Spirit. One of the fruit of the Spirit is goodness (cf. Galatians 5:16, 22). Knowledge is built upon goodness and faith. "Knowledge" means "*correct insight.*" Children of God should add knowledge to their faith and goodness.

"Self-control" means "*to discipline one's self.*" Solomon wrote that fools despise wisdom and discipline: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline*" (Proverbs 1:7). God wants His children to practice self-discipline so their lives will be orderly: "*Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control*" (Proverbs 25:28). God gives self-control to Christians who seek it: "*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline*" (2 Timothy 1:7).

"Perseverance" means "*to bear up under trials.*" Only Christians who discipline themselves are able to persevere in the trials of life. Christians who persevere have done the will of God and will receive the eternal reward: "*You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised*" (Hebrews 10:36). God's children should add perseverance to their self-control, knowledge, goodness, and faith.

"Godliness" means "*godly character out of devotion to God, humble reverence, and deep piety toward God.*" Sometimes unbelievers show patience toward the trials of life, but without devotion toward God. The desire to be godlike should be the motive for the actions of all Christians: "*But godliness with contentment is great gain*"

(1 Timothy 6:6). Godliness is valuable for this life and for the life to come: “*For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come*” (1 Timothy 4:8).

“Brotherly kindness” is from the Greek word *philedelphia* which means “*love of the brethren.*” Paul encouraged the Roman brethren to show brotherly kindness by placing others higher than themselves: “*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves*” (Romans 12:10). Paul commended the Thessalonian Christians for loving all the Macedonian brethren and encouraged them to show more love: “*And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more*” (1 Thessalonians 4:10).

“Love” means “*active goodwill toward those in need.*” A warmhearted affection for the brethren is to lead to love, not only for the brethren, but for all men. Love is the crown jewel of all graces: “*. . . But the greatest of these is love*” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Paul wrote that love binds all the virtues together: “*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity*” (Colossians 3:14).

Peter’s intention was to show that each of these attributes is produced by the preceding one. Each attribute makes possible the next one. Christians who strive to develop these qualities in their lives will participate in His divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

A Christian receives value when he adds these qualities to his life in increasing measure as we are assured in 2 Peter 1:8:

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A Christian who grows in the knowledge of Jesus will be neither idle nor unfruitful. Christians who are ineffective, useless, and unproductive, do not have these qualities in their lives. To become productive, energetic Christians, people need to develop these Christlike qualities in their lives. Then they will be motivated to become faithful servants of Jesus Christ. Every Christian should regularly examine his life to determine the attributes that needs to be increased. People of God need to increase their faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love so they can multiply in good works for God.

Failure to grow in full knowledge results in spiritual myopia (blindness) and amnesia (loss of memory): “*But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins*” (2 Peter 1:9). There are many nearsighted and blind people in the church who have forgotten that Jesus cleansed them from all sin. They have spiritual amnesia. They have forgotten that the Lord has forgiven their sins completely: “*Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him*” (Romans 4:8). The myopic conditions renders people unable to look directly into the light, thus hindering their sight, but the man who walks by faith has vision. Christians have short-sighted spiritual lives if they are not growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. A person who does not grow in Christ has forgotten what Christ did for him at baptism. He has forgotten that Jesus’ blood took away all his sin, and he received the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38). A person who remembers his salvation will serve God out of gratitude for the rest of his life. He will show appreciation to God by making every effort to be like the Son.

When a person develops these qualities in his life, he will make his “*calling and election sure*.”

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these

things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:10 –11).

“*All the more eager*” means “*to hasten.*” Great haste, zeal, or earnestness is needed in pursuit of those attributes essential to the Christian life.

If a Christian continues to incorporate these qualities into his life, he will never fall away. That person will also have a rich welcome in heaven. This assurance of salvation does not mean a person will never sin (cf. 1 John 1:8,10). Paul wrote that all men sin: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). A Christian will never fall if he earnestly grows in the knowledge of Christ, and thereby makes his “*calling and election sure.*” Salvation is a “*calling*” and an “*election.*” It is God who calls by His Gospel: “*...from the beginning God chose you to be saved ... He called you ...*” (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14). God’s “*calling*” is the invitation; the “*election*” is man’s acceptance.

Remembrance of the Plan of Full Knowledge

Peter wrote to remind the recipients of the truths that were already known to them. 2 Peter 1:12–14:

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

To stir up their minds to remembrance is an apostolic duty. Man has a tendency to forget the lessons of the past, and the truth once received may become dim. There is, therefore, a responsibility to preach, teach, encourage, and exhort tirelessly (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2).

Peter was by now an old man and must have known that the time of his death was near. He wrote this letter to leave a permanent document for Christians to have after his death. Peter looked at himself as living in a tent, an outward body, which would one day decay in the grave. Peter also knew that His spirit would live eternally with God (cf. Psalm 49:15) because Jesus had told His apostles that man cannot kill the soul. *“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matthew 10:28).

The phrase “*put it aside*” referred to Peter’s approaching death. The same Greek word is used when the Israelites exited Egypt and traveled toward Canaan. Peter knew that he would soon depart this life. Jesus had told Peter about his death before Jesus ascended into heaven. In John 21:18–19 Jesus told Peter:

... but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Paul wrote that death was a blessing. *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21). For a Christian, death is departing one life to go to another life.

The Testimony of Apostolic Eyewitnesses

Peter saw Jesus’ majesty with his own eyes; he was an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry and he reminds his readers of this in 2 Peter 1:16:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Peter was not influenced by skillful, deceiving men who told untrue stories. Peter and the other apostles were with Jesus during His ministry. They were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life.

Peter wrote about the Father's display of love for His Son that was given at the transfiguration.

For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain (2 Peter 1:17–18).

Luke wrote a description of what happened when Jesus was transfigured (cf. Luke 9:28–36). Jesus' face changed and His clothes were as bright as a flash of lightning. Elijah and Moses appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They were discussing Jesus' departure. Peter wanted to build shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, but the Voice from heaven indicated that Jesus was the chosen one and people should listen to Him.

