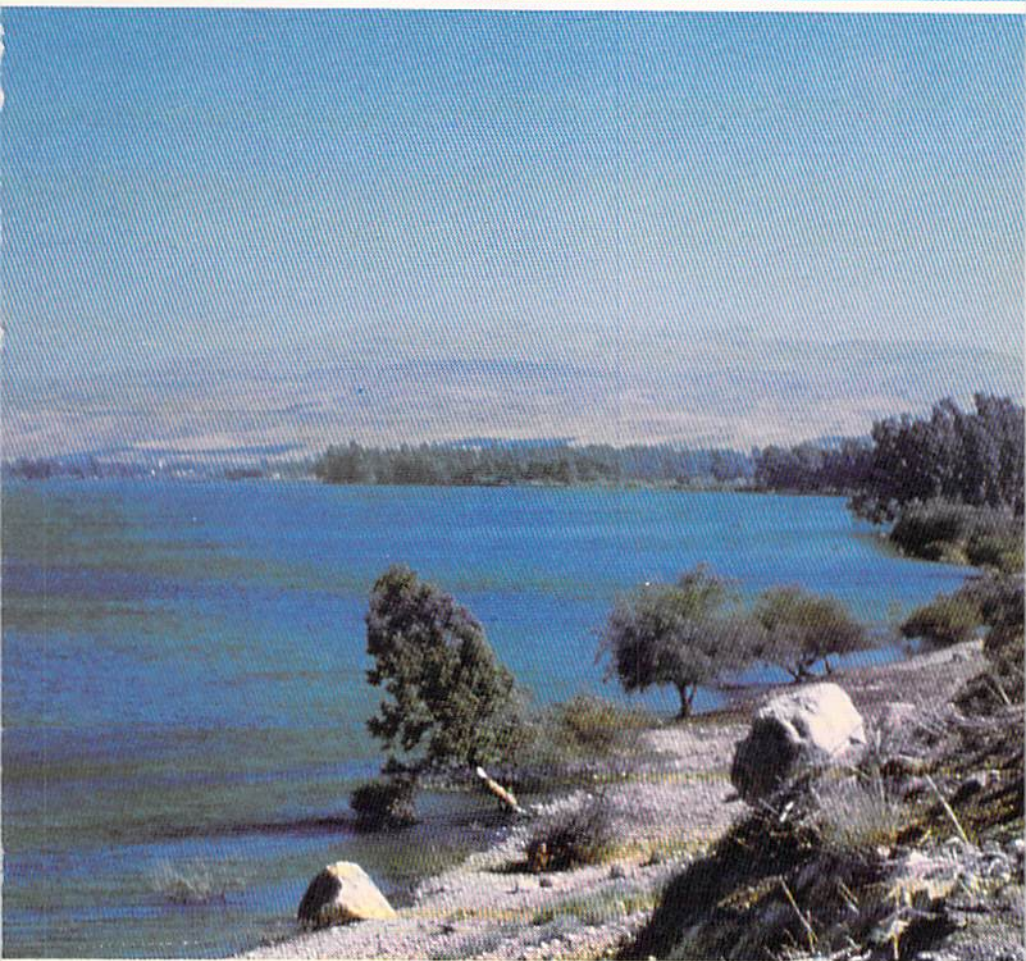


BIBLE STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON

I & II PETER



VICTOR KNOWLES



I AND II PETER

Bible Student Study Guide

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I AND II PETER

Victor Knowles



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On The Cover — The sparkling blue waters of the Sea of Galilee.
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Dedicated to the memory of my mother
ETHEL MAE ("DEARIE") KNOWLES
who went to be with her Lord April 5, 1985,
during the writing of this book.

"Home at last."

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PREFACE

I believe that what God has said about men is settled forever in heaven. I believe that what men have written about what God has said is forever unsettled on earth. When College Press asked me to write this book on I and II Peter I was delighted because about 10 years ago I had written a brief commentary on those books. "Hey, no problem!" I told Don DeWelt. I figured I could spruce it up a little and turn it in. No sweat. Well, I began to sweat when I got out the 10-year-old unpublished manuscript and took a look at it. More than once I asked myself questions like "Did I say that?" or "Why did I write that?" or "Did I believe that?" Inventory city!

So what you are about to consult is one man's view of a portion of God's Word a second time around. I suppose it may be possible that 10 years from now I might be asking myself those same questions. This is all to say that fallible men write books about the only infallible book in the world. Please keep that in mind when you read the comments in this volume. God's Word is inerrant. Man's comment, certainly my own, are subject to error.

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Why write a study guide book at all then? A worthy question, deserving an honest answer. Sometimes the Scriptures need a little explaining. This is what Philip did on behalf of the enquiring eunuch from Ethiopia. The man did not understand what he was reading and he asked for Philip's help. The reason you are reading these very words is an indication that you desire a little help as well. Keep one thing in mind: Philip spoke by inspiration, I don't.

I hope, then, that these brief comments will help you better understand what God has spoken to his people through the apostle Peter. I have used the New International Version as the text because I feel that it is the most readable and understandable version available to us today.

In composing these brief comments on I Peter, I tried to think of how the early Christians must have felt the first time they read the letter. God is not distant and unfeeling. Just as He heard the cries of His people in Egypt and sent Moses to deliver them, so He must have heard the cries of His persecuted children in Asia Minor and inspired Peter to pen this epistle of encouragement.

The people to whom Peter wrote were living under the shadow of the Roman eagle. They had been ruthlessly harassed by the Roman state for their faith in Christ. And the worst was yet to come! Scattered as they were, they needed something to hold them together. To live in fear is not to live at all but rather to die by inches. I Peter, then, is a handbook for spiritual survival in trying times.

The author was a rough and tumble fisherman. He was uneducated (Acts 4:13), coarse (Matt. 26:72) and impulsive (Matt. 14:28; 17:4). Yet God used him to write one of the most moving letters in the New Testament!

The date of writing is commonly thought to be around 63 A.D. The dispersion of the Jews took place not long after the death of James. Josephus puts his death at 62 A.D.

Peter writes to Christians scattered among five provinces of the Roman empire in what is now known as Turkey (1:1). The stated purpose of his letter is found in I Peter 5:12. "I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it."

The place of writing is Babylon (5:13). Is this the famous city on the Euphrates (where many Jews fled under persecution by Claudius) or is it a veiled reference to Rome (as Rome is spiritually called "Babylon" in Revelation 17:5 and 18)? We cannot say for certain but the post-apostolic church generally believed it to be Rome.

1

1 PETER 1:1-12

Greeting (1:1-2)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
1 To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

V. 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, — Peter uses the name that Jesus gave him (John 1:42) rather than the one his parents gave him (Simon). "Peter" is Greek for "rock." "Cephas" is Aramaic for the same.

Note that Peter does not refer to himself as a bishop or pope but as an "apostle," a Greek word meaning "one sent forth." Peter, along with other humble men, was commissioned by his

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Lord to go and preach the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Among the lists of the apostles (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13) Peter is always mentioned first, showing the prominence (but not preeminence) in which he was held. It was Peter that received the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19) and took the lead in preaching the gospel on Pentecost (Acts 2:14).

To God's elect, — The Christian is the most privileged person on earth! Forget the suffering, grief and trials (v. 6). The Great Creator has elected—*selected*—you to be one of His children. How thrilled the Christians of Peter's day must have been (especially those who were lowly slaves) to realize that God Himself had elected to include them in His royal family. How thrilled *we* should be at the same thought!

strangers in the world, — As Christians, our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We are "aliens and strangers on earth" (Heb. 11:13). The Greek word for "strangers" means those who are staying for a short time in a foreign country. The captain of an invading army once warned his men, "Don't drive your tent stakes too deep. We are moving on in the morning!" What good advice for Christians.

scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, — The first Christians were "scattered" because of the great persecution initiated against the church by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1). Now we find Christians again being scattered because of their faith and practice. Being a Christian has forced countless thousands to flee from homes and families.

Some of these five provinces of Asia Minor are mentioned in Acts 2:9-10. This was an area where Paul had preached. Today it is known as Turkey. How sad that it is one of the most unreached countries in the world as far as the gospel is concerned.

V. 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, — "Chosen" was a special term used often of Old Testament Israel (Deut. 4:37; 7:6; 14:2). Here it is applied to Christians, whether Jew or Gentile. This must have been encouraging to those suffering saints to know that God had chosen them to be on His side. Remember how good it felt to be chosen by someone you admired when you were playing ball as a child? My mother was one of 13 children orphaned at an early age. She recalls how wonderful it felt to be "chosen" by her adopted parents.

This choosing is in accordance with God's foreknowledge (Rom. 8:29). God predetermined a plan by which fallen man could be redeemed through the sacrificial death of His Son.

by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, — The Holy Spirit is the agent that God has chosen to sanctify (set apart) man for His purpose. "From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (II Thess. 2:13). Through the preaching of the gospel the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, brings them to the cross where sin is forgiven and sets them apart for a life of service for Christ.

for obedience to Jesus Christ — W. E. Vine points out that "God's foreknowledge involves His electing grace, but this does not preclude human will." Salvation is not by fate but by faith (Eph. 2:8). Election depends upon obedience. God's great plan for man culminated in the coming of Jesus to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins. When men obey Christ they receive the atoning benefits of His blood (compare Matt. 26:28 and Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Note, too, the work of the Godhead in man's conversion: God the Father chooses us; God the Spirit sanctifies us; God the Son cleanses us by the blood.

and sprinkling by his blood: — In the Old Testament the high priest would sprinkle animal blood on the altar of atonement for the sins of himself and the people (Heb. 9:7). Christ became our high priest by shedding His own blood for our sins (Heb. 9:11-14). Another Old Testament reference to the sprinkling of blood was the Passover when Israelites were spared through the sprinkling of the blood of a lamb upon their doorposts (Exod. 12:7, 13). Christ is our Passover (I Cor. 5:7), the Lamb slain to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Our hearts are sprinkled by His blood when our bodies are washed with pure water (Heb. 10:22), an obvious reference to baptism.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance. — As a result of our redemption, we have grace and peace. "Grace" is a Greek word (*charis*) meaning God's unmerited favor to sinners and "peace" is a famous Hebrew word (*shalom*) showing the result of grace in our lives—rest, calmness of soul, tranquility. Our souls are at rest with God because of His grace. Both grace and peace are to be ours "in abundance."

Reasons for Praise (1:3-12)

Praise to God for a Living Hope

³Praise 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, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These 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. ⁸Though 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, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹trying 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. ¹²It 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 have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

V. 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! — God is to be praised not only for being God but for becoming the Father of Jesus Christ. If we on earth celebrate when a man becomes a father, think how all heaven must have celebrated the night God became the Father of the incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ! Paul calls for praise for the same (II Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3). The Psalmist praised God seven times a day (Ps. 119:164). How much more should we praise the One who sent His Son to become our sin-bearer and redeemer!

In his great mercy — Here is ample reason for praise—God's great mercy. Mercy assumes need on the part of him who receives it and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it (W. E. Vine). God is "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4). He loves to be

merciful and wants us to be merciful as well (Matt. 5:7). Mercy is the only thing greater than judgment (James 2:13).

he has given us new birth — When one is born again (John 3:3) he becomes a new creation (II Cor. 5:17) and begins a new life. He has new purpose, a new attitude, new direction. The theme of “new birth” is found throughout the New Testament (John 3:1-15; James 1:18; I Peter 1:23). What sets Christianity apart from mere religion is that it grants *new life* to a person.

into a living hope — Another distinctive of Christianity is the hope a Christian possesses. The pagan world of the apostles’ day had no hope of life beyond the grave. Theocritus said, “Hope goes with life; all hopeless are the dead.” Aschylus wrote, “Once dead there is no resurrection more.” Lucretius uttered these mournful words: “None ever wake again whom the cold pause of life hath overtaken.” No wonder Paul wrote Christians not to “grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope” (I Thess. 4:13) and spoke of those who are “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). The Christian’s hope lives because the One in whom they have put their hope lives! Jesus Christ, according to His own testimony, is “alive forevermore” (Rev. 1:18).

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, — The resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the arch of Christianity. Remove it and all will crumble and fall. In I Corinthians 15 Paul lists eight frightening implications if Christ was not resurrected from the dead:

1. Our message is meaningless (v. 14)
2. Our faith is futile (v. 14)
3. Our witness is wicked (v. 15)
4. Our souls are still in sin (v. 17)
5. Our departed are doomed (v. 18)
6. Our hope is hobbled (v. 19)
7. Our baptism is barren (v. 29)
8. Our conflict is confused (v. 30)

Peter personally experienced living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. Peter had denied Christ, had failed his Lord. When Christ died on the cross, Peter’s hope expired with Him. When the body of Jesus was buried, Peter’s hopes were buried with Him. He was a saddened, lonely, disconsolate man. But when Jesus Christ arose from the grave and the reality of it finally dawned upon him, Peter’s hope

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was resurrected as well! He became a changed man. Infused with new hope, Peter carried on in the work of Christ until he himself expired on a rugged Roman cross.

V. 4 and into an inheritance — Not only has our merciful God given us a living hope but He promises us an eternal inheritance as well. For suffering Christians who had lost much—perhaps all of their earthly estate—this must have been comforting and reassuring. An inheritance meant much to the Old Testament Jew who longed for Canaan, the Promised Land. Heaven, *eternal* life, should mean more to the Christian. An inheritance is for a father's child. If we are a child of God then we are an heir (Rom. 8:16-17).

that can never perish, spoil or fade. — Peter uses three words that suggest *permanence* to describe our inheritance. It will never *perish*, it is indestructable. It will never *spoil*, no deterioration is possible. It will never *fade*, the bloom of heaven will always be fresh and fragrant. Deterioration, decay and death are symbols of a sinful, fallen world. None of this will be a part of heaven (Rev. 21:4).

kept in heaven for you, — You have a home in heaven awaiting your arrival. You have Jesus' word on it (John 14:1-3). This mansion is "kept" or "guarded" for you. "Kept" is a military term meaning "to guard." Your mansion in heaven is carefully watched. No earthly or demonic powers can touch it. No fallen angels seeking reentry can invade it.

V. 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power — Not only is the inheritance guarded but the inheritor as well! We are truly "garrisoned by God." Notice how Paul used that word in II Corinthians 11:32. God's power is so great that it not only saves but *keeps* as well (Jude 21, 24). Our part is showing *faith* in the One who makes all these marvelous promises. Hence, we read of our "shield of faith" (Eph. 6:16).

A thrifty but believing Scotsman had but one word engraved on his tombstone—"Kept." It was enough!

until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed — How long should we keep on believing? Until Christ comes again! At that time He will be looking for faith on the earth (Luke 18:8). Will he find it in you and me?

The Christian experiences salvation in two phases. Phase I is here on earth where we can experience salvation from sin (II Thess. 1:9). Phase II is when we will be brought safely into the *heavenly* kingdom (II Thess. 4:18). Just when Phase II will begin no one knows (Matt. 24:36) but Peter advises that it is "coming" and "ready to be revealed."

in the last time. — Ever since Pentecost (according to Peter's own interpretation of Joel's prophecy) Christians have been living in "the last days" (Acts 2:16-17). John narrows it down to "the last hour" in I John 2:18. Jesus spoke of "the last day" (singular) in John 6:40, a reference to the day of Judgment. All of this points to the fact that time is winding down as far as the Christians's earthly days are concerned.

V. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, — All of this is tremendous cause for rejoicing. Who wouldn't be happy? God has chosen us, sanctified us, cleansed us, given us grace, peace, mercy, new birth, a living hope, an eternal inheritance and shields us by His power. The Christian is to "be joyful always" (I Thess. 5:16) and Peter lists these encouraging things to be joyful about.

though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief — The "now" in this phrase shows us that persecution was going on even as Peter wrote. No suffering is ever easy or pleasant but Peter wants his readers to remember that it is just for "a little while." Paul makes this point in II Corinthians 4:17. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." That is the way we should look at our trials too. Romans 8:18 tells us "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

in all kind of trials. — People who dare to live for God have gone through a vicious variety of trials. Hebrews 11:32-40 contains one such list. Paul gives his personal checklist in II Corinthians 11:23-28. But Jesus promised all who lost houses, lands, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers or children for His sake a 100-fold reward in the life to come. And James adds that we should consider it "pure joy" when we face trials of many kinds because this time of testing develops perseverance in our lives (James 1:2-3).