The Word of prophecy further confirmed what Peter had witnessed at the transfiguration. 2 Peter 1:19 tells us:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

The Word of the prophets is additional evidence that would strengthen the existing faith of the recipients.

Apostasy From Full Knowledge I

2 Peter 1:19–2:3

Introduction

One of the most successful rackets in the world today is that of selling “fake art.” Even some of the finest galleries and private collections have been invaded by paintings that are clever counterfeits of the great masters. Publishers have also had their share of hoaxes, purchasing “genuine” manuscripts that weren’t so genuine after all.

Counterfeits are nothing new. Satan is the “great imitator” (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13–15). He has been hard at work ever since he deceived Eve in the garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 3:1–7; 2 Corinthians 11:3–4). He has false Christians (cf. Matthew 13:38–39), a false gospel (cf. Galatians 1:6–9), and even a false righteousness (cf. Romans 9:30 – 10:4).

The nation of Israel was constantly being led astray by false prophets. Elijah had to contend with the prophets of Baal, but they promoted a pagan religion, not a false version of God’s Law (cf. 1 Kings 18). It was the Jewish false prophets who did the most damage by claiming to speak for Jehovah God. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel exposed this counterfeit ministry, but the people continued to follow the pseudo-prophets. The religion of the false prophets was easy, comfortable, and popular. The fact that the false prophets preached a false peace did not worry the people (cf. Jeremiah 6:14). The false message was what the people wanted to hear!

The apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church and then passed from the scene (cf. Ephesians 2:20). Peter wrote about the false teachers to alert the church to the danger of being led astray.

The Testimony of Divinely Originated Prophecy

The Certainty of the Prophetic Word

Peter's words are inspired prophecy just like the words of the Old Testament prophets. Peter reminds us in 2 Peter 1:19:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Peter is a prophet; he revealed God's will by inspiration. Peter is saying, we apostles have the prophetic word "more certain" than the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament prophets saw dimly, not with absolute knowledge. They saw part of what would happen. They saw the Christ coming as Messiah, but not clearly.

The apostles wrote what they actually saw. They saw the Messiah in flesh. They touched Him, walked with Him, saw the miracles that He performed, and heard Him teach. The apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus, but the Old Testament prophets were not eyewitnesses of Him. That makes the prophecy of the apostles "more certain."

Christians should still carefully study the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul commanded Timothy to do so in 2 Timothy 3:14–15:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know

those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Old Testament Scripture is like “*light shining in a dark place.*” Like apostolic testimony, they help to confirm faith in Jesus Christ. Old Testament Scripture helps the Christian become “*wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15). Everything that was written in the past was written to teach Christians as well as the Israelites (cf. Romans 15:4). They will serve such a purpose “*until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*” This is likely a reference to the second coming of Jesus as described by John as “*the bright Morning Star*” (cf. Revelation 22:16). Jesus’ return will be seen by all (cf. Revelation 1:7), but will be appreciated most fully in the hearts of those who anxiously await Him!

The Old Testament prophets words are certain. 2 Peter 1:20–21 tells us:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Old Testament prophets when they prophesied, were not prophesying their own ideas. The ideas they gave did not originate with them nor was it their interpretation of what they thought God’s will was. It was actually God’s word because they spoke only what the Holy Spirit moved them to say (cf. Jeremiah 23:16, Ezekiel 13:3).

New Testament prophets’ words are from God. They not only spoke of what they actually saw, their eyewitness testimony, but they also had the Holy Spirit guiding them. New Testament prophets had the Holy Spirit, as the Old

Testament prophets did, to remind them of what they saw and heard. An eyewitness to an event may later forget exactly what he saw, but the New Testament prophets had the Holy Spirit to remind them of everything that Jesus had said and done: “*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*” (John 14:26). Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide the His disciples into all truth: “*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth . . .*” (John 16:12–13). The writings of the Apostles Peter and Paul are not their opinions, but their writings are the will of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit inspired them: “*If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command*” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul wrote that he did not receive the Gospel from man, but from God: “. . . [God, ed] was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man” (Galatians 1:15–16). There is assurance that scripture is an accurate record of the will of God. Paul told his young co-worker and us in 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The scriptures are a complete record of God’s will; they make a person perfect and complete. The scriptures equip Christians for every good work that they want to do. There are some works that people do which cannot be found in scripture and thus are not biblical. Some people worship Mary, burn incense, and pray to the dead. These are not good works because they are not found in scripture.

When people read scripture, they are reading the mind of God, the Word of God. The Bible is complete and accurate in

every way. A person can have complete assurance that when he follows apostolic teachings as recorded in scripture, he is doing the will of God. In no other place or book can man have access to the will and mind of God.

The Destructiveness Of False Teachers

Old Testament Examples

Peter wrote about the destructiveness of false teachers. Peter warned Christians about people who leave the standard of truth revealed in scripture. He cautioned Christians to beware of men who teach things other than what is in the Bible.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves (2 Peter 2:1).

In times past false prophets lead the people of Israel astray, so false teachers were to be expected among the Christians. There are a number of false prophets in the Old Testament.

In First Kings 22 Zedekiah claimed that King Ahab could go to battle against the Syrians and completely defeat them. He illustrated his prophecy by picking up some iron bars saying the iron bars would push the Syrians away and defeat them. Micaiah, a true prophet of God, told King Ahab that he saw Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Micaiah told King Ahab that Israel would be defeated. King Ahab was furious and did not want to believe Micaiah even though Micaiah's prophesies always came true. He wanted to believe Zedekiah because Zedekiah told him he would win. False prophets tell people what they want to hear. King Ahab went to battle against the Syrians, was completely defeated, and lost his life. Had King Ahab

listened to the true prophet of God, he would have been spared defeat and death.

Jeremiah, a true prophet of God, told the people that God was going to let the Babylonians take His people into captivity for seventy years (cf. Jeremiah 25:9, 11). Hananiah, a false prophet, told King Zedekiah what he wanted to hear. Jeremiah 28:2–3 records this for us:

“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon.’”

Because Hananiah deliberately lied, God took his life. Jeremiah’s prophecy came true when King Nebuchadnezzar took the nation of Judah to Babylon for seventy years.

New Testament Examples and Warnings

Jesus predicted the coming of false prophets who would cause many to fall away: “*... and many **false prophets** will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold*” (Matthew 24:11–12). Jesus warned His disciples to watch for false teachers who are like ferocious wolves: “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them . . .*” (Matthew 7:15–16). The way false prophets live will identify them as false prophets.

Paul also predicted that some Christians will abandon the faith because of false prophets.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come

through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:1–2).

Paul warned the Ephesian elders to keep watch over themselves and the flock.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock (Acts 20:28–29).

This is an indication that even leaders in the church can be guilty of leading the people into apostasy, a departure from God's will.

In the Greek language the term “*false teacher*” is *pseudodidaskalos* which is defined as “*a spurious teacher*.” A “*false teacher*” is a propagator of erroneous Christian doctrine. The term “*false teacher*” is found no other place in the Bible. Peter’s use of this term strongly suggests that it means more than someone who happens to teach error out of ignorance of the truth (someone sincerely mistaken). Peter wrote about those “*false teacher*” who know full well what they are doing and are purposely trying to mislead others. There are blind men who lead the blind (cf. Matthew 15:13–14), but Peter is not describing blind leaders, but individuals much more sinister.

Destructive Heresies

The evil, corrupt people “*will secretly introduce destructive heresies*.” “*Heresy*” is usually defined as “*a false doctrine*.” In the Greek language the word “*heresy*” comes from the word *heresis* which means “*an opinion*.” Not all opinions are bad. Sometimes people speculate on things the scriptures have not said. They have opinions or

interpretations that are not absolute, but that alone does not mean they are destructive.

The description of “*false teachers*” fits perfectly the description of the gnostic teachers in Asia Minor, modern Turkey, during the life of John the apostle. John wrote to refute the gnostic teachers. The word “*gnostics*” comes from the Greek word *gnosis* which means “*knowledge*.” The gnostics emphasized knowledge, but a special hidden knowledge which they believed they alone possessed. They thought that matter is evil, but the spirit is good. They believed that an evil god created the world because it is material. They had two gods: an evil god who created the world and a spirit god who was good. Gnostics believed that since matter is evil, a person should not touch it.

One school of Gnosticism were ascetics who abstained from everything. They would not eat meat because they believed it was material. They would not marry because they believed that anything fleshly was evil. There was another school of Gnosticism that taught that matter is evil, and since bodies are matter, they are evil. They believed that when a person is saved, only the spirit is saved, not the body. Therefore, the body can commit sin and still the spirit will be saved. They liked to illustrate this theory with a gold nugget. The gnostics would throw a gold nugget into the mud. When they got the gold nugget out of the mud, they would say that it was still gold. The fact that it was in the mud did not destroy the value of the gold. They believed if a Christian wallows in the mire of sin it will not affect him because his spirit will be saved. The illustration is faulty because the Bible has examples of people who turned from God and His Spirit left them. The Holy Spirit left King Saul because he rebelled against God (cf. 1 Samuel 16:14). When Christians wallow in sin and refuse to repent, there will be wrath and anger (cf. Romans 2:8).

The gnostics also taught that the Holy Spirit did not come upon Jesus until His baptism and at that point He became the Christ and the Holy Spirit left Jesus before He died on the cross and ceased being the Christ. And so they

reasoned that Christ did not die on the cross, only the man Jesus. They even denied that the resurrection occurred and that Jesus died for sinners. The gnostic teachers deluded Christians, convincing them to indulge in sin, deny the resurrection of the Lord and deny their future resurrection. The gnostic teachers were “*false teachers*” who secretly introduced “*destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord.*” John wrote about “*false teachers*” who denied Jesus Christ (cf. 2 John 7).

The phrase “*who bought them*” indicates that the “*false teachers*” were Christians at one time. They are later described as those who had “*escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior*” (cf. 2 Peter 2:20).

Fruit of Their Destructive Doctrines

The church receives a bad reputation when Christians follow the world instead of following the Lord: “*Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute*” (2 Peter 2:2). When Christians indulge in sin, and it is discovered, it makes people of the world think that is the way all Christians behave. Their behavior causes people of the world not to want to become Christians. It is sad when Christianity is judged by the bad behavior of a few Christians rather than by the good behavior of many Christians.

No Christian is perfect. There is no man who can boast that he has no sin for every person sins and falls short of the Glory of God (cf. Romans 3:23). Christians are justified by grace and must have a sincere intent to live for Him. When they do sin, they must repent so the blood of Jesus will purify them from their sin (cf. 1 John 1:7).

Peter predicted, what Jude later wrote, about false teachers who changed the grace of God and denied Jesus. Jude 4:

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our

God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

When you read the book of Jude you will find a fulfillment of the predictions of Peter. Jude wrote of the fulfilment of what Peter predicted.

Destructive Methods

The false teachers had not yet exploited the Christians when Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:3:

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Peter wrote that the false teachers will exploit (future tense) Christians. Jude wrote “*that godless men have [past tense, ed] secretly slipped in among you.*” These men are already in their midst when Jude wrote. Jude wrote that the apostles foretold the coming of the scoffers.

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit (Jude 17–19).

Jude described these teachers the same way Peter did. Jude is the first person to quote 2 Peter as an inspired, apostolic document. Jude shows the fulfillment of Peter’s prophecy. Peter is a true prophet because he said false teachers would come, and they came. The book of Jude is the fulfillment of Peter’s prophecy.

Peter wrote “. . .*these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.*” The false prophets tell stories that are untrue. The gnostic teachers had stories that they had made up. “*In their greed these teachers will exploit you*” characterize men who exploit people for their own selfish interests. They work “*secretly*” (cf. 2 Peter 2:1). Knowing that error cannot stand the light of the truth, false teachers resort to working behind the scenes. Truth has nothing to fear from investigation, so if a person believes they have the truth, they will not object to open and fair evaluation. If a teacher is not willing to let his doctrine be examined openly by others, let that be a warning sign.

The false teachers will appeal to covetousness. “*In their greed these teachers will exploit . . .*” Trained in covetousness themselves, they will allure through the “*lust of the flesh.*” They are experts in greed: “*With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood!*” (2 Peter 2:14). The false teachers will offer things that the flesh often desires: wealth, health, power, and influence.