V. 7 These have come so that your faith — Why do we have to suffer? This is an agonizing, universal question which Peter is now going to answer. The answer has something to do with our *faith*.

of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — Before he gives the answer Peter adds a parenthetical insertion stating that faith is more valuable than gold. How much is gold worth? At this writing it is selling for a little over \$414 an ounce in Zurich, London and New York. How much would your faith be worth if it could somehow be measured? Yet faith is far more valuable than gold because it is imperishable. Where are the thousands of gold pieces minted years ago? Precious few remain. But faith, even though it must go through the refining fires of trials, will not perish.

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may be proved genuine — Trials come from God to make us; temptations come from Satan to break us. God wants to know (and wants *us* to know) that our faith is real. Abraham was told, "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Gen. 22:12).

and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed — Another reason for trials is more far-reaching. If we pass God's tests of our faith some wonderful, eternal results await us. Jesus will personally praise us at Judgment (Matt. 25:21). Yes, we will praise Jesus in eternity for all He went through for us (Rev. 19:5) but Jesus will also praise us for all we have gone through for Him.

V. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; — Can you love someone you've never seen? Of course. Ask any godly mother who has loved that little unborn one she carried for months in her womb. We have not yet seen Christ but our love for Him deepens as the time draws near for Him to be revealed.

and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him — Can you believe in someone you've never seen? Of course. Ask any historian. Because they've never seen such notable figures as Socrates, Napoleon or Lincoln doesn't mean that they don't believe in their previous existence. Our faith in Christ is based upon the credible testimony of those who did see Him (I John 1:1-3). Peter himself was one of those "eyewitnesses."

and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, — The hymn-writer B. E. Warren wrote, "It is joy unspeakable and full of glory!" We simply are at a loss for words when it comes to expressing our joy for Jesus.

V. 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. — Why did you become a Christian? Why do you live the Christian life? Here is the answer—to be saved! Eternal life should be uppermost in our minds each day that we live. This is what it's all about, this is "where it's at." The salvation of our souls should be our goal. We enjoy the benefits of salvation now (peace, pardon, etc.) and we look forward to eternal life.

V. 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, — The prophets were devout men who, having seen or heard a message from God, faithfully declared that message. Some of the great prophets were men like Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. They all looked forward to the salvation the Messiah would bring.

who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, — How privileged the Christian is! God reserved His grace for a people who lived beyond the era of the noble prophets—those of Peter's time and us today. Certainly we have done nothing to merit such favor.

searched intently and with the greatest care, — Here we see not only their diligence but their devotion as well. All Bible prophecy should be studied in the same manner.

V. 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing — Barnes says they became students of their own predictions. They were human beings as well as inspired prophets. The Spirit of Christ was directing their message even though they did not fully understand the meaning of their own message (although they tried to with all earnestness).

The Holy Spirit is also called "the Spirit of Christ" (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19).

All of the Old Testament points forward to Christ—"Someone is coming." The theme of the gospels is "Someone has come." The remainder of the New Testament warns, "Someone is coming again—prepare!"

when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. — The Holy Spirit, through the prophets, foretold the "agony and ecstasy" of Jesus (Isa. 53; Ps. 22; Dan. 9:25-26; Acts 3:18). Christ Himself told the two men on the road to Emmaus that the Messiah had to suffer and then enter His glory (Luke 24:26). The "glories" spoken of may well refer to Christ's resurrection, ascension and coronation. They could even extend to His second coming, judgment and eternal life in heaven.

V. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, — The Holy Spirit "uncovered" the fact to the prophets that these marvelous prophecies were not for themselves but for a people of a later generation. How disappointed they must have been at this startling revelation yet how faithful they were to deliver God's message anyway—even to the point of suffering for doing so (James 5:10).

McGee says the prophets saw two great mountain peaks: the sufferings of Christ and the glories of Christ. They did not see the long valley in between—the valley that you and I live in as Christians. We are at a point in time where we can look backward and forward. They could only look forward.

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Barclay relates a touching story of a blind lamplighter, tapping his way from lamp-post to lamp-post bringing to others a light which he himself would never see. What a beautiful picture of the prophets!

when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. — The preachers of the New Testament age continued to preach this “good news” under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We still need men today who will continue to be Spirit-led in the preaching of the gospel. The message is heaven-sent and will save men from hell.

Even angels long to look into these things. — Peter has just mentioned some special men on earth (the prophets) who sought to understand the message of salvation. Now he turns to a group of select beings in heaven (angels) who desire to know the same. What longing these spirit-beings have to know what we know (and, all too often, take for granted). Angels would give their veritable “wings” to fully fathom and personally experience salvation as we can today. Even though God used the angels (they are mentioned over 300 times in Scripture) and continues to use them today (Heb. 1:14), angels are not able to experience redemption. What they are denied we can enjoy. What the prophets were prohibited from, we can experience. How privileged is the Christian!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the meaning of Peter's name?
2. Why was Peter's reading audience “scattered” and in what way were they “strangers”? In what way are we “strangers in the world”?
3. How does the Godhead cooperate in our conversion experience?
4. How does the hope the Christian possesses differ from what hope the world has?
5. Why do you think it is necessary for our heavenly inheritance to be “guarded”?
6. In what ways does God “shield” us today?
7. What can help us endure our times of trial and suffering?
8. Is it possible to believe in someone or something we've never seen? Explain.
9. What is the goal of your faith? (If your answer does not coincide with v. 9 reevaluate your reason for being.)
10. Why weren't the prophets allowed to understand their own message?
11. Why can't angels experience salvation?

Call to Holiness (1:13—2:3)*Be Holy*

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

¹⁷Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. ¹⁸For 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, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

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²²Now 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. ²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For,

“All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers
of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands
forever.”

And this is the word that was preached to you.

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

V. 13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; — We now come to the practical implications of 1:1-12. Peter has been discussing our glorious future but the Christian cannot be forever dreaming about how it will be (Eccl. 11:4); he must prepare for action! Even spiritual people occasionally need a renewal of attitude. So Peter turns from the future blessings Christians will receive and brings his readers back to reality: we're still here on earth and there is a battle to be fought. Let's "gear up" for action! This begins with mental preparation.

be self-controlled; — For action to be constructive we must first discipline our thinking. This calls for "self-control" which, in reality, is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). Self-control will keep us from going off half-cocked with some half-thought-out idea.

set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. — To forge ahead without clear focus on a goal would be rash and foolhardy. So Peter suggests an overall goal to focus upon—the grace (favor) we will receive when Jesus Christ comes again. True, we've received grace in this life (Rom. 1:5) but we will receive even more grace when Christ returns. Truly, "he gives more grace" (James 4:6).

V. 14 As obedient children, — There is hardly anything that pleases a parent more than to see children obeying orders. "A wise son brings joy to his father" (Prov. 10:1). Paul, the spiritual father of

the Philippians, praised them for always obeying, not only in his presence but “much more” in his absence (Phil. 2:12). John had “no greater joy” than to hear that his spiritual children were “walking in the truth” (III John 4). How much more is our heavenly Father pleased when His children obey? Obedience is stressed throughout First Peter (1:2, 22; 3:1, 6; 4:17).

do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. — With privilege (being God’s child) comes responsibility (holy living). The word “conform” occurs only here and Romans 12:2 and, in both instances, the Christian is warned about giving in to worldly desires. Just because we are saved from sin doesn’t mean we will never have a fight with the flesh again. As long as we are in the flesh we will have to deal with evil desires. But, as a child of God, we are no longer to conform—give in—to those desires. God promises us that if we live by the Spirit we will not gratify, or fulfill, the fleshly desires (Gal. 5:16).

The reference to having “lived in ignorance” would seem more applicable to Gentiles, who lived without God’s laws, than to Jews who possessed it.

V. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, — The One who has called us to holy living is the supreme epitome of holiness. The perfect holiness of God is one of the great themes in Scripture (I Sam. 6:20; Ps. 99:9; Isa. 6:3; Rev. 15:4). In the Song of Moses we find these words of praise: “Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonder?” (Exod. 15:11). Paganism’s greatest gods were often connected with gross immorality. Not so with our God—He is holy!

so be holy in all you do; — The word “holy” carries with it the idea of being separate. We are to separate ourselves from sin and when we make that break God separates us to do His work. A holy God must have pure containers to dispense His milk from. We who are His vessels should strive to be holy in everything: our thought-life, speech, attitudes and conduct.

V. 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” — This quotation is found several times in Leviticus (11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7). If we are God’s children then we should want to be just like our Father. If we are God’s representatives in an unholy world then we will want to reflect the holiness of God to others in our lifestyle.

True holiness is found only in Christ. I am not to manufacture my own holiness—that would be self-righteousness. There is no way I can

measure up to God's holiness by my own feeble efforts. We become the righteousness of God by accepting the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for our sins (Rom. 5:19; II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:24). Then we can stand "dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne!"

V. 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, — How often in a day's time did you call on your father for help when you were a child? How often do you call upon your heavenly Father for help? It is something we should do every day because we never outgrow our need of heavenly help. Scripture urges us to "call on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; I Cor. 1:2).

Scripture also declares that God is no respecter of persons (Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; James 2:1). He will save any and all who call on Him. In like manner God will judge our work impartially. He knows our talent, capabilities and effort and will judge accordingly (Matt. 25:29).

live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. — We live in the shadow of eternity. Our stay on earth is only for a little while. A hymnwriter put it this way: "I am a stranger here, within a foreign land. My home is far away, upon a distant strand. Ambassador am I, of realms beyond the sea. I'm here on business for my King!"

The "reverent fear" spoken of is the kind of fear God wants us to have. Cowardly fear, or timidity (*deilia*) is forbidden (II Tim. 1:7; Rev. 21:8) but godly, or reverent fear (*eulabeia*) is encouraged (Prov. 1:7; Heb. 11:7).

V. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed — Money talks! Or so people thought (and still think). In apostolic times human beings were bought and sold on the open slave market. But our redemption from sin was not purchased with money. Salvation is one thing money can't buy. If I had all the money in the world I still couldn't buy my way into heaven because eternal life is the free gift of God (Rom. 6:23).

The Greek word for "redeemed" (*elytrothete*) means "released on payment of the ransom price." Satan "kidnapped" me and I was his slave to sin but Jesus gave His life as a ransom for me (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; I Tim. 2:6).

from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, — What is it, exactly, that we were redeemed from? An empty, non-fulfilling life—a life that really wasn't ours anyway—just a way of life that was passed on to us by our equally unfulfilled

ancestors. The pagans of Peter's day were well characterized by this word "empty." Their hopes were empty, their dreams were empty, their victories were empty. So it is with those who live only for the flesh today.

How wonderful, in contrast, is the thought that Christian parents can pass on to their children and future generations a way of life that saves and keeps and satisfies!

V. 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, — Our eternal redemption was made possible only through the precious blood of Christ. "O precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow; no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

The blood of Jesus is precious (priceless, invaluable). You cannot put a price tag on it. Jesus shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins (Matt. 26:28). We can be saved through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25). Our sins can be washed away by the blood of Christ when we, by faith, are baptized with Christ into His death (Rev. 1:5; Rom. 6:3, 4; Acts 22:16). Thank God for the blood! Without it we would be forever lost and doomed.

a lamb without blemish or defect. — Under the Old Covenant a lamb could not be offered as a sacrifice if it had any physical defects (Exod. 12:5; Lev. 22:20-24; Mal. 1:8). A perfect God demands a perfect sacrifice for an imperfect world. That we are imperfect goes without saying—we cannot even control a little member of our body (the tongue), thus rendering us imperfect (James 3:2). That Christ is uniquely qualified to become our perfect sacrifice is certified in such Scriptures as II Corinthians 5:21 and I Peter 2:24. Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

V. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, — Jesus Christ is the eternal purpose of God! He is spoken of as "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). We tend to think of God as Creator, then Redeemer but God thought of Redemption before Creation! The Great Redeemer was not some emergency measure in God's great plan to save man.

but was revealed in these last times for your sake. — How fortunate we are to be the recipients of God's amazing grace! We could have been born under the dispensation of law where the Messiah was always a hope but never a reality. What did you and I do to deserve this unparalleled blessing? No wonder salvation is "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:9).

V. 21 Through him you believe in God, — God wanted men to believe in Him. But God is spirit (John 4:24) and men cannot see a spirit so He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14). Therefore, God was “manifest in the flesh” and “believed on in the world” (I Tim. 3:16).

The only way God can be known is through His Son, Jesus Christ, who declared, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). This was not as revolutionary to the Gentile as it would have been to the Jew. Believe in God—whom they thought they had known all their life—through *Jesus*? Think for a moment of the staggering implications of this truth: if God can only be known through Jesus Christ then what of the millions of people in Judaism? Islam? And a hundred other non-Christian religions in the world? They are lost, they are lost, they are lost! God can only be known through Jesus Christ!

who raised him from the dead and glorified him, — Jesus was “delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

and so your faith and hope are in God. — We believe in God because of what He did to and through Christ. The reason God raised Jesus from the dead was so men would place their faith and hope in Him. This is what Thomas finally did when he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

V. 22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth — The faith that saves is a faith that obeys. The natural result of genuine faith is trusting obedience. Two Old Testament characters illustrate this. “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family” (Heb. 11:7). “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Heb. 11:8). Saving faith does not argue over the necessity of public confession of Christ, repentance of and from sinful pleasures, baptism for the forgiveness of sins or faithful church attendance and Christian service.

When one obeys the truth, i.e. the gospel, his soul is “purified.” This is not ceremonial purification, so common among devout Jews, but moral purification.

so that you have sincere love for your brothers, — The proof of our purification, or salvation, is seen in the new love we will have for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Love is the first fruit of the

Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22. Without love we are nothing (I Cor. 13:2).

Peter describes this love as being "sincere." Fulton Sheen described the kiss of Judas in the garden as "the kiss that blistered." It was insincere, feigned, put on. May our love for the Lord and the brethren be "the real thing."

love one another deeply, from the heart. — Does this describe the love you have and show for your brothers in Christ? Mutual love is the one sign that will identify "the true church" (John 13:35). I fear that our superficial tolerance of each other is a far cry from what our Lord commanded us.

V. 23 For you have been born again, — I love the signs of spring—tiny crimson buds appearing on tree branches; little shoots of green grass springing up through rich, black soil; colorful red, yellow and orange tulips unfolding their petals. When I see these I know that spring has "sprung." One of the true signs that we have been born again is if we love God and His children as well (I John 5:1).

We need constant assurance of our salvation and so Peter reminds his readers of their conversion experience. Satan wants us to doubt our conversion but God wants us to know that we have eternal life (I John 5:13).

not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. — Implanted seed brings life. This "unperishable" seed is defined by Jesus as the Word of God (Luke 8:11). God plants His Word in us through preaching. Our responsibility is to be "good soil" and "humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you" (Matt. 13:23; James 1:21).

V. 24 For, "All men are like grass, — Peter begins a quotation from Isaiah 40:6-8.

When I was a boy growing up in Iowa I thought the grass I had to mow during the summer months would never stop growing! But it did. Every fall I would dutifully exchange the lawnmower for a rake and proceed to rake up the dead, yellow grass that only a short time before had been a luxuriant green. So it is with life—we are here for just a season.

and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; — Man's glory is like a tiny field flower—brilliant in splendor but only for a short while. Even as I pen these words the beautiful daisies and buttercups of summer lie frozen and buried under a blanket of snow. So it is with the glory of man's life. Do you realize that President John F. Kennedy had only 1000 days to reign in "Camelot"?

the grass withers and the flowers fall, — We grow old, health deteriorates and, at last, death becomes the common lot of us all. Martin Luther wrote, "Life is a constant and daily journey toward death. One after another dies, and the living must merely engage in the miserable business of carrying one another to the grave." Bleak words, but true.

V. 25 but the word of the Lord stands forever. — In shining contrast with fallible man stands the infallible Word of God! In a world where nothing lasts long—including man himself—it is assuring to know that there is something that will stand forever. "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven!" (Ps. 119:89). I've staked my eternal destiny on this. How about you?

And this is the word that was preached to you. — Isn't it thrilling to realize that this *same* everlasting Word has been preached to us? What a privilege it is to hear great Bible preaching in our country! Many are denied this joy throughout the world. Let every Christian make the most of every opportunity to hear Bible preaching. Let every teacher and preacher approach the Bible with reverence, study it with diligence and proclaim it with eloquence! Praise God for the opportunities we have to read, hear and obey the Eternal Word!