Knowing how false teachers work, Christians are less likely to be deceived by them. Being well-grounded in the truth of the Gospel is the best protection against being misled!

Apostasy From Full Knowledge II

Punishment of Apostasy

2 Peter 2:4–19

Introduction

The subject of 1 Peter is grace, and the subject of 2 Peter is experienced knowledge. The basis of a person's relationship to God is founded upon experienced knowledge according to 2 Peter 1. A full knowledge comes by developing Christ-like attributes which will keep one from being ineffective and unproductive. In 2 Peter 2 Christians are warned that false teachers will arise leading many astray and that the false teachers will face certain condemnation.

Peter saw no hope for the apostates; their doom was sealed. His attitude was different from that of "tolerant" religious people today who say that there are many roads to Heaven. Examples of God's righteous judgment in the past will be studied in this chapter. Temptations and trials will be examined. The character of first century false teachers will be compared to modern day teachers of false doctrines.

Punishment of Apostasy

Punishment of False Teachers

The condemnation of the false teachers was instituted long ago: ". . . *Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping*" (2 Peter 2:3). God has always condemned false teachers. "*Their*

destruction has not been sleeping" means their destruction has never ceased to exist. The false teachers are continually punished.

The Angels Who Sinned

Peter wrote that God cast the angels who sinned into hell: "*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment*" (2 Peter 2:4). The Greek word for "hell" is **tartaroo**. **Tartaroo** is not the word that Jesus used for hell. Jesus used the word **gehenna**. **Gehenna** means "*the valley of the sons of Hinnom*." King Manasseh sacrificed his sons in the Valley of Ben Hinnom (cf. 2 Chronicles 33:6). When his son, Josiah, became king, he destroyed the place of sacrifice so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire (cf. 2 Kings 23:10). This valley became the common receptacle for the refuse of Jerusalem. There was always fire burning the garbage, and it became a figure for the final resting place of the wicked. Jesus used the word **gehenna** when He said the soul and the body go to hell, not just the soul: "*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matthew 10:28). **Gehenna** is the final resting place of the wicked after the final judgment.

Tartarus is the Greek word translated as "hell" in 2 Peter 2:4. **Tartarus** was the word that the Greeks used to refer to the lowest section of the Hadean world where dead spirits went. It was the place where most of the punishment was given in the Hadean realm. Jesus said that when Lazarus died, the angels carried him to Abraham's side, but the rich man went to **Hades** when he died (cf. Luke 16:22–23). The word **Hades** means "*the unseen realm of the dead spirits*." **Hades** is the place where the spirit goes when the body is buried. **Hell** is the place where the raised body will join the spirit after the final judgment. Before the final judgment a person's spirit goes either to Paradise, where Lazarus, Jesus, and the thief on the cross went (cf. Luke 23:43), or it goes to

Hades, where the angels and the rich man went (cf. Luke 16:23).

There is a great chasm between these two realms, and no one can cross over from one realm to the other (cf. Luke 16:26). The dead are held in these realms until judgment day. Peter wrote that the angels were cast into **Hades** for judgment. Since they had already been judged, why were they being “*held for judgment?*” The American court system illustrates this situation. When a man commits murder, he is brought before the court and found guilty. At a later time he receives his sentence. If he receives a death sentence, he is placed in prison and may wait many years before his execution. In the same way God has reserved punishment for wicked people who have died and their spirits are in **Hades** awaiting the final judgment day.

Isaiah wrote about the end of the world and the punishments that kings and angels will receive. Isaiah 24:21–22:

In that day the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days.

The “*powers in the heavens above*” that will be punished are angels. The angels will be “*herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days.*” Peter wrote of the same punishment for angels that Isaiah wrote about many years before. Both men wrote that angels that sinned were put in a dungeon until the great judgment day to await punishment. Peter is not revealing a new doctrine. He is confirming the truths that Isaiah wrote. Peter’s argument is from the greater to the lesser. If God did not spare angels who beheld His glory when they sinned, He will certainly punish false teachers who purposely lead His people astray!

The Ancient World

Peter wrote another example of the punishment given to sinful people: “. . . if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others” (2 Peter 2:5). “The ancient world” is the antediluvian world, the time before the flood. The Lord was grieved that he had made man because the people were so wicked (cf. Genesis 6:5–6). Jesus preached through Noah to the unrighteous people. The people continued to disobey so they died in the flood, and their spirits were sent to prison (cf. 1 Peter 3:19). Peter wrote that their spirits were still in **Hades** awaiting the final judgment day. God used the flood to judge the ungodly. If God destroyed the unrighteous people in Noah’s day, will He not still destroy the false teachers who “secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord.”

The same flood that was used to destroy the world was used to “protect Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.” Noah believed God and did everything just as God commanded him: “. . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). Eight people were saved and are in **Paradise** awaiting their resurrection to eternal life. Christians can be encouraged to remain faithful for two reasons. Not only will God bring doom upon false teachers, but He will protect those who remain faithful.

The Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah

Peter gives a third example of the result of ungodly behavior in 2 Peter 2:6–8:

. . . if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day

after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)

God burned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because their sins were so grievous (cf. Genesis 19:24). Lot and Abraham separated because their herdsmen were quarreling. Lot chose the whole plain of the Jordan where Sodom and Gomorrah were located (cf. Genesis 13:11). Later when the Lord told Abraham that He was going to destroy the cities, Abraham pleaded with God to spare them.

Two angels went to Sodom, and Lot was hospitable to them even though he was not aware that he was entertaining angels. The New Testament writer may have been referring to Lot when he wrote: “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it*” (Hebrews 13:2). All of the men of Sodom surrounded Lot’s house and asked Lot to bring out the guests so they could have sex with them (cf. Genesis 19:5). The men of Sodom were homosexuals. This scripture shows how depraved the men were.

Ezekiel wrote that the people of Sodom were arrogant, overfed, haughty, and unconcerned; they did detestable things. That is the reason God decided to destroy them (cf. Ezekiel 16:49–50). They are now spirits in prison. Jude 7:

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.

Lot was delivered because he was “righteous.” The adjective “righteous” is used three times by Peter (cf. 2 Peter 2:7–8). Lot was distressed by the filthy lives of the

men of Sodom. and was tormented by their lawless deeds. Like Noah, Lot had been found righteous (cf. Genesis 7:1).

Peter's Assurance to Christians

God will rescue the righteous. 2 Peter 2:9:

. . . if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

The angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters safely out of the city of Sodom. Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, but Lot and his daughters were saved because they trusted in the word of the angels (cf. Genesis 19:26). Lot thought he was making a better choice than Abraham when he chose the plain of the Jordan, but he found an evil environment that tormented his soul. God delivered Lot and his daughters as he had delivered Noah and his family.

Peter's words should encourage Christians to remain faithful to the Lord and warn other people to live pure and righteous lives. Children of God who live in an evil society need to be tormented by the evil like Lot was. When Christians become calloused and accept the evil around them, it will eventually destroy them. May God's children never be happy with the evil about them. May they constantly be agitated in their souls so they will teach God's truth in order to bring people out of darkness into the Light.

The angels who sinned, the evil people of Noah's day, and the sexually immoral men of Sodom are examples of people who are being held "*for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*" The judgment and destruction of false teachers does not slumber. God's judgments of evil people in the past guarantee that there is the day of judgment in the future for all people! Those who remain faithful to the Lord will be spared eternal punishment.

The Picture of Apostasy

The Character of the False Teachers

There are two characteristics given of false teachers: “*This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority*” (2 Peter 2:10a). The false teachers like to satisfy the lusts of their flesh, and they despise authority because they do not want anyone telling them what to do. This daring, self-willed behavior is typical of society today: do your own thing; don’t let anyone tell you what to do. Run your own life; it is nobody else’s business what you do. Yet the sinful behavior of people is the concern of other people. The actions of sinful people affects other people. Sin affects relationships, especially with God. These people showed arrogance, selfishness, and pride, which God despises.

The false teachers were bold and arrogant. 2 Peter 2:10b–11:

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.

The sinful, proud men reviled angelic majesties. Even though God’s angels are more powerful and higher, the men were not afraid to slander them. Gnostic teachers taught in the first century that the god that created the world was evil. In their ignorance they slandered celestial beings and God. They were ignorant that the God, who created the world, was the Father of Jesus Christ and is good, pure, and holy.

Like unreasoning animals, the false teachers revile without knowledge. 2 Peter 2:12 speaks of their character:

But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of

instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

The false teachers were unreasoning animals born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed. The sinful teachers were to perish like brute beasts. Jude wrote that the archangel Michael did not dare bring a slanderous accusation against the devil when he disputed with the devil over Moses' body. Michael left the rebuking of the devil to the Lord (cf. Jude 9). Yet these evil men do what even angels fear to do when they blaspheme God.

Peter wrote that the false teachers will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. 2 Peter 2:13:

They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.

Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight; they sin openly and have no shame. They are blots and blemishes reveling in their pleasures while they feast with Christians on the Lord's day.

Their eyes are full of corrupt desires so that they never stop sinning: “*With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood!*” (2 Peter 2:14). Their eyes are full of adultery. These men looked at women as means of satisfying their own carnal lusts. Jesus taught that a man should not even look upon a woman lustfully: “*... anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matthew 5:28). Adultery begins in the mind; sin begins in a person's heart. When a person keeps a pure heart, sin will be far away.

They prey on the unstable. A woman having difficulty in her marriage may seek counsel. The counselor may takes advantage of her situation and use her for his own selfish

lusts. That is the absolute opposite behavior from what Jesus Christ wants a Christian counselor to have. A Christian counselor should help people by strengthening marriages not destroying them. He should strengthen an unstable woman not take advantage of her. The counselor should look at the woman with spiritual eyes instead of carnal eyes. It is amazing how many false prophets and teachers commit this particular sin. Many televangelist, who have reputed themselves to be prophets and ministers of God, have seduced the unstable.

The evil teachers covet what other people have: “*...they are experts in greed—an accursed brood!*” (2 Peter 2:14b). It is amazing how many false prophets are greedy. They use their ministry to gain a fortune for themselves. Their only purpose is to make money. Their ministry is not to preach Christ or to minister to people.

I heard a so-called prophet on a television program say that every year God had appeared to him in a vision and told him that he needed to go to Mount Calvary in Jerusalem to preach his Easter sermon. The televangelist said that God had told him that the audience must give the money for him to make the trip. The television prophet told the people to send money so he could make the trip. He appealed for money in every one of his programs. False prophets frequently ask for money. Peter and Paul preached the Gospel and the church took care of their needs. Paul collected a special contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem (cf. Romans 15:26).

The false teachers left the straight way.

They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey – a beast without speech – who spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness (2 Peter 2:15–16).

Balaam was a true prophet of God. The king of Moab wanted Balaam to curse Israel. King Balak saw all that had been done to the Amorites, and he was terrified of the Israelites. King Balak asked Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on the Israelites. Balak offered Balaam the fee for divination. When Balaam asked God for direction, God told him not to put a curse on the people. King Balak sent more men with a handsome reward to persuade Balaam to curse the Israelites, but Balaam refused again. That night God came to Balaam and told him to go, but Balaam was to do only what God said. The next morning the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose Balaam and his donkey. The donkey saw the angel three times and refused to go. Balaam beat his donkey each time. The donkey spoke to Balaam in a human voice, and God opened Balaam's eye to see the angel with his sword ready to kill Balaam. When Balaam went to the king of Moab, he told the king that he would only speak what God put in his mouth (cf. Numbers 22).

The Moabites prepared altars for sacrificing, but every time Balaam prophesied, he would reveal God's message—a blessing instead of a curse. In one of Balaam's prophesies he predicts that a star will come out of Jacob, the Messiah. God turned every curse into a blessing. King Balak was furious because Balaam would not curse the Israelites (cf. Numbers 23–24). Balaam was willing to go and curse Israel despite the warnings he received from God. Balaam desired the money which the Moabite messengers brought. Balaam spoke God's truth, but his heart was not right. Peter wrote about teachers who were like Balaam because they desired personal gain for teaching a false Gospel.