Chapter 2, V. 1 Therefore rid yourselves of all malice and deceit, — In view of the fact that man lives just a short time, we should do some "spiritual house-cleaning" before we stand before God to be judged by the Word.

The first two things Peter says we should get rid of are "malice" and "deceit." We are to throw them out of our life just like we would garbage because they represent "spiritual garbage." *Malice* is inconsistent with—in fact, opposite of—brotherly love. It is ill-will. McGee calls it "congealed anger." *Deceit* is opposed to the sincere love we are to have for our brethren. It is tricking others for personal gain. It was never found in Christ (2:22). A Christian simply cannot grow until he gets rid of these debilitating sins.

hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. — Peter adds three more things to our list of things to "take to the dump." *Hypocrisy* is the one sin Jesus seemed to hit harder than any other (Matt. 23). A hypocrite is an actor, one who plays a part, pretending to be something he is not. *Envy* was present even among the disciples (Luke 22:24). But true love does not envy (I Cor. 13:4). Envy is hatred of others for possessing something we do not have. *Slander* is a vicious sin, somewhat akin to backbiting (II Cor. 12:20). It is an evil fruit

of envy and usually takes place when the person spoken of is not there to defend himself. Slander is a cruel and cowardly vice.

V. 2 Like newborn babies, — New Christians are likened to newborn infants. In what ways are they alike? Both need constant supervision, attention, love, care and feeding. Christ told Peter to “feed my lambs” (John 21:15). That is what every mature Christian should be doing. But I would have to estimate the percentage of spiritual deaths that occur in the church because of spiritual “child neglect.” We would be booked for murder and thrown into prison if we treated our newborn babies the way we treat (or fail to treat) our newborn Christians!

crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, — One of the signs that a newborn baby is going to make it is a craving for milk. I knew our children were going to make it the way they howled come feeding time! We fear for the wee one with an anemic appetite. And so we should for the babe in Christ who does not “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” But let us make sure the new convert has a Bible (especially a translation he can understand), is assigned a daily reading schedule, has someone to study and pray with him, and is present for all the services of the church. His teacher should give him milk and not meat (I Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14) lest he choke to death on difficult texts. And make sure the milk is “pure”—don’t dilute it with human opinions, rules and commands which “lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Col. 2:20-23). A newborn babe in Christ cannot grow up in his salvation if mature members do not feed him, so feed, spiritual “moms and dads,” feed!

V. 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. — The commercial world constantly urges us to take a “taste test” to see which soft drink or brand of peanut butter is best. God challenges us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8). How are your spiritual “taste buds”? Does Christ become “sweeter as the days go by”? What about Bible study, prayer and church attendance? Sorrowfully we report that some who “tasted the goodness of the word of God” have fallen away (Heb. 6:5, 6). Why, O why, would anyone want to return to a worldly, sinful appetite?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why is “self-control” so important in responding to God’s call to holiness?

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I AND II PETER

2. What should be the ultimate focus of our hope?
3. What is the only way a Christian can be holy as God is holy?
4. What kind of fear does God want us to have?
5. In what ways do pagans live "empty" lives?
6. Why is Christ's blood described as "precious"?
7. What is the significance of Jesus being a "lamb without blemish"?
8. Which came first in the mind of God: creation or redemption? Explain.
9. How does obeying the truth purify the soul?
10. What is the Biblical concept of being "born again" and how does it compare with current religious thought?
11. In what ways are men like grass and flowers?
12. What are some things the new Christian is to get rid of? What is he now to desire?

The Living Stone and a Chosen People (v. 4-12)

⁴As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵you 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. ⁶For 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.”

⁷Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone.”

⁸and,

“A stone that causes men to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

⁹But 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. ¹⁰Once 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.

¹¹Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹²Live 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.

V. 4 As you come to him, — We come to Christ for salvation for it can be found in no one else (Acts 4:12). Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). All men must come to Christ for salvation. He invites all men to come to Him (Matt. 11:28, 29) and promises “Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37).

the living Stone — If there is anything that does not resemble life and vitality it is a stone. A stone is hard, cold, immobile. Yet Peter (whose own name meant “rock”) likens Jesus to a stone—a *living* one, however. The term stone is used of Christ in prophecy (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16). When the stone was rolled away the Living Stone came forth from the grave and is “alive forever more” (Rev. 1:18). He ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). Jesus not only gave His life, He gives life (John 1:4).

rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — The greatest mistake a man can make is to reject Jesus Christ. The consequences will be both eternal and horrible (John 12:48). Yet, that is precisely what men did (and what men foolishly continue to do). People reject Christ for a number of reasons, all invalid.

Nonetheless, Jesus was “chosen by God” (see comments on 1:20) and is “precious to him.” Just as I have only one son and he is the apple of my eye, so God—in a far greater sense—loved His only boy. But He loved the world (you and me) more because “He gave his one

and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Christ is the Father's choice!

V. 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house — A Christian should resemble Christ and so it is no wonder that Peter refers to Christians as *zontes*, "living" stones. We are to be like the Living Stone (Eph. 2:19, 20; I Cor. 3:11).

Have you ever seen a sign which reads, "Construction ahead. Men at work."? God is at work in the church. He is building you and me into the spiritual framework of His church. A stone by itself is useless; together they form a mighty edifice.

to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices — Just as some mistakenly believe the church is a building, others think that only a few exceptionally holy people could ever be a priest. Yet, just as Peter informs us that the church is a "spiritual" house, so he enlightens us as to who is a priest. All who have come to Christ for salvation are His priests. John praised Jesus because He "has made us to be . . . priests to serve his God and Father" (Rev. 1:6).

As holy priests we offer "spiritual sacrifices," our own bodies in the service of Christ (Rom. 12:1), our material gifts to the work of the Lord (Phil. 4:18), and the praise of our lips to His name (Heb. 13:15).

acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. — This statement lets us in on a vital truth: worship of God and service to God is acceptable to Him only when offered through Jesus Christ. What does that do to the millions upon millions who attempt to worship God apart from Christ? It renders all such efforts null and void. How sad! How tragic! How *avoidable* if men will be shown that Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

V. 6 For in Scripture it says: — Peter will quote Isaiah 28:16. Paul does similarly in Romans 9:33. Christ and the apostles constantly appealed to the Old Testament prophets. The Word of God is our only appeal in matters of faith and practice.

"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, — This stone has already been identified as Christ (vs. 3, 4). Peter, in Acts 4:11, has previously made the same connection. This prophetic quotation reveals that God would place this priceless stone in "Zion." What, or where, is Zion? It was one of the hills on which Jerusalem stood. The term "Zion" eventually came to stand for all of Jerusalem itself (II Kings 19:21). God, with purpose and intent, chose to build His church in Jerusalem with His own Son Jesus being the cornerstone. For what is a building without a good cornerstone?

and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." — The Weymouth Version says, "shall never be disappointed." There's no disappointment in Jesus. I used to play a game with my children when they were little. I would swing them up in the air and place them on top of the refrigerator (an exciting but scary place to be when you're just a child). I would then stand back, reach out my arms and tell them to jump. Their reaction was always the same—all six of them. They would lean forward a little, give a nervous giggle and then, with eyes big as saucers, leap into my waiting arms. I never disappointed them because they knew they could trust Daddy. Isn't that what this verse is saying? Those who trust in Jesus and "long to rise in the arms of faith" will never be disappointed.

V. 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. — Why do some Christians never miss a church service? Always partake of the Lord's Supper in a reverent manner? Listen intently to each sermon, even taking notes? Read their Bible every day? Take time to be holy, speaking often with the Lord? Do good to their neighbor and fellow-man? Because to them Jesus Christ means everything. He is all the world to them, a priceless possession.

But to those who do not believe, — Unfortunately, Christ is not precious to everyone. Even in His own day "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (John 1:11). What a foolish and tragic mistake! Scripture makes it abundantly clear that we must believe in Christ. "If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24). There are hundreds of "excuses" given for not believing in Jesus but not a one of them is worth the paper they could be written on.

"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," — Peter is now citing the words of Ps. 118:22. How ironic and sad. The ones who thought they were building God's work rejected the very stone that was the most important one of all—Jesus Christ the capstone.

V. 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." — The Holy Spirit has again inspired Peter to quote from Isaiah, this time Isaiah 8:14. The picture is almost amusing, were it not so tragic. Grown men—educated, religious men—continually tripping over a stone they themselves had discarded, having determined it to be inferior for God's building! Christ foretold that He would be a rock of offense to many (Matt. 21:42-44) and the apostle Paul confirmed the same truth (Rom. 9:33; I Cor. 1:23).

Christ is either a stepping stone or a stumbling stone, depending on what you make Him. Faith will cause you to step on to greater things; doubt will cause you to trip and fall.

They stumble because they disobey the message — If you catch pneumonia because you did not obey your mother's instructions to bundle up before going out into bad weather, who is to blame? If you continue to smoke cigarettes after your doctor has warned you that you may get lung cancer by doing so, whose fault is it when you develop the deadly disease? The main reason why men stumbled over Jesus is because His teachings ran counter to their desires and practices. "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

which is also what they were destined for. — How do we interpret this? Are we to believe (as some most assuredly do) that God has foreordained certain men to be eternally lost; that there is nothing these men can do to save themselves, poor devils? I think not. Such would contradict the plain teaching in Scripture that God wants all men to be saved, that He doesn't want a single soul to perish (II Peter 3:9; I Tim. 2:4).

What, then, does this verse mean? It must mean that anyone who is bound and determined to rebel against the teachings of Jesus Christ is going to suffer the consequences (John 12:48). God has predestined a plan, not a man. All who believe and obey that divine plan will be saved; any who disbelieve or disobey it will be lost (John 3:36). J. B. Phillips translates this verse as follows: "Yes, they stumble at the Word of God for in their hearts they are unwilling to obey it—which makes stumbling a foregone conclusion."

V. 9 But you are a chosen people, — Peter now gives some titles that described God's Old Testament people and applies them to Christians. Israel was God's chosen people (Deut. 7:6-8). God chose the living Stone, Jesus (v. 4) and He chose the living stones, Christians, to be His people.

a royal priesthood, — Israel *had* a priesthood but the church *is* a priesthood. Jesus, our high priest, has "made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). In the Old Testament there were sometimes conflicts between kings and priests (II Chron. 26:16-21). Not so in Christ! Truly, royal blood flows through our spiritual veins!

a holy nation, — There is to be a noticeable difference in the nation that serves God and those who don't (Exod. 11:7). This difference

is called "holiness." We are called by God to be a separate, sanctified people. Holiness of life is what separates us from the pagan world.

a people belonging to God, — We are not our own. We have been bought at a great price (I Cor. 6:20) and our lives should glorify God who purchased us with the blood of His Son (Acts 20:28). God owns our life by right of creation . . . and redemption. "Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me!"

that you may declare the praises of him — If you've ever wondered about your purpose in life, wonder no more! Here it is, plain and simple. Your life is to be a constant declaration of praise to God for what He's done for you. "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Heb. 13:15).

who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. — Is there anything more frightening than darkness? Is there anything more welcome than light? And a cheery voice welcoming us into that light? W. T. Sleeper wrote, "Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; into thy freedom, gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee." This wonderful thought is also expressed in II Corinthians 4:6 and Colossians 1:13.

V. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; — Even Israel, at one time, was not considered the people of God (Hosea 1:9, 10). Gentiles were certainly not the people of God either (Eph. 2:11, 12). But God, in His great love and mercy, took these spiritual waifs and adopted them as His own (II Cor. 6:18; Gal. 4:3-6; Eph. 1:5). Anybody whom God has adopted is no longer a nobody but a real somebody!

once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. — Living apart from God, we do not receive mercy. Coming to God, as we are drawn to Him at first by curiosity, then wonder, then love for what He did for us on the cross through His Son Jesus, we receive mercy. God delights to show mercy (Mic. 7:18). It is only through the mercy of God that we can be saved (Titus 3:5). In the great hymn "At Calvary" William R. Newell wrote, "Mercy there was great, and grace was free; pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary."

V. 11 Dear friends, I urge you, — Several translations use the word "beg" here. Peter is a man down on his knees begging his friends to refrain from sinful desires. Are we as concerned about our Christian friends who indulge in worldly pleasures?

as aliens and strangers in the world, — The people to whom Peter was writing had been scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. They were strangers in a pagan world and the world was strange to them just as it should be to us. We are “in the world but not of the world” (John 17:15, 16). When it comes to being up on the latest, we should be the latest to know.

to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. — Sinful desires are something we will never be able to escape as long as we are in the flesh. Jesus said, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). But our human weakness is no excuse to indulge in sin. To the contrary, the writer urges abstinence. Why? Because sinful desires war against the soul. There is a battle raging in you between the flesh and the spirit (Rom. 7:23). If you do not realize that, the war is lost. If you do realize it, call for the reinforcement of God’s Holy Spirit who is greater than Satan (I John 4:4).

V. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans — A pagan (or heathen) is someone irreligious, someone who does not recognize God. Such was the world of Peter’s day and such is our own world. We are surrounded by pagans wearing three-piece suits and Chanel No. 5. A pagan is someone who does not recognize God and who gives his life over to sensual, hedonistic, humanistic desires. Such morally and spiritually bankrupt people need good examples in Christians.

that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, — How strange! The very ones living in defiance of morality accuse decent, God-fearing, law-abiding Christian citizens of doing wrong! The early Christians were falsely accused by pagans of conspiracy to overthrow the Roman state (because of their private assemblies), atheism (because they worshiped no visible god), cannibalism (because they ate the Lord’s Supper) and even incest (because of the “holy kiss”). How clever and devious is Satan, “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10).

that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. — A Christian should do good works, not to be seen of men (Matt. 6:1) but because we *are* seen of men. Ogden Nash said, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day. I’d rather someone show me, than merely point the way.” Even pagans can become burned out and disillusioned and start looking for something that really satisfies and lasts. This is why we should let our light shine before men, so that they may see our good works and turn to God (Matt. 5:16).

What is the day God visits us? The Greek word for visit (*episkope*) includes the idea of “inspection.” Prior to the destruction of Sodom

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I AND II PETER

and Gomorrah, God said He would “go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me” (Gen. 18:21). This could be a reference to God’s visit, inspection and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (see Luke 19:44), or even the second coming of Christ and the final judgment of man. In either case, pagans who had become Christians because of a good Christian example would find reason for rejoicing.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In what way is Christ “the living Stone”?
2. Why did men reject Him?
3. What are some “spiritual sacrifices” we can offer to God?
4. How are our spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God?
5. What is the significance of the cornerstone being laid in “Zion”?
6. What makes Christ precious to some and commonplace to others?
7. What was the great blunder committed by those who thought they were building God’s house?
8. How was (is) Christ a stumbling stone?
9. What is your view of those “destined” to stumble?
10. What Old Testament terms does Peter use to describe New Testament believers?
11. In what ways are Christians “aliens and strangers”?
12. Why is it so important that we abstain from sinful desires?

Submission to Authorities (2:13-25)

¹³Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. ¹⁶Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. ¹⁷Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

¹⁸Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. ²⁰But 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. ²¹To this you were called, because Christ suffered for

you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22“**He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his
mouth.**”

23When 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. 24He 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. 25For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

V. 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: — Submission to authority is one of life’s most difficult lessons to learn. By nature we are a proud and stubborn people. The key to submission is found in the phrase “for the Lord’s sake.” Out of reverence to Christ (who submitted Himself to death on the cross) Christians should submit to each other (Eph. 5:21). Christian wives will submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22) just as they would to the Lord Himself. Because they are under the Lordship of Christ, Christians will be in submission to civil authorities.

whether to the king, as the supreme authority, — Peter begins at the top—the king—or as the 20th Century New Testament reads, “the emperor.” I am always impressed by this when I remember who was emperor at the time Peter penned these words. Nero! Has a bloodier tyrant ever ruled? Yet, Peter writes, “Submit!” The apostle understood what many professing churchmen don’t seem to realize: civil authorities, no matter how rank, have received their authority from God (Rom. 13:1-7). This was a difficult but necessary lesson for the 1st century saints. No less so today.

V. 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. — The next authority figure Peter mentions is governors, or “magistrates” (Knox Translation). These men were commissioned by the supreme authority to do two things: (1) punish lawbreakers and, (2) praise lawkeepers. I’ve often thought that if our local police would practice praising those who *keep* the law there would soon be a better relationship between the police and the public. Who knows, maybe there would be even less crime to punish!

V. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. — There is hardly anything an unregenerated person enjoys more than catching a Christian in a sin. "I thought you were a Christian! I guess all that church stuff isn't worth much after all, huh?" Peter tells us to live so as to put a stop to their ignorant prattle. Christians will always have their critics but they should live in such a manner that no one will believe their critic's charges.

V. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil, — The reason we are to live above reproach is so there will be no occasion for non-Christians to blaspheme the cause of Christ. Christ has freed us from sin but we are not free to break the laws of the land. We are still under authority. We can only disregard the laws of the land when they come in direct conflict with the laws of God (Acts 5:29).

live as the servants of God. — We once were servants of sin but now we are servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17, 18). Being mindful of our servant status in society will keep us from putting ourselves above the laws of our government.

V. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: — Peter now calls for four Christian duties, the first being to honor, or respect, all men. We belong to the brotherhood of man and ought to treat each person as a unique individual, made in the image of God. Everyone has feelings. Don't trample on them. Treat mankind with dignity.

Love the brotherhood of believers, — There is the brotherhood of man and then there is the brotherhood of believers, those whom God has adopted into His spiritual family, the church. If God has adopted them, I am to accept them as brothers in the family. More than just accept them, I am to love them as well. Loving the brethren is not an option, it is a command!

fear God, honor the king. — These last two commands show the proper respect we should have for divine authority (God) and civil authority (the king). Note that we are to fear God but not man (Matt. 10:28). We are to honor the king but even then we are to give honor to God as well: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt. 22:21).

V. 18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, — Slavery was a cruel, demeaning, unChristlike practice that was prevalent in Peter's day. Yet, strangely enough, there is no apostolic denunciation of the practice in the New Testament. There certainly is no condoning

of slavery in the New Testament but neither is there any condemnation of the evil practice. Christian slaves were admonished to respect and submit to their owners and give them a good day's work; Christian slaveowners were told to treat their slaves right (Eph. 6:5-9).

not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. — The principle of submission was to be followed even if the slave owner was a wicked and cruel tyrant. Not all Christian slaveowners were "Simon Legrees" but evidently enough of them were to warrant this instruction. It is relatively easy to work for a man who is kind and considerate. It is quite another thing to work for a harsh taskmaster. One can only imagine what some of these poor slaves were forced to endure.

V. 19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. — Although this section of Scripture was directed to Christian slaves, I think we can also apply it to our modern employer-employee relationships. If a Christian suffers on the job because of his Christian faith and convictions (such as refusing to lie or cover up for the boss), that is commendable.

V. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? — Suppose we are disciplined or even fired for breaking the company's rules (but not necessarily for our religious convictions). That certainly is not to our credit or glory. We have not only failed as a good worker, we have failed as a Christian example.

But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. — The thing that pleases God is when we handle injustice in a mature Christian manner. The Living Bible says, "Praise the Lord if you are punished for doing right!"

V. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, — The calling of God is not just to blessing and pleasantries. There is hardship and suffering as well. Paul told Timothy to endure hardship as a good soldier (II Tim. 2:3). Christ suffered on our behalf; where do we get off thinking we owe Him nothing in return?

leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. — Many would like to follow Jesus until they discover where His steps lead: "o'er the cold dark mountains . . . in homes of the poor and lowly" (Mrs. M. B. Slade). Do we really follow the steps of Jesus, "where'er they go"? As we will soon see in v. 23, the example of Christ being referred to here is non-complaint when suffering injustice. Do we moan and groan about all the things we have to go through for being a Christian, real or imagined?

V. 22 **“He committed no sin,** — The quotation is from Isaiah 53:9. Jesus had every right to complain. Not only was He innocent of all charges, He was sinless! The sinlessness of Christ is what set Him apart from all other men, even great men. Abraham, “the friend of God,” sinned (Gen. 20:2). David, “the man after God’s own heart,” sinned (II Sam. 11:4). The great apostle Paul considered himself “the worst of sinners” (I Tim. 1:15). Only Jesus was without sin. Only Christ was uniquely qualified to become the perfect substitute for the sins of the world.

and no deceit was found in his mouth.” — Jesus “never told a lie” (The Living Bible). Only one other man in the Bible is commended for guilelessness (Nathaniel, John 1:47). Jesus had plenty of lies told about Him but He never resorted to untruths for He was “the truth” (John 14:6). To be like Christ we must be totally honest.

V. 23 **When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate;** — Horrible insults were hatefully screamed at Christ on the cross (Matt. 27:39-44). Yet He never once opened His mouth to retaliate. That’s “Amazing Grace” for sure! Christ left us this example. Are we following in His steps?

when he suffered, he made no threats. — Cicero wrote that the taunting at crucifixions sometimes got so bad that the soldiers on duty would cut out the tongues of the tormented creatures on the crosses. Their language became so vile, their useless threats and curses became so obscene that this terrible action was taken. But Jesus, as Isaiah predicted, opened not His mouth (Isa. 53:7).

Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. — Jesus had the power to call 12 legions of angels to destroy His tormentors (Matt. 26:53). But He left things in the hands of God. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

V. 24 **He himself bore our sins in his body** — The purpose of Christ’s death on the cross was not to become a martyr for His disciples but to become the Saviour of the world (I John 4:14). This was the purpose for which He came to earth. Charles H. Gabriel wrote, “He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own; He bore the burden to Calv’ry, and suffered and died alone.” That is what the atonement is all about. Jesus, the sinless one, personally absorbed the sins of all humanity in His body on the cross. In fact, God *made* Him to *be* sin for us so we could be right with God through the atonement (II Cor. 5:21). The heart of the gospel is found in this verse. Jesus is the great sin-bearer.

on the tree, — An interesting thing here, “the tree.” Why not “the cross”? In all of the writings of Peter not once does he use the word cross (*stauros*). It is always tree (*xulon*). Paul uses the word “cross” time and time again. But Peter never once. Why? We can only speculate. Perhaps his horror and shame over having denied Christ, thereby sending his Lord to the cross, had something to do with it. We do know that Peter was a highly emotional person. He wept bitterly after his denial. Tradition says whenever a rooster crowed when Peter was preaching he would break down and could go no farther in his message. Perhaps the word “cross”—with all its memories and implications—was just too much for Peter. We are told that Peter requested to be crucified upside down because he felt he was not worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; — Unless we grasp this truth and live it out each day, the death of Christ was in vain. There is a dual reason for the atonement: one purpose was to take away our sins, the other to take us away from the life and love of sin. Changed lives is what the cross is all about. Christ died *for* our sins, we are to die *to* our sins.

by his wounds you have been healed. — The healing spoken of here is obviously *spiritual* healing, i.e., the forgiveness of sins. The context makes this clear: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.” Later we read, “Christ died for our sins” (3:18). The popular charismatic position, based on Isaiah 53:4, 5, that the atonement was for our sicknesses as well as our sins finds no support in this passage. Matthew 8:16, 17 clearly shows that Christ, in his ministry of healing, fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. The purpose of the atonement was for sin (I Cor. 15:4).

V. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, — This well-known analogy is from Isaiah 53:6. It is the common tendency of sheep to drift away from the fold. That’s why we need Jesus, the Good Shepherd. That’s why the church needs godly shepherds, or elders (I Peter 5:1-4).

but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. — Man has a way of botching things up. “It is not for man to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Man needs someone to guide and watch over him. That someone is Jesus, our personal shepherd and overseer.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What authority figures does Peter say we should be in submission to?
2. When does submission to governing authorities end? Or does it ever end?
3. What is the best way for a Christian to silence his critics?
4. Is a Christian above the laws of his land? Explain.
5. What do we owe to our brethren? God? The king? Everyone?
6. What is your explanation for the absence of censure of slavery in the New Testament?
7. What is the Scriptural context of following "in his steps"?
8. How did Jesus react to his tormentors?
9. What is the significance of the word "tree" in Peter's writings?
10. For what purpose did Christ bear our sins in his own body?
11. Is the healing by Christ's wounds physical or spiritual? Explain.
12. In what ways are men like sheep?

Wives and Husbands (3:1-7)

3 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 talk by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, 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. ⁵For 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, ⁶like 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.

⁷Husbands, 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.

V. 1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands — In *what* “same way”? Peter has just given three examples of submission: (1) citizens submitting to governing authorities, (2) servants submitting to masters, and (3) Jesus submitting to death on the cross. In like manner, Christian wives are to be in submission to their husbands.

so that, if any of them do not believe the word, — Why would a godly woman be married to an unbelieving man? Perhaps the woman herself was an unbeliever when she married him and then became a Christian. Perhaps the husband was at one time a believer but later fell away. Or perhaps as a believer she may have gone ahead and married an unbeliever. Whatever the case, God’s ideal is that believers marry believers (I Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14). But there are times, such as the above illustrations indicate, where an unequal yoke exists. How, then, can the unbelieving mate be won to Christ? Certainly not by the believing mate leaving them (I Cor. 7:13-16).

they may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives, — Unbelieving husbands can be won to the Lord without a word ever being spoken by their believing wives! They can be won by the Word that lives in the Christian wife, not by the constant preaching that can nag and irritate. Seeing the message of Christ lived out before you day after day carries more impact than hearing it “preached” at you time and time again. A woman who is married to an unbeliever can be a beautiful “silent witness” to her husband by her Christlike behavior.

V. 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. — What is it that the unbelieving husband should behold? A lifestyle that is marked by high moral character and devout reverence for God—true holiness of life, nothing manufactured or put on. Example carries greater weight than words.

V. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, — True beauty comes from the inside. It isn’t what’s on your face that will change a man’s life, it’s what’s in your heart. That’s what has a way of coming through, of changing other people.

such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. — As examples of outward adornment, or arrangement (*kosmos*), Peter mentions these three. Obviously, there is nothing inherently wrong with hair, jewelry or clothing. But there is always the potential for going overboard on some things. Evidently some Christian women had a tendency to spend too much effort on braiding their hair, decking themselves out with an inordinate amount of jewelry, wearing

the very finest clothes money could buy. These things do not make a woman beautiful to God because He looks on the heart (I Sam. 16:7). Nor will they help win a lost husband to Jesus Christ.

V. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, — The beauty that God seeks and that an unsaved husband needs is inner beauty. Developing inner beauty is an area where legitimate amounts of time, concern and effort can be spent. Prayer, Bible study, meditation and personal worship can make a woman truly beautiful.

the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, — Whereas physical beauty eventually fades no matter how much time and money a woman may spend on concealing cosmetics and face-lifts, inner beauty grows more wonderful to behold with every passing day. Hollywood and Madison Avenue would never buy it but God's choice of a real woman is one who demonstrates a gentle, quiet spirit. How different from the shrill, painted images that boldly leer at us from the magazines and television screen.

which is of great worth in God's sight. — God is looking for women who will be gentle and quiet rather than bold and brassy.

V. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. — To underscore this point to his New Testament readers, Peter goes to the Old Testament and comments how women—*holy* women of the past—made themselves beautiful in the sight of God by placing proper emphasis on inner values (such as trusting God).

They were submissive to their own husbands, — If a woman is in submission to the Lord as to His desires concerning true beauty, she will likewise be in submission to her husband. That will go a long ways farther to converting him than by putting too much emphasis on preaching to him or putting on her face. Seeing that her religion really means something to her will have a great impact on him.

V. 6 Like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master, — A case in point is Sarah who was in submission to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-5; 18:1-6). Physically, she was an extremely attractive woman, so much so that Abraham feared other men would desire her (Gen. 12:11, 14). Sarah undoubtedly had lots of nice clothes and gold jewelry like Rebekah (Gen. 24:53) but she did not let these things become more important in her life than the inner beauty of a submissive, quiet spirit. When God told Abraham to leave his country and kin there is no record of Sarah putting up a big fight to remain in Ur of Chaldea (Gen. 12:1-5).

You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. — Christian women today can be “daughters of Sarah” if they will follow her godly example of developing inner beauty and a submissive spirit. The opposite emphasis and behavior might qualify one for being a daughter of Jezebel! She went heavy on the outer adornment and was anything but a submissive wife to Ahab (I Kings 21:1-25; II Kings 9:30). Christian wives should not be afraid of what their husbands will think (or even what other women will think) but rather what God thinks of them.

V. 7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, — As wives are to be submissive to their husbands, so husbands are to be considerate of their wives. Consideration was hardly a trait of Eastern men in Biblical times; hence, this timely admonition. Women are not mere chattel, slaves or even servants. Woman was made to help man, not serve man (Gen. 2:18). God wants Christian husbands to treat their wives with love and due respect.

and treat them with respect as the weaker partner — In what sense are wives “weaker”? Some women I know are stronger than their husbands spiritually, emotionally and even physically (consider their dawn-to-dusk schedule, Prov. 31:15-18). The word for “partner” (*skeuos*) means “a vessel.” The more fragile the vessel, the more care is needed in handling. Women are beautiful, fragile creatures. Men should not treat them roughly, carelessly or thoughtlessly. Handle them with care! Under Jewish law a woman was considered a thing, like a pig or a goat. Under Greek and Roman law a woman had no rights. Christianity placed woman on the highest plane and demands that men treat them with utmost respect.

and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, — Christian wives should also be treated as equals in life. God has granted the precious gift of life to woman, as well as man (Gen. 1:27). In Christ there is no male or female, all are one in Him (Gal. 3:28). God thought of and planned for “equal rights” for women long before the feminist movements of today.

so that nothing will hinder your prayers. — There are many hindrances to an effective prayer life but one of the quickest ways to short-circuit prayer is to have a wrong relationship with your mate. How can a person be at one with God when he or she is at odds with his or her mate? Unresolved differences and bitterness block the avenue of prayer (Ps. 66:18). Be at peace with each other so you can be at peace with God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In what "same way" are wives to be in submission to their husbands?
2. What does "submission" mean and how far can we take it? See Colossians 3:18.
3. What is God's ideal for marriage?
4. How is it possible for an unbelieving husband to be won "without talk"?
5. When does outward adornment become a hindrance?
6. What inner qualities should a Christian woman strive to develop?
7. How did women of the Old Testament make themselves beautiful to their husbands and to God?
8. In what ways was Sarah submissive to Abraham?
9. What are some ways husbands could be more considerate of their wives?
10. How are Christian women equal with Christian men?
11. How can a husband-wife relationship affect prayers?

Suffering for Doing Good (3:8-22)

⁸Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do 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. ¹⁰For,

“Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech.

¹¹He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.

¹²For 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.”

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." ¹⁵But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. ¹⁶But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸For 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, ¹⁹through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰who 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, ²¹and 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, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

V. 8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; — Peter now comes to the heart of his letter. In order to have victory over suffering (which seems to be the prevailing theme of the book) it will take harmony—getting along with each other as husbands and wives, as workers and masters, as Christians in fellowship. "Be of one mind living like brothers" (Phillips).

be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. — Satan would like nothing better than to get Christians (who were being persecuted by the Roman state) to turn on one another in frustration and fear. So Peter calls for understanding and love. If Christians "bite and devour one another" (Gal. 5:15) we have worked the devil's plan because that is what he wants to accomplish (I Peter 5:8).

V. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, — The last thing that Peter mentions in verse 8 (humility) is what it will take to pull this off. When someone does us dirt, the old flesh rises up to retaliate. When a cutting remark comes our way we have to bite our tongue. But Peter goes beyond just holding our tongue and urges us to go ahead and say something—a blessing! That really takes grace!

because to this you were called so that you might inherit a blessing. — This is what it's all about, repaying good for evil, blessing for cursing. This is the very essence of Christianity (Matt. 5:43-48).

V. 10 **For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.** — Here, and in verses 11 and 12, we have a quotation from Ps. 34:12-16. This is a timeless admonition to restrain the tongue from speaking evil.

V. 11 **He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.** — Not only are we to watch our tongue but we are to look for opportunities to seek peace with our enemies, whoever they may be. Peace must be *made*, it doesn't just happen (Matt. 5:9).

V. 12 **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.** — God will help the person who acts righteously but will oppose all evil doers, whether it's a non-Christian doing evil to a Christian or a Christian returning evil to his enemy.

V. 13 **Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?** — It's hard to hate someone who has done you nothing but good. Paul writes, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head" (Rom. 12:20). Now, that's the way to "get even" with an enemy!

V. 14 **But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.** — But suppose you do good and are slandered for doing so? You can still be blessed (happy). Jesus said that when we suffer for welldoing (1) it assures us that the kingdom is really ours (Matt. 5:10); (2) it will result in great reward in heaven (Matt. 5:10); and (3) it gives us a sense of identity with the prophets who were also persecuted for welldoing (Matt. 5:12).

"Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." — The NIV adds this footnote: "do not fear their threats." The Phillips Translation says, "You need neither fear men's threats nor worry about them." This is probably more in keeping with the context. God's people are not to fear those who can kill the body (Matt. 10:28). Paul wrote that Christians are not to live in terror of their adversaries (Phil. 1:28).

V. 15 **But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.** — The Williams Translation says, "in your hearts be consecrated to Christ as Lord." When Jesus is enshrined on the throne of our hearts as Lord indeed, we will be empowered and enabled to withstand whatever the enemy hurls at us. The assuring presence of Christ within calms the inner fears that well up inside us when confronted by a crisis.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. — The early Christians often answered questions at the point of a sharp Roman sword! The abiding presence of Christ gave them great grace to give a courageous answer, even if it meant torture or death. Hence we find Weymouth's Translation to be excellent here: "be ready to make your defense." The Greek word for "answer" (*apologia*) means "defense." Christians are to be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). How far modern-day Christians have strayed from this concept. Many aren't even prepared to answer a simple question from a non-hostile source about salvation or eternal life! We have the hope of heaven; let's be ready to answer anyone who asks, for whatever reason!

But do this with gentleness and respect, — Not only are we to know *what* to say, we are to know *how* to say it as well! The first Christians, though treated roughly and ruthlessly, spoke the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Truth is too sacred to be put into smart replies or canned remarks. The Knox Version says, "do it courteously and with due reverence."

V. 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ — It seems so unfair to be falsely accused for just being a Christian but that was precisely the lot of the early Christians. They were the salt of the earth but were treated as though they were vinegar. Through all these malicious and fallacious charges (see comments on 2:12) they were to keep a clear conscience. It helps when you know that you are doing what is right.

may be ashamed of their slander. — The example of a Christian practicing his faith under fire may lead to the needed shame on the part of observing oppressors (see Titus 2:8). One Roman emperor, who had persecuted Christians, begged for their prayers on his deathbed.

V. 17 It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. — Can suffering ever be a part of God's will? Yes. Even if we didn't deserve it or were wronged for doing right? Yes. What evil men intend for evil, God can use for good (Gen. 50:20). *All* things can work for good to the person who loves and serves God (Rom. 8:28).

V. 18 For Christ died for sins once for all, — Christ Himself suffered unfairly at the hands of hardened men but God took their cruelty and turned it into redemption for all mankind, even Christ's enemies (Rom. 5:6-11). This He did "once for all" (Heb. 7:27).

the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. — By human standards this doesn't seem fair. But it resulted in tremendous

good—redemption for ruined man. Christ's atonement on the cross makes us right with God (II Cor. 5:21).

He was put to death in the body — Jesus paid the ultimate price—death. That may also be the price we will have to pay: not dying as a Saviour but perhaps as a martyr (such as Stephen, Acts 7:60, or James, Acts 12:2).

but made alive by the Spirit, — Death could not hold its prey. On the day of Pentecost Peter said it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus (Acts 2:24). He was raised to life by the power of the Spirit. The same can (and will) happen to us, no matter what men may do to the body. "He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you" (II Cor. 13:4).

V. 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison — William Barclay says this is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. There are two major views. One is that it was actually Noah who preached to these people who were still alive in his day. Noah preached to them through the Spirit of Christ (Gen. 6:3). The other view is that after his bodily death on the cross Christ, in the spirit, went to the place where the spirits of men are held in prison awaiting the resurrection and judgment and preached unto them. That Christ's spirit went to hades after his death cannot be denied (Acts 2:27; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:9, 10). Hades had two compartments: paradise and tartarus. Jesus told the repentant thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). It is not inconceivable that Jesus preached to the spirits confined in tartarus from his vantage point in paradise. Abraham spoke to those in tartarus from paradise (Luke 16:25-31).

What did Christ preach? The text does not say. But it would seem more in keeping with the overall theme of the Bible that his message was one of vindication rather than invitation. Christ was "vindicated in the Spirit" (I Tim. 3:16, NASB).

Why did he preach? The passage yields no clues. What was the hearers' reaction, the results of this unusual post-death, pre-resurrection ministry of Christ? We simply do not know and conjecture would be just that—pure guesswork on our part, better left unsaid. I do concur with B. W. Johnson who said that the view of Christ preaching through Noah "furnishes fewer theological difficulties" while the view that Christ preached in the spirit to the spirits in prison "seems more in harmony with the context."

V. 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. — God waited patiently, not for the ark to be built, but for rebellious man to hearken to the preaching of Noah (II Peter 2:5; 3:9). The reason their spirits were in prison was due to their disobedience, their rejection of Noah's message. Although God wants all men to be saved, He will punish those who disobey His Word (II Thess. 1:8).

In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, — The majority chose to disbelieve but "By faith Noah . . . in holy fear built an ark to save his family" (Heb. 11:7). Only Noah, his wife, Shem, Ham, Japheth and their wives escaped the great deluge (Gen. 7:13). Water, the agent that God used to wipe out sin, also became the means of their salvation. In the boat they had built by faith, they were carried to safety.

V. 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — The great Noachian flood that saved the faithful few who took God at His Word "foreshadowed" (20th Century New Testament) the act of baptism. Baptism, when it is connected with faith, saves. Noah did more than say, "I believe God." He "moved with fear," built the ark, got into it when God said to and stayed there until God told him to come out. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. Jesus said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). The disobedient in Noah's time chose to not believe God's message and as a result they perished. Those who believed God and acted on their faith were saved. Baptism is for believers who are willing to go all the way for God. The Phillips Translation says, "that water was a kind of prophetic parable of the water of baptism which now saves you."

not the removal of dirt from the body — Baptism is not some kind of ritual washing to cleanse oneself physically (like the priests who "lavered" themselves before entering the holy place).

but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. — The RSV "an appeal to God for a clear conscience." God rewards faith (Heb. 11:6) but faith is not complete until we demonstrate it by obedience (Matt. 7:21). When our sins are washed away in baptism (Acts 22:16) we can have a conscience clear of sin and guilt. Once baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27) we are in Christ. In Christ we are complete (Col. 2:10) and can stand before God unafraid, unashamed, uncondemned (Rom. 8:1).

It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, — For the second time Peter states that baptism saves us. Notice that he does not say baptism *per se* saves. That would be “baptismal regeneration,” an unfounded and unfair charge often cast at those who preach “baptism for the remission of sins.” Baptism saves when the one being immersed truly believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Acts 8:37) and that “He was delivered for our sins and raised to life for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). Faith in the resurrection of Christ is absolutely essential to salvation (Rom. 10:9) and those who believe it will confess it and submit to baptism where we are “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” (Rom. 6:4). To deny the necessity of baptism is to belittle the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

V. 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand — It must have been a great comfort to Stephen to see Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Jesus is in heaven to intercede on behalf of the saints (Heb. 7:25). He will return from heaven some day to claim those who follow Him (John 14:1-3).

with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. — When God raised Jesus from the dead He seated Him at His right hand, “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come” (Eph. 1:21). His authority is not just in heaven but in the church as well. “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church” (Eph. 1:22). Truly, Christ has all authority “in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). If angels hasten to do His bidding in heaven (Matt. 6:10) then men should be equally prompt to do His will on earth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What qualities does Peter call for to produce harmony in the church?
2. How should we repay evil or insults? Why?
3. What will prolong and enhance life?
4. What should be the Christian response to suffering for doing what is right?
5. How will placing Christ as Lord in our hearts prepare us to answer questions about our faith?

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6. What attitudes should we have when sharing our faith with others?
7. What is your view of Christ preaching to the spirits in prison?
8. In what way is the water of Noah's flood symbolic of baptism?
9. How does baptism save us "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"?
10. Who is now subject to Christ?

Living for God (4:1-11)

4 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. ²As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶For 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.

⁷The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. ⁸Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰Each one should use whatever

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gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If 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.

V. 1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, — Victory over sin comes only after great struggle. The writer points us to Jesus as a great example. Christ not only overcame the temptation to sin, He suffered for sin in His atoning death on the tree.

arm yourselves also with the same attitude, — It was Christ's inner resolve that won the battle over the flesh and sin. If we are going to win the battle over the world, the flesh and the devil, we must develop a Christ-like determination to overcome.

because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. — The Amplified Bible reads, "for whoever has suffered in the flesh having the mind of Christ has done with intentional sin—has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God." Arming ourselves with the mind of Christ will help us win the battle of the desires of the flesh.

V. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, — A spiritual mind can subdue the flesh! We don't have to live in bondage to fleshly desires. As long as we are walking in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Having the mind of Christ changes our priorities and desires.

but rather for the will of God. — We change from doing what *self* wants to do to doing what *God* would have us to do. "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (II Cor. 5:15).

V. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — The old way of life was not only a wicked way of life but a wasted way as well. "Wasted years, wasted years! O, how foolish! As you walk on in darkness and fear. Turn around, turn around, God is calling! He's calling you from a life of wasted years."

living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. — Many of Peter's readers had lived lives of sin "to the hilt." Their past was a sin-soaked one. No Christian, having been delivered from such a life, should ever go back to it again.

V. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, — The Phillips Translation says,

“Indeed your former companions may think it very queer that you will no longer join with them.” But why should they? We are Christ’s sheep and sheep don’t wallow! Only pigs wallow (II Peter 2:22).

and they heap abuse on you. — Old companions, still steeped in sin, can make it rough on new Christians. But mocking and ridicule will never deter the one who has armed himself with the mind and resolve of Jesus Christ.

V. 5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. — Pagans who mock their former friends who are now Christians and no longer join them in their “welter of debauch” (Knox Version) will stand before the Lord in judgment for their unbridled behavior and evil imprecations. All men will be there, both the living and the dead (Acts 17:31).

V. 6 For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are 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 immediate context seems to indicate that the dead are those Christians who paid the ultimate price for their new way of life. I like Robert Gundry’s comments here: “‘The dead’ to whom the Gospel was preached (4:6) are not ‘the spirits in prison’ of 3:18ff. They are Christians who have been martyred (‘judged in the flesh [by their persecutors]’) and, as a result, now enjoy the life of heaven (‘live in the spirit’).”

V. 7 The end of all things is near. — Many believe Peter wrote this epistle around 63 A.D. If so, “the end” could be a reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem which took place in 70 A.D. Or it could be the impending near-destruction of the city of Rome in 64 A.D. (which resulted in the end of freedom for Christians for many years). At this time of writing Peter’s readers were already undergoing a “fiery trial” (v. 12) under the cruel emperor Nero. It is possible that Peter felt the end of the world was near (which he describes in vivid detail in II Peter 3:10-12). In any event, he tells them to prepare for the end by doing the following.

Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. — The drunken debauchery described in v. 3 was certainly no way to prepare for the end. This was the route the mockers of Noah’s time chose to go out on (see Matt. 24:37-39). Christians are to “watch and pray” (Mark 13:33).

V. 8 Above all, love each other deeply, — It takes love to stand together during a trial of Christian faith or practice. Some would be

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called upon to lay down their lives for their brothers (John 15:13). One of the Roman emperors, Trajan, wrote in admiration, "Behold, how they love one another!"

because love covers over a multitude of sins. — If we really love our fellow Christians, we will overlook a sin that may have been committed against us in a time of stress. Real love will "forgive and disregard the offenses of others" (The Amplified Bible). "Love covereth all sins" (Prov. 10:12). Love "keeps no record of wrongs" (I Cor. 13:5). In times of great stress we simply must overlook some of the things a brother may say or do.

V. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. — The early Christians lost lands and houses for the gospel's sake (Mark 10:29). These suffering saints would need a place to stay so Peter urges "ungrudging hospitality" (Weymouth) on the part of those who still had their homes. In the bittersweet story of Anne Frank (*Diary of a Young Girl*) one can see the tremendous pressure that is put on humans when times of persecution call for shared quarters. Hospitality is a mark of a true Christian (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2).

V. 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received — The gifts mentioned here are not *spiritual* gifts (like I Cor. 12) but *service* gifts, special endowments from God that enable Christians to minister to each other, especially in a time of crisis like the early Christians were experiencing. God grants different gifts and abilities to His children for service (Rom. 12:3-8).

to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. — The purpose of these special talents is ministry, serving others in their special time of need. We must be good stewards of the unique abilities God has given us. To use them for self or for inordinate profit is to waste our gift from God.

V. 11 If anyone speaks, — God has blessed some with the gift of words. Some can edify, rebuke or exhort others in a public church assembly. Others can encourage, admonish or comfort fellow-believers in private conversation.

he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. — Since speaking is such a special gift from God, the one so gifted should speak as God would speak. "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak" was the clarion cry of our Restoration forefathers. The Scriptures are all sufficient for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). Let us have so much of God in us that we will speak "the very words of God."

If anyone serves, — In the great tradition of Acts 6 there are also those who have the gift of “serving tables,” those whom God has blessed with a servant spirit, cast in the mold of Christ Himself who came to serve (Mark 10:45).

he should do it with the strength God provides, — Those blessed with a servant spirit should operate on the strength that God supplies. As God provides the strength, we minister. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. — Speaking and service are not only to minister to others but to bring glory to God as well. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. — Peter repeats this declaration in 5:11 (see also I Cor. 10:31; I Tim. 6:16; Rev. 5:12, 13).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How will having Christ's attitude help us in our suffering?
2. What practices does Peter mention that describe our sinful past?
3. What do our old friends think is strange about us? Should this bother us?
4. To whom must our former companions in sin eventually give an account?
5. What is your view of the gospel preached to the dead?
6. What is your view of “the end of all things is near”?
7. Why would the scattered church need a deep love?
8. Do you make it a practice to overlook sins committed against you? Explain.
9. What was the problem some were having with hospitality?
10. What are “service gifts”?

Suffering for Being a Christian (4:12-19)

¹²Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷For 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? ¹⁸And,

“If it is hard for the righteous to be
saved,
what will become of the ungodly
and the sinner?”

¹⁹So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

V. 12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, — The apostle did not want his friends to be "bewildered" (NEB) by what was happening to them. Jesus had warned His would-be followers, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matt. 10:22). Paul promised, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). One did not become a Christian in those terrible times without serious consideration of the possible—if not probable—consequences.

as though something strange were happening to you. — Suffering cannot be separated from Christianity. God suffered. His Son suffered. The apostles suffered. The early Christians suffered. "Must I be carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease? While others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?"

V. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, — Rather than being dismayed or shocked, we should consider it a joy to share in the sufferings of Christ. Suffering for one's faith gives us a rare sense of oneness with Jesus. Paul actually prayed for the "fellowship of his sufferings" that he might know Christ better (Phil. 3:10).

so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. — If you want to share in the glory of Christ's coming you must go with Him through the garden of His sufferings. There is no crown without a Calvary, no glory without a Gethsemane. See Romans 8:17, 18.

V. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, — Some feel that the disciples in Antioch were first called "Christians" in derision (Acts 11:26). James says they were: "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" (James 2:7). To wear the name of Christ is to open oneself to possible ridicule and verbal abuse. To identify with Jesus is to expose ourselves to the slander and censure of an unbelieving world.

you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. — Suffering for the cause of Christ can be our "red badge of courage." We should actually be happy when such occurs because God has placed His divine stamp of approval on those who suffer for the cause of Christ in the spirit of Christ. God's Spirit is there to comfort and console.

V. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, — The first Christians, who suffered greatly at the hands of the Roman state, were never to live so that the state would have just cause to punish them for genuine criminal activity. Christians are not above the law.

or even as a meddler. — Sometimes people get in trouble because of being a busybody, “prying into other people’s affairs” (Taylor), “interested in matters which do not concern Christians” (20th Century New Testament). If we stick our nose in someone else’s business let us not cry “Persecution!” when said nose gets punched! See II Thessalonians 3:11; I Timothy 5:13.

V. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, — The term “Christian” appears only three times in Scripture (here, Acts 11:26 and 26:28). Each time it is in the context of God’s people on the hot seat. To be a “Christian” is a popular thing today, even to the point of being politically expedient at election time. Not so in Biblical times.

do not be ashamed, — We are not to be ashamed of Jesus, His teachings (Mark 8:38), or the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). We are not to be ashamed of suffering as a Christian or of those who suffer for Christ’s sake (II Tim. 1:8). Christ is not ashamed to call us His brethren (Heb. 2:11) so why should we be ashamed of Him?

but praise God that you bear that name. — Alexander the Great once told a timid soldier who shared the same name as himself to either show bravery in battle or change his name! We bear the name that is “above every name” (Phil. 2:9), the only name under heaven by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12). Praise God for the privilege of being called a Christian!

V. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; — This judgment does not appear to be the final judgment but rather the unleashed fury on the Roman state that would soon be directed against the Christians. In 64 A.D., one year after this epistle was written, the imperial city of Rome was nearly consumed by fire. Nero blamed the Christians for what many believe was the work of his own wicked hand. Christians were rounded up by Roman execution squads and herded to terrible deaths. Some were torn to pieces by wild animals. Some were sewn inside wild animal skins and hunted down by dogs. Some were covered with pitch and set afire to illuminate the garden of Nero so he could watch even more unspeakable atrocities.

and if it begins with us, — Christians are often the first to feel the brunt of violence from the state. Jewish persecution claimed the lives

of Stephen and James. Roman persecution was responsible for the deaths of Peter, Paul and countless thousands of Christians.

what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? — The Christians, though suffering horribly—even to the point of death—had a faith that insured eternal life. Many of them went to their deaths singing and praising God! But what hope is there for the one who hasn't obeyed the gospel? He is a double loser: he loses in this life (which is bad enough) and he loses in the next (which is the ultimate tragedy). See II Thessalonians 1:8.

V. 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, — This is a reference from Proverbs 11:31. How does it apply here? Peter wants his friends to know that they will be saved, even though there will be difficulties. After being stoned and left for dead at Lystra, Paul testified that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Jesus said that His followers would be hated for His name's sake but that those who would endure to the end would be saved (Matt. 10:22). This verse does not teach that Christians will "barely" or "scarcely" be saved; it is saying that because of persecution there will be difficulties. But, praise God, they *will* be saved!

what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" — What chance will these poor souls have? Faith in Christ will take a man through the worst of trials. Those without faith are to be pitied. Consider the long centuries of untold suffering that unbelieving Jews have experienced.

V. 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will — Peter knew nothing of the "health and wealth" gospel of today that teaches that it is not God's will that anyone suffer. Suffering can certainly be the will of God (see James 5:10-11).

should commit themselves to their faithful Creator — The word "commit" (*paratithemi*) is an old banking term meaning that you trust a person enough to deposit your money with them. In times of suffering we should commit ourselves to God. This is what Jesus did on the cross, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). This is what Paul did before kneeling before a hooded Roman executioner (II Tim. 1:12). God is faithful. He saves those who trust in Him (I Tim. 4:10). "Be not dismayed what'er betide, God will take care of you!"

and continue to do good. — Regardless of what is happening (or is going to happen), Christians are to keep on doing good. Faithfulness to the end is what God asks of us (Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10). An

old man was hoeing his garden. He was asked what he would do if he knew he would die the next day. Without looking up he replied, "I would finish hoeing this row of peas." Continue to do good!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why should we not be surprised when we are called upon to suffer for our faith?
2. Have you ever been insulted because of the name of Christ? Explain.
3. What is the overall Biblical context of the word "Christian"?
4. How should we respond to the problem of "meddlers" in the church?
5. Have you ever been ashamed to admit that you were a Christian? Explain.
6. How can we overcome the temptation to be ashamed of Jesus?
7. In what way does God "judge" his people in life?
8. What does Peter mean when he says, "If it is *hard* for the righteous to be saved"?
9. What verse in this chapter indicates suffering can be a part of God's will?
10. What all is involved in "committing" ourselves to God? Have you made this full commitment?

To the Elders and Young Men (5:1-11)

5 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. ²Be 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; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

⁵Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

“God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble.”

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

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⁸Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰And 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. ¹¹To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

V. 1 To the elders among you, — Elders (*presbuteros*) were mature church leaders that watched over the Christians who had been entrusted to their care (Heb. 13:7). Scattered as they were (1:1) the Christians would need oversight all the more. In trying times, such as they were experiencing, this would be even more important.

I appeal as a fellow elder, — The Catholic church has made a great error in ascribing preeminence to Peter. He was not a pope but an elder (and to be an elder one must be a married man, 1 Tim. 3:2). He was not even the “leading elder” or “main elder” but a “fellow elder.” Peter’s humble example is a good lesson for those who would exert undue authority in the eldership today.

a witness of Christ’s sufferings — Peter personally observed the sufferings of his Lord (although it was from “afar off,” Luke 23:49). John, a fellow apostle, wrote, “That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have *looked at* and our hands have *touched*—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). To be an apostle one had to witness the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22).

and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: — Peter not only was a witness of Christ’s sufferings, and a fellow elder but would, in the future “share in the glory to be revealed.” How fortunate can a man be? This honor will be bestowed upon all who love the Lord and look for His return (Rom. 8:17).

V. 2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, — Elders are to be shepherds—undershepherds really—under the Chief Shepherd Himself (v. 4). A good elder will watch the flock (Heb. 13:17), feed the flock (Acts 20:28), guide the flock (Ps. 23:3), guard and protect the flock (Titus 1:9-11). Peter himself was told to feed Christ’s sheep (John 21:15-17).

Note that the flock is *God’s*, not *man’s*. Paul warned about elders who would draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30).

What a tremendous responsibility an elder has! God has actually put His church under their care. Woe to the elder who shirks his divinely ordered duty! Woe to the church that rebels against God's appointed leaders!

serving as overseers — Elders are to be servants, not lords. They are to oversee the affairs of the congregation, not overlook.

not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; — An elder is to *desire* the work (many desire the office, few desire the work). We make mockery of the sacred office and work when we vote unwilling, unqualified men to be "elders" at our "annual elections" (try finding that practice in Holy Scripture). Men who took on the responsibility of shepherds in apostolic times did so out of a genuine desire to help God's people in difficult times. They served for two reasons: because they wanted to and because God wanted them to.

not greedy for money, but eager to serve; — Elders who worked hard at their task of feeding God's flock were to receive a "double stipend" (NEB) for their efforts (I Tim. 5:17, 18). Those who preach the gospel are to receive their living from the gospel (I Cor. 9:14). But no man should ever teach or preach for the sake of money.

V. 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, — The work of an elder is a sacred trust. Let no elder abuse his office by running roughshod over the church as the would-be dictator Diotrophes did (III John 9, 10).

but being examples to the flock, — The Lord's church does not need do-nothing boards or ruthless lords. It needs good examples of how to live the victorious life in turbulent times. Paul said to follow the faith of church leaders (Heb. 13:7). Elders are to lead the way in their lifestyle. Who would ever follow an elder's teaching on "self-control" when they see him blow his stack at a board meeting?

V. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, — The early Christians lived in expectation of the second coming of Christ and so should we. Christ is referred to here as the *Chief* Shepherd. Every elder needs to remember that Christ is head over His church (Eph. 1:22, 23). When Christ returns they will give an account to Him for how they watched over His sheep.

you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. — Elders who have done their work out of genuine love for the Lord and His people will receive a wonderful reward when Jesus returns—special recognition that will last forever. Elders, *it is worth it, it will be worth it all!*

V. 5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. — By the very nature of the word, elders are “older,” both in years and understanding. Peter instructs the young men in the church—the future leaders—to yield to the counsel and advice of the elders. Their time to lead will come but will they make good leaders if they have not been good followers? This is why it is important for elders to be in submission to their “elder,” Jesus Christ. If they aren’t, how can the young men in the church be submissive to them “in the same way”?

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, — As Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples’ feet, so Christians (leaders and members alike) should have a humble attitude toward each other. “Put on the apron of humility to serve one another” (Moffatt Translation).

because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” — Peter cites Poverbs 3:34 to underscore this needed truth. The same thought is expressed in James 4:6. “In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). Humility will eliminate church fights.

V. 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, — Nebuchadnezzar, himself a powerful king, learned humility the hard way—under the mighty hand of God (Dan. 4:28-37). Sometimes God puts the pressure on us to bring us to our knees before Him. The Amplified New Testament says, “Lower yourselves in your own estimation.”

that he may lift you up in due time. — God’s “due time” is not our time. We want instant answers, remedies, solutions. If we practice humility, God will lift us up in His own time and in His own way. He lifted up Joseph from the pit to a palace, from a prison to position under Pharaoh. He will do the same for all who humble themselves before Him.

V. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. — How these words must have comforted Peter’s readers! There *was* someone who cared, there *was* something they could do to alleviate their daily fears. What a blessing this must have been to the concerned pastors and their flock. God cared! “You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern” (Phillips). Paul’s advice was not to worry about anything and to pray about everything (Phil. 4:6).

V. 8 Be self-controlled and alert. — Jesus warned His disciples, “Watch and pray” (Matt. 26:41). By all means we should pray. It is a great antidote to worry. But also be watchful and alert. Life goes on. Just because we’ve prayed about it doesn’t mean our part in the battle is over.

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. — Satan has been a murderer from the very beginning (John 8:44). He entered the heart of Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2, 27). He prompted Peter himself to dissuade Jesus from making atonement for sin on the cross (Matt. 16:21-23). Satan hated Christ and hates all Christians and seeks their death through means of entering and using people. The devil is not some legendary figure in a red suit with tail and pitchfork; he is “the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). He is alive and well and lusting for souls. He knows his eventual fate (Matt. 25:41) and knows his time is short (Rev. 12:12). That is why he works with such ferocity to devour Christians.

V. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, — Satan is forced to flee when confronted with the power of faith (Matt. 4:11; James 4:7). Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4). Unshakable faith is what kept the first Christians from denying their Lord.

because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. — Not only did their faith in Christ enable them to remain loyal under Satanic onslaught but hearing about the faith of their fellow Christians who were also under fire served to encourage, embolden and strengthen their resolve. When you know that you are not alone in this matter of suffering—that others are remaining faithful to Jesus despite hardship—it helps you to be more determined.

Christians today need to be one in spirit with our persecuted brothers and sisters in anti-Christian countries. We are commanded to “remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (Heb. 13:3). Pray for your brethren through the world who are being persecuted for their faith.

V. 10 And the God of all grace, — What a beautiful word is inserted here. How they needed the grace of God! Grace is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). It is given to those who humble themselves before God (v. 5).

who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, — Beyond suffering is eternal glory. God has called us to His everlasting glory. To think that God would share that with us! So Paul is led to say that our “light affliction” (in comparison with Christ’s) is but “for a moment” and works for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17).

after you have suffered a little while, — Suffering is tempered with these welcome words, “a little while.” Even Christ’s sufferings did not last forever. Knowing that glory awaited Him helped as well. Jesus, “for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). We too can endure whatever Satan hurls at us. We have faith that can see us through (v. 9a), we are encouraged by the noble example of our fellow Christians in the face of persecution (v. 9b), we have the hope of eternal life through Jesus (v. 10).

will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. — Coming through a trial has a way of toughening us. God builds better men in the fires of adversity. The word for “restore” (*katartizo*) is a word used to describe the mending of nets in Matthew 4:21. God can repair the snagged and broken life. And when He gets done, the net is stronger and tougher than before.

V. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever, Amen. — Matthew Henry comments, “Those who have obtained grace from the God of all grace should and will ascribe glory, dominion and power to him for ever and ever.”

Final Words (5:12-14)

¹²With 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.

¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

V. 12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, — Silas (a contracted form of Silvanus) was a frequent traveling companion of Paul (Acts 15:40; 16:25; etc.). Apparently, he served as Peter’s amanuensis (secretary) in the writing of this letter.

encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. — Peter's dual reason for writing to the scattered Christians is seen here: (1) to encourage these suffering saints, and (2) to assure them that what they believed was worth suffering—even dying—for, why suffer and die for something that isn't true?

Stand fast in it. — He exhorts them to faithfulness, to stand firm to the end, regardless of the cost. Take your stand in the grace of God. It is the only thing that will last.

V. 13 She who is in Babylon, — The Greek for "church" (*ekklesia*) is feminine in gender; hence, the term "she." But which "Babylon"? Is it the famous city on the Euphrates or is it a figurative term for Rome? At the time of Peter's writing there was a large colony of Jews in Babylon who had fled from Rome because of persecution from the emperor Claudius. But Rome is also called Babylon in Scripture, Revelation 17:5, 18 (as Jerusalem is spiritually called Sodom, Rev. 11:8). The historical setting of the book would seem to favor Rome.

chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, — Whoever the church in "Babylon" was, they wanted their fellow Christians to know that they were one with them in faith and sufferings. All Christians have been chosen by the Father to be a part of His family and should rejoice in each other's fellowship.

and so does my son Mark. — Mark (John Mark), the author of the second gospel, was a spiritual son to Peter as Timothy and Titus were considered by Paul to be his spiritual children in the faith (I Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). Real church leaders will reproduce themselves in the lives of others.

V. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. — The "kiss of fellowship" (Knox Translation) was characteristic of the early church. Their detractors distorted the practice with false charges of immoral behavior.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ, — What a beautiful word to end this epistle with! Peace. The Christians had gone through so much. They were enduring much persecution. Still more terrible things awaited many of them. But peace, "freedom from fear" (Amplified), would be with them! And so will it be with all who are in Christ Jesus our Lord!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why did the church in Peter's time especially need elders?

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I AND II PETER

2. To whom does the church belong? How will knowing this help an elder serve?
3. What might be a good alternative to voting in unwilling, unqualified men to the eldership?
4. What all should be involved in elders "overseeing" a church?
5. In what ways is Jesus the *Chief* Shepherd?
6. What attitude should young men in the church have to the elders?
7. How will humility help when problems arise in the church?
8. What is a good Christian antidote for worry?
9. How does Satan get into the church? How can we offset his evil work?
10. How can we help our persecuted brethren in other parts of the world?
11. What does Peter mention about Silas? Mark?
12. What is your view of the church in "Babylon"?

LESSONS ON II PETER

INTRODUCTION TO II PETER

The language of Peter's second epistle is somewhat different from that which he employed in his first letter. Understanding the purpose for which he wrote each letter can help us determine the reason why. In his first letter Peter was concerned with the *external* threat to the church through persecution from the Roman state. In the second letter he is concerned with the *internal* threat to the church through the influence of false teachers. Whereas the first letter was written to comfort and encourage, the second was written to warn and expose. Hence, the difference in language.

Although the genuineness and authenticity of II Peter has been held in question by some, I believe the book is inspired of God from the following internal evidence:

1. The author identifies himself as Peter (1:1)
2. He claims apostleship (1:1)
3. He had been personally informed by Christ as to how he would die (1:13)

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I AND II PETER

4. He witnessed the transfiguration of Christ (1:16-18)
5. He has already written a previous letter to the same people (3:1)
6. He was familiar with the writings of Paul (3:15)
7. He includes similar words and teachings found in his first epistle, i.e., "precious," I Peter 1:7; II Peter 1:1; and the doctrine of last things, I Peter 1:5; II Peter 3:10.

For a fuller defense of the authenticity of II Peter see the introductory material to II Peter in *The New Bible Commentary* (Eerdmans) by Davidson, Stibbs, and Kevan.

II Peter is the last letter of a man who knows he is about to die (1:13). Peter is living in the shadow of an inverted Roman cross. Therefore, there is a great sense of urgency in his words. The man who was once a "hot-headed" disciple is now a "hot-hearted" pastor. He urges his scattered flock to make their calling and election sure (1:3-11), assures them that the Scripture he writes is inspired of God (1:12-21), warns of false teachers (chapter 2), and predicts the day of the Lord and the destruction of the world (chapter 3).

The book is thought to have been written about 66 or 67 A.D. The place of writing is not stated.

Since there is so much similarity between II Peter (especially chapter 2) and the book of Jude, a few words of explanation may be appropriate here. Peter predicts the coming of false teachers (most of his verbs are in the future tense, 2:1) whereas Jude refers to false teachers as a present reality in his day (Jude 4). Jude also tells his readers to remember the words of the apostles (Jude 17) and then proceeds to quote II Peter 3:3 almost verbatim (Jude 18). Peter wrote his material about 66 or 67 A.D. and died under Nero about 68 A.D. Jude was written between 75 and 80 A.D. So it appears that for these reasons it is Jude quoting Peter rather than Peter quoting Jude.

Greeting (1:1, 2)

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

1 To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

²Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

V. 1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, — The writer adds two words not found in the opening verse of I Peter: “Simon” and “servant.” Here he gives his proper name, Simon (meaning “hearing” or “hearing with acceptance”). Remember that Jesus changed his name to “Peter” (John 1:42). Simon is called “Simeon” in Acts 15:14, a variant of Simon.

The word for “servant” (*doulos*) means subjection under bondage. However, Peter voluntarily accepted his role as a willing servant of Jesus Christ. Note that he places servanthood before apostleship.