There were people in the church in Pergamum who held to the teaching of Balaam.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality (Revelation 2:14).

Balaam taught Balak to entice the Israelites. When the Israelite men indulged in sexual immorality with Moabite women, they began to worship Baal. You can read of this in Numbers 25:1–3:

While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them.

God was angry with the Israelite men for committing sexual immorality with the Moabite women and being drawn to foreign gods.

Peter describes these false teachers: “*These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them*” (2 Peter 2:17). Sometimes clouds come across the sky and rain seems certain, but not a drop of water comes. That is the way the false teachers are. Their teaching is empty and worthless. They present themselves as teachers of truth, but they are “*springs without water*.” Tired and thirsty travelers hasten only to be met with disappointment.

The false teachers spoke empty, arrogant words.

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error (2 Peter 2:18).

Their words are vain, hollow, and without substance. Their purpose was to allure new converts and lead them astray. The converts had escaped “*from those who live in error*” only to be thrown into the shadows of their former way of life.

The teachers promised freedom, but they were enslaved in sin. “*They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him*” (2 Peter 2:19). They interpreted the freedom from sin to include the privilege of indulgence. While offering freedom to others, the false teachers were enslaved to sin. A man is a slave of that which overcomes him.

Peter wrote that “false teachers” will arise, leading many to follow their destructive ways. Peter made it clear that these false teachers had “*forsaken the right way*” meaning they were going the “*wrong way*.” Their judgment was sure, even though it had not yet come.

The Hope of Full Knowledge

2 Peter 3:1–18

Introduction

“Every body is ignorant,” said Will Rogers, “only on different subjects.” How true, but there is more than one kind of ignorance. Some people are ignorant because of lack of opportunity to learn, or perhaps lack of ability to learn. Other people are “*willingly . . . ignorant*” (cf. 2 Peter 3:5).

Peter wrote about the character and conduct of the false teachers in 2 Peter 2. Their false teachings and the certainty of Christ’s second coming are the subjects in this last chapter. How important it is for Christians to understand God’s truth! Today there are scoffers who reject the Bible teachings on Christ’s return and the certainty of judgment. In chapter three Peter admonished Christians to understand that God’s Word is true and consistent, and God’s will is merciful.

Product of Apostasy

The Ultimate Outcome of Apostasy

The false teachers that Peter wrote about in 2 Peter 2 were described as “*springs without water*.” Their words were boastful and appealed to the lustful desires of human nature. The false teachers enticed new converts, people who were new in the faith. Young Christians do not usually have a lot of Biblical knowledge; they have not grown and

matured in the faith. The false teachers preyed on new Christians because of their lack of experience and knowledge. New converts can be lead astray easily, but older, mature Christians cannot be swayed as easily. Older converts will be able to refute false teachings and will be better prepared to resist lustful temptations.

The false teachers promised freedom, but they were slaves to depravity. Evil people still promise freedom: “do anything you want if it feels good; take drugs! give in to lustful desires! overeat! drink as much alcohol as you wish!” Many people who have run after freedom have found that it leads to slavery. A person ends up a slave to whatever masters him. A person can become a slave to sin or a slave to God.

The false teachers had formerly escaped the corruption of the world, but were again entangled in it.

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

(2 Peter 2:20)

How does a person escape the corruption of the world? A person’s escape is by the full knowledge of the Lord. His escape is only through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. When a person is baptized into Christ, his sins are washed away, and he is freed from sin and death. He becomes a child of God and escapes the corruption of the world.

What happens when a person is again entangled in the corruption of the world? Peter uses a fisherman’s term, “*entangled*,” to suggest the figure of a fish entrapped in a net. Though these men boasted of their freedom, they were helplessly captive. Imagine a fish that is entangled in a net. Then the fish is set free to roam the ocean once again, but he later swims back to that same net and becomes entangled. This is what happens to a new convert who escapes the

corruption of the world, receives the forgiveness of his sins, and then goes back into the world and gets entangled. He is destroyed in the process and is worse off at the end than he was at the beginning. Jesus talked about an evil spirit that came out of a man. The evil spirit returned and found the house unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order. The evil spirit then returned with seven other spirits more evil than it is. The final condition of the man is worse than the first. Jesus said that is how it will be with this wicked generation (cf. Matthew 12:43–45). A Christian needs to continually grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ so he can resist the entanglement of sin.

The Tragedy of Unused Knowledge

It would have been better not to have known the way than to have known it and turned away says Peter in 2 Peter 2:21:

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

The word “*known*” is not the Greek word **gnosko** which means “*to know facts*.” The word “*known*” in this text is the Greek word **epignosko** which means “*to know in an experiential way*.” **Epignosko** means “*to experience what is known*.” The teachers had experienced the knowledge of salvation. They had enjoyed a clear perception of the principles of Christ, but they “*turned their backs on the sacred command*.” It was better for the false teachers not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to have turned their backs on the sacred command. A person who becomes a Christian and later leaves Christianity is going to be in a worse state than he was before he became a Christian. He has greater knowledge than he had before he became a Christian: “. . . *From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded;*

and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48). The judgment of God will be based upon the knowledge and opportunities that a person has. If a person has more knowledge and opportunity, God will judge him more severely.

Jesus said that some people will be beaten with many blows while other people will receive fewer blows.

That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows (Luke 12:47–48a).

One group of people will be punished more severely because they had more knowledge. When a Christian, who had a knowledge of his master’s will, falls away, he will be judged with greater severity. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah will be treated less severely in the day of judgment than the people of Capernaum who saw the miracles of Jesus. The people of Capernaum had more opportunity and knowledge (cf. Matthew 11:23–24). It is so dangerous to become a Christian and then fall away. It would better not to have even become a Christian than to become a Christian and fall away. Therefore, when a person becomes a Christian, he should commit himself wholly to Jesus and never turn back. He should remain faithful to the end knowing he will be judged with greater severity.

Peter wrote two proverbs for illustration: “*Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud’*” (2 Peter 2:22). The first part of the verse is taken from Proverbs 26:11: “*As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.*” It is horrible to think about a dog who eats his vomit or a clean pig who jumps back into the slime once again. It is even more horrible when a

Christian returns to the mire of sin. It is tragic! If a Christian continues to develop the eight qualities given in 2 Peter 1:5–7, he will not become entangled in sin again.

Hope of Full Knowledge

Defense of the Hope of Full Knowledge

It appears that Peter was close to the recipients of his letter, calling them “*dear friends.*” This is Peter’s second letter of reminder. 2 Peter 3:1–3:

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

Peter wrote to warn about the false teachers and their message. Peter wanted the people to recall the words spoken by the prophets and Jesus’ commands given through the apostles. Peter predicted that scoffers would come mocking the second coming of Jesus and following their own lusts.

Peter wrote about the arguments the scoffers were giving concerning the final coming of Christ and the resurrection: “*They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’*” (2 Peter 3:4). Remember the earlier statement that the gnostic teachers denied the resurrection. There have been many other people since that time who have denied the final coming of Christ. The scoffers statement is a uniformitarian doctrine. A uniformitarian doctrine states that everything continues at the same rate. Evolutionists say that people

have been on earth four billion years because everything now existing has always existed and has developed at the same rate. That assumption is not true. The arguments of evolutionists are discussed in the Apologetics course.

Peter refutes the uniformitarian doctrine in the next verses. In 2 Peter 5–6 he speaks of the deliberate ignorance of God's word.

But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

The scoffers have forgotten two events in the past. First, the scoffers overlooked the formation of the heavens and the earth in the beginning. The earth was formed out of water and by water when God spoke (cf. Genesis 1:9). This is rather interesting because scientists state that at one time the entire earth was covered with water. There was a huge amount of water covering the entire earth by which God formed the valleys, the mountains, the underwater springs, and the rivers. All this was done by the mighty power of God using water as the means by which he formed the earth. If the whole world was covered by water at one time, then things have not always been the same.

When the author grew up in Amarillo, Texas, he would climb the nearby Palo Dura Canyon and find sea shells. Scientists state that at one time that entire area was an ocean. Yet Amarillo is about 3600 feet above sea level. The ocean could not get 3600 feet above sea level if everything continues at the same rate as it is now. Obviously, at one time the earth was completely different than it is now.

Second, the scoffers also overlooked the destruction of the world by water during the flood in Noah's day (cf. Genesis 7:21). This was the second time the world was completely covered with water. It is really interesting that

the archeological discoveries are finding that about 4,000 or 5,000 years ago all civilization suddenly began to blossom and disperse. That means that all of humanity must have been destroyed about that time.

The population statistics show that the rate of growth, from eight people at the time of the flood to five billion people presently, would be less than half of a percent of growth per year since the time of Noah. That indicates there was a time when all of humanity was wiped out, and the world population has only grown back to five billion people in a little over 4,000 years.

The weight of that much water on the earth two times caused transformation to take place below the earth: coal was formed, ore was produced, and diamonds were created. Peter gave two excellent examples to disprove the basic premise of the scoffers that everything has always continued at the same rate.

Peter again refutes the arguments of the doubters: *“By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:7). In Noah’s day the wicked people were destroyed by water, but on the final day the earth will be burned up and ungodly men will be destroyed.

In a recent Time magazine the cover page was about the sun. The article said that one day the sun will burst into flame, expand, envelope the entire solar system, and destroy the earth with fire. The authors do not think that will happen for a couple of billion years, but that article indicated that the way our solar system is built, it will one day burn up. Peter predicted the day will come when God will destroy the earth by fire. Jesus predicted the end of the world: *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will never pass away”* (Matthew 24:35). Isaiah predicted that one day the world will fall, never to be rebuilt: *“The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls – never to rise again”* (Isaiah 24:20). Jesus said the earth

will pass away, Isaiah wrote that the earth will fall, and Peter wrote that it will be burned up.

Time is nothing with God: "*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day*" (2 Peter 3:8). If one day is like a thousand years to God, and two thousand years have passed since Jesus made the promise, then that is just two days on God's calendar. Nearness of time is relative, depending upon the vantage point. Consequently, Jesus may come back at any time.

When Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and His return, it appeared to the people that Jesus was saying that right after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord would be coming back (cf. Matthew 24:1–31). Jesus told the story of the wicked servant who thought his master was not returning because he had stayed away a long time. Jesus said the master of that servant will come on a day when the servant does not expect him (cf. Matthew 24:48–50).

The Lord's delay is not slackness, but patience: "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9). This admonition is for the scoffers to make good use of what they allege is delay by making their own calling and election sure. The purpose in the apparent delay is to exhibit God's longsuffering. God's patience gives time for all men to avoid perishing and to come to repentance.

The reason that Jesus has not come back is because He is giving more time for people to repent. Noah preached for 120 years. God waited for 120 years to destroy the wicked people, which shows His patience (cf. Genesis 6:3). Almost 2000 years have passed since Jesus was on the earth, and God is still waiting for the Gospel to be preached, for the kingdom to be expanded, and for more souls to hear and obey the Gospel. The only reason that Jesus has not come back sooner is that he is still patiently waiting for people to repent and turn to Him.

People must open their hearts, listen to the message, and receive the Truth before it is too late. They must believe on the Lord Jesus, accept His message of repentance and baptism, become members of His body and citizens of His kingdom, serve Him, and be ready for His return because one day He will return as He has promised.

Description of the Hope

The earth is not going to last forever.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10).

Peter predicted that one day the Lord will return and the earth will be destroyed. Yet, men still put their hope and treasure in things of this earth. They try to accumulate land, money, wealth, and power. But what happens? Paul wrote: “*For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it*” (1 Timothy 6:7). Men’s efforts are to store up treasures on this earth, an earth that one day will be destroyed. Jesus said to store up treasures in heaven. Matthew 6:19–20:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

People need to be putting their time and money into spiritual riches and not into material riches which will one day be destroyed.

Jesus will return like a thief in the night. A thief gives no warning when he comes. He does not call on the phone and say, "I am going to rob you tonight." No, he appears suddenly when he is least expected. The final coming of Christ will be the same way.

It is sad that people predict the date when Christ will return. I, Ted Stewart, have read two books in the last year that gave the dates for the final coming of Christ. One of the dates was in October of last year. Obviously, the author of that book was a false prophet. Now he is saying that he made a mistake, and Jesus will return this year instead. In October the author will be proved a false prophet again. Either Jesus will return before that date, or he will come back after that date. Matthew wrote that no one knows the day Jesus will return except the Father: "*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*" (Matthew 24:36). Be prepared for Jesus will come like a thief. He will not announce His coming. He will suddenly appear in the sky, and then it will be too late to prepare. Prepare now; work for Jesus now.

Christians ought to live holy and godly lives since the earth will one day be destroyed.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat (2 Peter 3:11–12).

Christians need to be living righteous lives because of the destruction of the heavens by fire when the elements will melt in the heat. Such destruction demands vigilant watchfulness. Children of God need to incorporate the eight qualities listed in 2 Peter 1:5–8 into their lives. These qualities need to increase in the lives of Christians as they mature. The faithful should look forward to and earnestly

desire the coming of the Lord because earthly trials will end at that time.

Christians should not forget their hope: “*But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness*” (2 Peter 3:13). As Christians live and teach the Good News to other people, they should remember that their hope is not in items of this earth. Their hope is for a new heaven and a new earth. John wrote of the new heaven and new earth and the city of Jerusalem that he saw in Revelation 21:1–2.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

John wrote a graphic and beautiful description of the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation 21–22. John saw the first heaven and the first earth pass away. And he saw the heavenly city Jerusalem descend upon the new heaven and new earth. John wrote: “*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away*” (Revelation 21:4). What a beautiful place to live eternally!

Christians can speed the coming of the day of God by preaching the Gospel to the whole world so everyone is given the opportunity to hear the Good News. Jesus has not come back because he is waiting for Christians to evangelize the world, to shout the Glad News to the four corners of the earth, and give every single person the opportunity to hear and obey. Christians can speed His coming by teaching the Gospel to every person.

Peter wrote earlier about the inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade (cf. 1 Peter 1:4). The inheritance is waiting for God’s faithful children. The inheritance is not an earthly, material land. It is a heavenly land. The inheritance

will be more beautiful than man can imagine. John described the city of pure gold with gates of pearl and streets of gold (cf. Revelation 21:18, 21). It will be more beautiful than any place man has ever seen. This glorious habitation is where God's people will live throughout eternity. God himself will be there! Christians will see him face to face and will be able to talk to Him. What a privilege that will be to talk with the Creator of the universe and ask questions and learn the answers immediately. Christians will be able to see the prophets of old. Believers will be able to talk with Noah about the flood. Won't heaven be great! The resurrected believers will be able to talk to the apostles, including Peter. Christians will get to have a personal relationship with all the godly men and women mentioned in the Bible.

Jesus told the centurion that many will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Matthew 8:11). It will be marvelous to sit with Old Testament and New Testament saints as well as with the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be wonderful to live in a land where there is no more death. I went to the hospital yesterday to see a student who is ravaged with cancer. He had his entire stomach, half of his spleen, liver, and esophagus removed. He is a child of God and has put his hope in Jesus Christ. One day he will get a new body and will inhabit a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no sickness. There will be no disease, no death, and no more pain! Christians will live a glorious life throughout eternity.

What a wonderful place Heaven will be! If someone offered a job in a place like that, no one would turn it down. But there is not a place like Heaven on this cursed earth. God is preparing a home for the righteous where there will be no sinners, like Nero who cast Christians to the lions and crucified them. There will be no injustice in the Promised Land. What a beautiful place heaven will be! This is the place Peter spoke of in 1 Peter 1:4, ". . .and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you."

Duty of the Hope

Christians should look forward to the second coming of Jesus, the destruction of the earth, and the new heaven and earth.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:14–16).

Since Christians are looking forward to the coming events, they should strive to be right with God. They should serve Him faithfully every day of their lives. God is patient wanting all men to have the opportunity to come to Him. Peter called Paul his “*dear brother*” and wrote that what Paul had written to them was from God. Paul wrote in all his letters some things that are hard to understand, which the unstable twist to their destruction. Christians should take the scriptures the way they are written and not try to make them say something else. Children of God should study, believe, and obey the Scriptures.

Christians have a duty to be on guard against false teachers. 2 Peter 3:17–18a gives a graphic warning:

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote God's heirs to be on guard so they would not be carried away by the wicked and fall away from God. This warning is significant because it is possible to fall away. This warning would not have been given if it were impossible to fall away, as some people falsely teach. Peter encourages the recipients of this letter to be on guard.

Peter wrote Christians of the duty to "*grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" God is the giver of the grace in which Christians are to grow. To grow in knowledge is to become better informed of God's Word.

Conclusion

Peter concluded his second letter with these words: "*To him be glory both now and forever! Amen*" (2 Peter 3:18b). It was not long after Peter penned these words that he "put off his tent" (cf. 2 Peter 1:14) and joined the great multitude described by his fellow apostle John in Revelation 7:9–10:

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

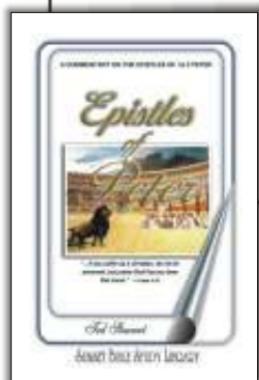
Ted Stewart



Ted Stewart grew up in the Central Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas. He attended Abilene Christian College (now University) where he received his Bachelor and Master Degrees in Bible. Ted served as a missionary in São Paulo, Brazil for thirteen years before returning to the States to preach and teach Bible at Abilene Christian University. In 1976 he became an instructor in the Sunset International Bible Institute.

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Ted and Dot Stewart operated the Sunset Bookstore for over 30 years. When Dot retired and closed the bookstore in 2007, they expressed a desire that Sunset make use of their building. It now houses the Cline R. Paden Bible and Ministry Resource Center. Ted and Dot Stewart continue to make their home in Lubbock, Texas.



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