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: — Faith can be obtained only through the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:22). This faith is shared by all to whom Jesus is precious. It draws us together in Him. It is the common denominator that brings believers together. We are all members of the one body of Christ, equal in honor and privilege.

V. 2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance — See notes on I Peter 1:2.

through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. — Knowledge (*epignosis*) is a compound word expressing *full* knowledge. We are to “gain fuller knowledge of God” (Knox Translation). It is also *personal* knowledge. Paul did not say “I know *what* I have believed.” He said, “I know *whom* I have believed” (II Tim. 1:12). Peter will close this letter with an appeal to grow in the knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18).

Adding to Our Faith (1:3-11)

Making One's Calling and Election Sure

³His 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. ⁴Through 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.

⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For 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. ⁹But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

¹⁰Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

V. 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness — Our power source for living comes from God through Christ. All that we need to live the Christian life is supplied in Jesus. All we need is Jesus but we need all of Jesus. "His power can make you what you ought to be!" (Cyrus S. Nusbaum). The power of Christ within thoroughly equips us for godly living in a wicked world.

through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. — Knowledge is power. Knowledge of Jesus is even more powerful. The more we know of Jesus the more powerful our lives will be for him. He has called us to live for him by his own "splendour and might" (NEB). Peter himself experienced the magnetic pull of the call of Christ (John 1:40-42).

V. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, — Through the glory and goodness of Jesus we are granted priceless promises. What did we ever do to deserve all this? Jesus, you're just too good to us! In his 200-year-old classic "Precious Bible Promises," Samuel Clarke listed and categorized literally hundreds of Bible promises to believers. And the Bible says that not one word of all his good promises has failed (Num. 23:19; I Kings 8:56; Josh. 23:14). All the promises of God have their "Yes" in Christ (II Cor. 1:20).

so that through them you may participate in the divine nature — Christians should study the promises of the Bible because in so doing they can actually share in the divine nature, the spiritual life that proceeds from God. God's spirit links up with ours when we get into a serious study of the promises.

and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. — Another blessing of studying the promises of God is that the world will have less and less of a pull on us. When we find ourselves desiring the promises of God more than the glitter-coated corruption of the world, we will experience victory over the flesh. The Greek for "escape" is in the emphatic form of "flee." If you would flee from the passions of the world, flee to the promises in the Word!

V. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; — With all this in view the Christian should be eager and zealous to fortify his faith with all the good things he can. Peter strongly believed that a Christian should grow in the faith (I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18). The first supplement he mentions is goodness (*arete*). The Williams Translation has "moral character." What good is a religious faith if there is no moral excellence (Rom. 2:17-24)?

and to goodness, knowledge; — Knowledge (*gnosis*) stands in contrast with our former ignorance (I Peter 1:14). Spiritual knowledge is just cause for rejoicing (Jer. 9:24). It liberates the soul (John 8:32) and leads to eternal life (John 17:3). One caution however: knowledge can also puff us up (I Cor. 8:1) so it must always be tempered by love.

V. 6 and to knowledge, self-control; — To know is not enough. We must have self-control (*egkrateia*), literally “to take a grip on oneself.” “Self-restraint” is Alford’s translation. We are to control our thinking, speech, attitude, and conduct.

and to self-control, perseverance; — Chrysostom called perseverance (*hupomone*) “The Queen of the Virtues.” To persevere is to patiently endure. Jesus *endured* the cross (Heb. 12:2). What a needed virtue in an impatient society demanding instant answers, solutions, and gratification.

and to perseverance, godliness; — Godliness (*eusebeia*) is to think, talk, and act like God. It is to be God-like (I Tim. 6:11). It must come from him. We cannot manufacture or fabricate it.

V. 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; — This word comes from *philadelphia*, love of the brethren. Goodspeed reads, “a spirit of brotherhood.” Peter has already urged this (I Peter 2:17, 22). Why is it that sometimes we treat the people of the world with more kindness than we do our own brethren in the church?

and to brotherly kindness, love. — Seven virtues are mentioned in this list and, as always, love (*agape*) is the greatest virtue. It is the greatest of the heralded three in I Corinthians 13:13. It heads the list in the famous “fruit of the Spirit” passage in Galatians 5:22, 23. It crowns all virtues in Colossians 3:12-14. *Agape* love is God’s love, unconditional.

V. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, — These seven, love-crowned virtues are not to be static. We are not just to *have* them as a part of our character—we are to *grow* in them day by day.

they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. — Growing Christians will not be “idle nor unfruitful” (ASV). Why be a Christian at all if we do not intend to be effective and productive for Christ? The reason Jesus chose us was that we would be fruitful (John 15:16). We will never be fruitful for Christ until we are full of his fruit—the chain of seven graces that we are to add to our faith.

V. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, — The person who does not add these Biblical virtues to his faith is spiritually shortsighted. His lifeview does not include the long look into eternity. In fact, he is spiritually blind, like the lamentable Laodiceans (Rev. 3:17).

and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. — What a pathetic picture Peter paints for us! Not only is this person nearsighted and blind, but he has a bad memory as well! It is more than a bad memory, however. Such a person is “oblivious that he has been cleansed from his erstwhile sins” (Moffatt Translation). He has “*chosen to forget*” (TCNT). What a terrible insult to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).

V. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. — Earnest, eager effort should be exerted by every Christian who wants eternal life. Note the order of “calling and election.” God calls all to salvation through the gospel (II Thess. 2:14) but our election, or choosing, depends upon our obedience to Christ (Heb. 5:9). God invites all men to be saved but He can only save those who do his will (Matt. 7:21). We are saved when we obey the gospel (Acts 2:38) and as we continue in his word (John 14:23). Our salvation is solidified by faithfulness to Jesus.

For if you do these things, you will never fall, — “Standing on the promises, I cannot fall!” (R. Kelso Carter). How true! As long as we are eager to grow in our Christian faith and do so, we are safe. The Christian *does* have “eternal security”—*if* he does these things! But if we fail to grow in Christ we will most assuredly fall from grace (Gal. 5:4).

V. 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. — Goodspeed translates, “you will be triumphantly admitted.” How wonderful it will be to hear our Lord and Savior say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:21). But only those who have done the will of God will be admitted through the splendid gates into the eternal city of light (Rev. 22:14).

Note that the kingdom of our Lord is *eternal*. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall (Hitler’s Third Reich is a powerful reminder) but Christ’s great kingdom is forever (Dan. 2:44; I Cor. 15:23, 24; II Tim. 4:18).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Does Peter’s placement of “servant” before “apostle” (1:1) have any significance? Explain.

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I AND II PETER

2. Is there a difference between personal knowledge of Jesus and knowledge of Biblical facts? Explain.
3. How can we become partakers of the divine nature?
4. How do the promises of God help us in escaping the world's corruption?
5. Name the seven virtues we are to add to our faith.
6. Which of the above virtues do you need to work on most in your life? Will you? Beginning today?
7. How will possessing these virtues help us in our knowledge of Christ? i.e., What will be the effect?
8. How does Peter describe the man who does *not* have these virtues?
9. How can we make our calling and election sure?
10. What word does Peter use to describe the duration of Christ's kingdom?

Prophecy of Scripture (1:12-21)

¹²So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

¹³I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

¹⁶We 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. ¹⁷For 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." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

¹⁹And 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. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

V. 12 So I will always remind you of these things, — Peter, like a good father or shepherd, wants to be sure his readers understand. All of us need to be constantly reminded of God's eternal message, both the promises and the warnings.

even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. — We are established in the truth—as long as we continue in it (Col. 1:23). This is why teaching and preaching in the church assemblies is so important. The cares of daily living have a subtle way of choking the Word so that we become unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). Since there is nothing new under the sun, most preaching is repetitive in nature. But we need to hear the old story over and over again. As Catherine Hankey wrote in her great hymn "I Love to Tell the Story," it satisfies our longings as nothing else can do.

V. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory — Unfortunately, man is prone to forget. God warns us about forgetting him, especially in the book of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 4:9, 23; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19). We need to be stirred and stimulated by the preaching of the promises and warnings in the Word.

as long as I live in the tent of this body, — This is an aging preacher's last bow. The "tent" that Peter mentions (*skenoma*) is a frail tent, erected for only a night (M. R. Vincent). Peter knew he was not long for this world. Nor are we. But, as Paul wrote, "we know that if the *earthly tent* we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an *eternal house* in heaven" (II Cor. 5:1).

V. 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, — Montgomery's Translation reads, "the time for me to strike tent comes swiftly on." The Moffatt Translation says, "I know my tent must be folded up very soon." What poignant words! But how did Peter know? The rest of the verse will give us the answer.

as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. — We must take this to be a reference to John 21:18, 19 where Jesus revealed to Peter three things about his impending demise: (1) it would be in advancing age, (2) when he would be frail and feeble, unable to even dress himself, (3) and he would be taken forcibly to where he did not want to go.

Jesus pointed out to Peter the kind of death by which he would glorify God. Origen records that Peter's last request was to be crucified head downward because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as his beloved Lord. The request was granted.

V. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. — It seems that Peter's "death wish" is with reference to the *written* word for his spoken words have long ceased their echo in the temple courts and across hill and vale. Peter, at last, made his departure (*exodos*) but his words live on!

The next five verses deal with the written message of God. Only through the written Word are we able to remember everything God would have us to know. Praise God for the revelation, inspiration, and preservation of the Scriptures! The books of First and Second Peter are heartwarming evidences that Peter's wish came true. Like Job, his desire that his words be remembered, came true (Job 19:23).

V. 16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, — The beautiful story of Jesus is not some collection of "tales artfully spun" (NEB). Peter and the other apostles did not fabricate fables or manufacture myths about Jesus.

but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. — The use of "we" indicates Peter is now speaking as one of the apostles. The majestic phenomenon of the transfiguration was personally witnessed by Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36). John later wrote, "That which . . . we have seen with our eyes . . . this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (I John 1:1).

V. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, — Jesus Christ could receive no greater glory than to receive verbal praise from his own Father in front of apostles and prophets (Moses and Elijah were present as well).

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." — What a rare privilege it must have been for Peter to hear such wonderful words! These words were also voiced by God at the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:17). But at the cross there was only silence for Christ had become sin (II Cor. 5:21) and God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13).

V. 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. — The apostles became

“earwitnesses” as well. John testifies, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard” (I John 1:3). The mountain (thought by many to be Mt. Tabor) was made sacred, or holy, by the events that transpired there and by the words which were uttered.

V. 19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, — This is not to say that the Old Testament is superior to the gospel. Peter is simply stating that the prophecies of the Messiah were made *more sure* because of their fulfillment in Jesus. Christ is the confirmation of the Prophets!

and you will do well to pay attention to it, — i.e., to the Old Testament prophecies of Christ. What a marvelous, rewarding study is the study of Messianic prophecy! Philip cried to Nathaniel, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). There are over 300 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. What riches await the person who will pay attention to them!

as to a light shining in a dark place, — The prophecies of the Messiah are like shining stars in the dark skies of the Old Testament. They are like “a lamp shining in a gloomy place” (TCNT). What light they shed on Scripture—and those who study it!

until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. — It is an unforgettable experience to have the light of Scripture slowly dawn upon us as the person of the lovely Jesus gradually emerges in our study of the Bible and finally break through our hearts in radiant glory (II Cor. 4:4-6). Like the men on the road to Emmaus our eyes are opened, we know him, and we cry, “Did not our heart burn within us?”

Christ is called the “morning star” in Revelation 22:16.

V. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. — Why is this so important to understand? Because if the prophet flavored the prophecy with his own opinion it would not be the unadulterated Word of God. All Scripture is “God-breathed” (II Tim. 3:16). God revealed it, men recorded it.

The word for “interpretation” (*epilusis*) means to untie a knot, to unloose a bundle so as to disclose the contents. The prophets untied the knot and revealed the contents without putting their own construction on the God-breathed message.

V. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, — It is a wicked thing to assert, as skeptics and even some liberal theologians

do, that the Bible is merely the product of man's genius, Prophecy originated in the mind of God. The Bible writer's own testimony is that the sacred writings came from the Spirit of God and not the will of themselves (I Cor. 2:13; I Thess. 2:13).

but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. — Over 2000 times the writers of the Bible testify that the words they recorded came from Almighty God. Witness the oft-spoken phrase, "The word of the Lord came to" (followed by "Joel" or whomever God was speaking to). Again we must emphasize that all Scripture is inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16).

The prophecies in Scripture about the Lord Jesus Christ were not educated guesses or hopeful predictions. The prophets were "carried along"—influenced, yea, *impelled*—by the Holy Spirit of God. In fact, so far above their own knowledge were the words they spoke and wrote that they did not even understand their own prophecies (I Peter 1:10, 11). They became students of their own predictions! Truly, the Word of God is inspired, infallible, and inerrant!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the value of repetition in teaching and preaching?
2. What is the significance of Peter's use of the word "tent"?
3. What did Jesus tell Peter about his (Peter's) coming death?
4. How can we know that the story of Jesus is not some clever invention of Peter?
5. Name four other men who were with Peter on the mountain of transfiguration.
6. How is the word of the prophets "made more certain"?
7. Why should we pursue a study of Messianic prophecy?
8. Who, or what, is the "morning star"?
9. How can we be sure that the prophets didn't add to Scripture their own ideas?
10. What does the phrase "carried along by the Holy Spirit" imply?

Description and Doom of False Teachers (2:1-22)

2 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. ²Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³In 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.

⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; ⁵if 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; ⁶if 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; ⁷and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸(for that

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righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—⁹if 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. ¹⁰This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; ¹¹yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. ¹²But 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.

¹³They 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. ¹⁴With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed— an accursed brood! ¹⁵They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. ¹⁶But 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.

¹⁷These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸For 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. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. ²⁰If 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. ²¹It 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 commandment that was passed on to them. ²²Of 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."

V. 1 But there were also false prophets among the people, — Peter now turns his attention to an age-old problem, false teachers. They stand in stark contrast with the faithful prophets he has just finished describing (1:19-21). He states that there were false prophets among

God's Old Testament people, Israel. Such chapters as I Kings 22, Jeremiah 23, and Ezekiel 33 surely bear this out.

just as there will be false teachers among you. — False teachers know no time or place. They infiltrated the ranks of Israel. They invaded the church. They are with us today. Like the poor, we will always have them with us. Jesus warned of their coming (Matt. 7:15) and the New Testament records their evil presence (Jude 4, *et al*).

They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, — The furtiveness of their character is seen in the phrase "secretly introduce." A kindred adjective is seen in Galatians 2:4 where Paul said that false brethren "infiltrated" the ranks of the church to spy on their freedom in Christ. Jude says they "secretly slipped in among you" (Jude 4).

But the really bad thing about these clandestine characters was their "destructive heresies" ("ruinous divisions," TCNT). Their false teaching divided the church. Heresy (*hairesis*) is "a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of the truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects" (W. E. Vine). O, how the doctrine of the church has been rent asunder by the destructive teaching of opinionated men!

even denying the sovereign Lord who brought them — "Denying" — a highly significant word for Peter to use! But at least he repented of his denial of Jesus. These false teachers went so far as to deny the atoning Christ, the very One who had brought them with His own blood (I Peter 1:19). Such rank heresy cannot be tolerated, even for a moment. Hence, John writes that those who deny foundational truths about Jesus are anti-Christ and must be avoided at all costs (I John 4:3; II John 7, 10).

bringing swift destruction on themselves. — What a self-defeating thing it is to dabble in false teaching. It is to bring ruin on your own head. "If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him" (Prov. 26:27). All false teachers eventually self-destruct and bring their evil house of deceit crashing down on their own heads. "Whose end," warns Paul, "is destruction" (Phil. 3:19).

V. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways — The sad thing is that these deceivers build a following and their followers will suffer the same fate as their licentious leaders. "Shameful" (*aselgeia*) has also been translated "lascivious," "wanton," and "immoral." One of the taproots of false teaching is the sexual lust of dissolute leaders who prey on their foolish disciples.

and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. — True religion often suffers at the hands of falsehood (Rom. 2:24). Christianity is often given a black eye because of the shameless shenanigans of some unscrupulous cult leader and his lemming-like followers.

V. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. — Another underlying cause of false teaching is out-and-out greed. Love for money is a root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10). The motive is money and the method of securing it is fabrication. Unprincipled men make gullible people a source of monetary profit by fabricating wild stories. Behind every cult is some far-fetched tale (Mormonism's "Golden Plates" for example). The wilder the tale, the wider the following.

Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. — Like the sword of Damocles, the sentence hangs over them. Each day they live must be lived in the shadow of Judgment. Their damnation does not slumber. The open jaws of hell await them!

V. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, — Peter now begins a lengthy sentence which goes through verse nine. The gist of the statement is this: if God didn't spare angels (v. 4), the ancient world (v. 5), and Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 6), then where do false teachers get off thinking they will escape punishment for their evil deeds?

Angels were created beings (Ps. 148:2, 5), some of whom joined the rebellion of Satan and were banished from heaven (Jude 6; Rev. 12:9).

but sent them to hell, — The footnote has the Greek *Tartarus*. The sinning angels were not sent directly to hell (Gehenna) for that place still awaits them (Matt. 25:41). Tartarus is a hell-like compartment of Hades (Luke 16:23-26).

putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; — The variant reading in the ASV has "pits of darkness." The TCNT reads, "caverns of darkness." B. W. Johnson called them "dungeons of darkness." What a terrible thing darkness can be! The plague of darkness in Egypt was so thick that it could actually be *felt* (Exod. 10:21). How much more horrible must be the stygian, subterranean caverns of Tartarus!

V. 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, — Sin and rebellion always brings punishment from God. Jesus observed that the antediluvians continued in their merrymaking right "up to the day Noah entered the ark" (Luke

17:27). Then the flood came and destroyed them all. They had been warned (Gen. 6:3) but to no avail.

but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; — God preserves the righteous, just as he punishes the wicked. For 120 years Noah heralded God's message of righteousness (Gen. 6:3; I Peter 3:20). But man had so corrupted himself that only Noah and his wife, their three sons and their wives, were saved.

if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, — Another Old Testament example of recalcitrant sinners being punished is Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude adds "the surrounding towns" as well (Jude 7), which included Admah and Zeboim (Deut. 29:23). Sin has a way of spreading but God has a way of stopping the spread. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was so devastating that for years archaeologists could not even find the remnants. It was an event warranting multiple mention in the Old Testament (Isa. 13:19; Jer. 20:16; Ezek. 16:49; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9).

and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; — The awful fate of the Sodomites should serve as a grim reminder to those who give themselves to the perverted practice of homosexuality. "They serve as an example to those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

V. 7 and if he rescued Lot, — The rescue of Lot, Abraham's nephew, is told in Genesis 19:12-25.

a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men — It is hard to understand how Lot could be called "righteous" when he offered his virgin daughters to a band of lust-crazed men (Gen. 19:8). Little wonder his daughters later took their revenge on him in one of the most disgusting scenes in the Bible (Gen. 19:30-36). Perhaps we should conclude that Lot was "righteous" only in comparison to the perverted inhabitants of Sodom.

The word for "distressed" (*kataponeo*) gives the idea of being "worn down" (M. R. Vincent). A sinful environment can wear us down.

V. 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) — And well he should for he had no business moving his family into such a depraved environment in the first place (Gen. 13:12, 13; 14:12). Your soul is bound to be vexed and tortured when you voluntarily take your place among the wicked.

V. 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials — In spite of it all, Lot was rescued, just as Noah was

delivered. "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles . . . a righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all" (Ps. 34:17, 19).

and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. — This point has already been proven (v. 4) with the fallen angels. Those in Tartarus are already suffering punishment. The rich man was tormented by flames and unbearable thirst (Luke 16:24). Death does not end all!

V. 10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. — Judgment and punishment, in particular, will be for those who are "abandoned to sensuality" and "scorn control" (Weymouth). Those who live for the flesh in defiance of divine authority will pay a terrible price for doing so.

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; — Just as the Sodomites were not awed by angels (Gen. 19:5), so audacious and presumptuous false teachers are not hesitant to rail at divine authority. Nothing is sacred to them—not even the holy angels of God.

V. 11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, — i.e., than the men just described.

do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. — We are told that even Michael the archangel did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against Satan himself. Michael simply said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9). Truly, fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

V. 12 But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. — False teachers are arrogant in their ignorance, even to the point of blasphemy. They "sneer at what they cannot understand" (Knox Translation). See also Jude 10. People who know the least often speak the most. Paul spoke of those who want to teach but don't know what they are talking about (I Tim. 1:7).

They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, — False teachers are like "unreasoning animals" (Jude 10). Their inordinate lust and greed has stripped them of every human vestige, leaving only beast-like characteristics. When cornered or exposed they will bare their fangs and show their true colors.

and like beasts they too will perish. — Choosing to live like beasts, they will die like beasts—without honor. They will "assuredly perish through their own corruption" (TCNT). Rotten in life, rotten in death.

V. 13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. — They will reap eternal consequences for the damage they

have done. Their wickedness will be royally rewarded—"indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:8, 9).

Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. — Although the night is usually reserved by wicked men for sinful behavior (John 3:19; Acts 2:15; I Thess. 5:7), these hedonists took special delight in sinning in broad daylight. They remind us of Absalom (II Sam. 16:22), the sons of Eli (I Sam. 2:22), and the Israelite man and Midianite woman (Num. 25:6). Incidentally, all of the above were punished for their blatant behavior. And so will all who challenge God's moral code.

V. 14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; — "They have eyes for nothing but women, eyes never at rest from sin" (NEB). Nothing was pure in their eyes (Titus 1:15). Barclay says they saw a possible adulteress in every woman, wondering how she could be persuaded to gratify their lust. Unbridled lust was the basis for the Mormon doctrine of polygamy (still practiced by some Mormons today). Armstrongism is riddled with sexual sin among its founders.

they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! — Sex and money are the twin motivators of the false teacher. The curse of God is on them.

V. 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off — To think that these men were once in the truth! What a great warning for us to keep our motives for ministry pure and to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. — Balaam was an infamous seer who was hired by King Balak of Moab to pronounce a curse on Israel (Num. 22-24). He later persuaded Israel to commit sexual sin with the Moabites (Num. 25:1-9; 31:13-16). But he ultimately was the loser, being ignominiously killed in battle (Num. 31:8).

V. 16 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. — This amazing (and somewhat amusing) story is found in Numbers 22:15-35. Even a dumb beast that recognizes his Creator is wiser than a man who stumbles blindly after illicit gain.

V. 17 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. — Paul Cedar says, "They have nothing to offer, and they have no control of where they are going." They are a picture of emptiness and aimlessness. Jude adds even more: "They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit

and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars . . .” (Jude 12, 13). How miserable and bleak is the life of a false teacher.

Blackest darkness is reserved for them. — They lived in unspiritual darkness; they will live forever in eternal darkness of the worst sort. Hell is a place of “outer darkness” (Matt. 25:30). Jude adds, “for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever” (Jude 13). What a dreadful destiny is theirs!

V. 18 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 these who live in error. — “Antinomianism” is the false doctrine that under grace moral law is not binding since faith alone is sufficient for salvation. The antinomians were teaching new Christians that they could still enjoy the pleasures of sin because grace covered all. They taught that God’s moral law was no longer binding because all you needed was faith in Christ. This is the inevitable fruit of “salvation by faith *alone*” teaching which Martin Luther later came to rue and which the apostle James rebuked (James 2:18) as did the apostle Paul (Rom. 6:1, 2).

V. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. — How can someone who is a slave to lust and greed promise anyone “freedom”? What a joke! The false teachers of Peter’s day were nothing more than slaves of Satan, doing the lusts of their father (John 8:34, 44; Rom. 6:16). The world promises you “freedom” but they themselves are slaves to sin.

V. 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — The tragedy is that these men had at one time been saved from their sins through their knowing Christ. Why would anyone, once delivered from the pollution of the world, want to return? It seems incomprehensible, yet men do (Heb. 6:4-6).

and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. — Barclay notes, “It is a dreadful warning that a man can make himself such that in the end the tentacles of sin are inextricably around him.” Jesus said the state of such a man was worse than the first (Luke 11:24-26). How fearful is the fate of the willful backslider!

V. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, — What a shocking but truthful statement! Jesus taught that those who knew the Father’s will, but did things contrary to it, will suffer more severe punishment (Luke 12:47).

than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred commandment that was passed on to them. — This is what makes their doom so appalling. They knew the way, the truth, and the life—and then they deliberately turned their back on it and went back into sin. Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains” (John 9:41).

V. 22 **Of them the proverbs are true;** — The proverb of the dog is from Proverbs 26:11. The proverb (wise saying) of the sow is not found in the Old Testament but was common in Rabbinical writings and Greek classics.

“A dog returns to its vomit,” — What a revolting picture! And yet it accurately portrays the sin of backsliding. Why go back to the sickening fare of the world (I Peter 4:3)?

and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.” — Another disgusting picture of backsliding. The Christian who turns his back on God and returns to a life of sin is like a sow that “rolls in the mud again” (NEB).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What horrendous heresy did false teachers secretly introduce into the church?
2. How does Christianity suffer at the hands of religious falsehood?
3. What are two motivating factors behind false teaching?
4. Name three Old Testament examples that prove false teachers will be punished.
5. Name the Old Testament characters God rescued out of the midst of evil people.
6. Were these false teachers once Christians? Explain.
7. What prophet loved the wages of wickedness?
8. What doctrine were the false teachers teaching new Christians?
9. Why would it have been better for the false teachers never to have known the way of righteousness?
10. What two proverbs does Peter cite to illustrate the repulsiveness of backsliding?

The Second Coming of Christ (3:1-18)

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. ²I 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.

³First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ⁵But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. ⁶By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

⁸But 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. ⁹The 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.

¹⁰But 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.

¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as 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. ¹³But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

¹⁴So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

¹⁵Bear 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.

¹⁶He 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.

¹⁷Therefore, 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. ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

V. 1 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. — Like Paul in his correspondence to the Corinthians and Timothy, Peter believed in the power of repetition. Barclay observes, "There are certain great Christian truths which have to be repeated again and again and which must never be pushed into the background in the desire for novelty." The affirmation that this is his *second* letter to them is certainly internal evidence that Peter is the author of these two books.

I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. — As he did in the first letter, Peter is writing to encourage the Christians in their faith (I Peter 5:12). We need to be fully awakened to the fundamentals of our faith. His purpose is to "rouse you to honest thought" (NEB).

V. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets — Again he reminds them of the important place in God's plan that the prophets played (I Peter 1:10-12; II Peter 1:19-21). They

were "holy" men who spoke for God. What a contrast they are to the unholy false prophets he has just finished describing. Studying the prophets can be a very "profitable" undertaking for the Christian.

and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. — The apostles were those whom Christ sent, or commissioned, to go and preach the gospel to the world. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Everything that the apostles and prophets have spoken for God to us is worth listening to, worth remembering. The early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

V. 3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, — Peter himself was living in "the last days." It was he who stood up on the day of Pentecost and declared that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 was being fulfilled on that very day (Acts 2:14-21). Ever since Pentecost the church has been living in "the last days"—the last of three great Biblical eras: the Patriarchal age, the Mosaic age, and the Christian age. The latter will end with the second coming of Christ. Paul uses this expression (II Tim. 3:1) and Jude does as well (Jude 17, 18). In these last days, Peter says, "scoffers" will come.

scoffing and following their own evil desires. — Scoffers (mockers) pay no attention to the teaching of apostles and prophets. They are "governed by their own passions" (Weymouth). The people of God have always had to endure "cruel mockings" (Heb. 11:36). Imagine the mocking that Noah and his family must have endured.

V. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?" — The focus of their ridicule is the promise Jesus made that he would come again (John 14:1-3). What a sacred thing to scoff at! But we have already learned that men like this are not afraid to "scoff at the glories of the unseen world" (II Peter 2:10, Phillips). If Jesus said that it was evil for men to think that he had *delayed* his coming, then what a wicked thing it is for men to arrogantly *deny* his return (Matt. 24:48).

Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. — What a strange admission! They believed in the creation but not in the catastrophe (the great flood). They were the world's first "theistic evolutionists." What they were teaching was uniformitarianism—that all things have always continued as they were. Such philosophy would rule out the flood of Noah's day. But the flood certainly interrupted the flow of things!

V. 5 But they deliberately forget — This was not just failing memory on their part. Their sin was one of deliberate denial. They “shut their eyes to the fact” (TCNT). Woe to all who would willfully close their eyes to the truth!

that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. — It was by the divine fiat of God that the heavens and earth were brought into existence (Gen. 1:1-10; Ps. 33:6-9). Out of a watery chaos the world was formed (Gen. 1:2, 6). The world was created out of water, sustained by water (rain-fall), and destroyed by water (the flood).

V. 6 By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. — The Great Deluge of Noah’s day literally inundated the entire world, the waters covering all the mountains under the entire heavens to a depth of more than 20 feet (Gen. 7:19, 20). Every living thing on the face of the earth—men and animals alike—perished in the flood (Gen. 7:21-23). Only Noah and his family were spared. It pays to take God at his word!

V. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, — The heavens and earth were not only created by the powerful word of God but are sustained by them as well (Heb. 1:3; 11:3). This time God has commanded that they be reserved for fire! Since God promised men that he would never again send a universal flood (Gen. 9:11) the world is now destined to become one huge fireball, an orb of flame.

being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. — The heavens and earth are stored up for fire (some say *with* fire) until the day of judgment and doom. When Christ comes from heaven it will be in “blazing fire” to punish the ungodly (II Thess. 1:8). They will be punished with “everlasting destruction” so the doctrine of annihilation does not seem to apply here. Those who fail the judgment of Christ will go away into “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46).

V. 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: — There is a very important fact that Peter does not want his readers to overlook.

With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. — God is not governed by time. “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night” (Ps. 90:4). “Delay” was the charge of the scoffers (Matt. 24:48). People are usually down on what they are not up on. They didn’t realize that any “delay” on the Lord’s part is because he is merciful to man (I Peter 3:20).

V. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. — “He is not being dilatory” (Knox Translation). The Lord is not loitering. The footnote on Habakkuk 2:3 (NIV) reads, “Though he linger, wait for him; he will certainly come and will not delay.” This thought is repeated in Hebrews 10:37, “For in just a very little while, ‘He who is coming will come and will not delay.’”

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. — This is why God waited 120 years while Noah was preparing the ark and preaching righteousness (Gen. 6:3; I Peter 3:19). God is not a sadist. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23). God is good to men so they will repent and be saved (Rom. 2:4). He wants all men to be saved (I Tim. 2:4).

V. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. — Paul uses this same phrase, “the day of the Lord,” in connection with the return of Christ (I Thess. 5:2). Jesus likened his return to a thief in the night (Matt. 24:42-44; Rev. 3:3). It will be sudden, unexpected, unannounced.

The heavens will disappear with a roar; — One can only imagine the awesome, awful sound! It will be a “tremendous crash” (Berkley Verson); a “crackling roar” (Moffatt Translation). The Greek word (*rhoizedon*) means the roaring of a fire or the rolling of the heavens together as a scroll (see Isa. 34:4; Heb. 1:12). H. G. Stafford wrote, “And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll.”

the elements will be destroyed by fire, — The elements—some believe them to be the heavenly bodies like stars and planets while others take them to be the basic components of earth, atoms, if you please—will “disintegrate in flames” (NEB), “melt with fervent heat” (KJV). The Moffatt Translation says, “the stars will be set ablaze and melt.” What a colossal, frightening, devastating scene! I see no call for Barclay’s dismissal of literal interpretation here, which he calls “crude literalism.”

and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. — The footnote reads, “be burned up.” The Greek (*katakaio*) means to utterly burn up. So much for the “renovated” or “refurbished” earth theory! Peter says that the heat will be so intense that literally everything will be completely vaporized. The whole world will be “ground zero,” to borrow a phrase from nuclear vocabulary.

V. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? — Knowing in advance what is going to

happen to the world some day should certainly affect the Christian's worldview and lifestyle! It will be too late to change our views or life when the world is on fire!

You ought to live holy and godly lives — Surely, in view of the fiery holocaust Peter has just described, no one in their right mind would disagree. Why live for the world when it is going to go up in smoke? "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (I John 2:17).

V. 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. — The day of the Lord will bring good things as well and that is what we should be eagerly looking for and earnestly praying about. Paul urges us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions while we look for the "blessed hope"—the appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13).

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. — Inspiration belabors itself as Peter once again describes the fearful scene of the Last Day. The heavens and earth as we know them will be gone. Consumed. Obliterated. With a mighty roar unknown to man the atmosphere itself will ignite in a dreadful sheet of fire, the elements simply withering before the blast, melting in the white-hot heat, dripping into nothingness.

V. 13 But in keeping with his promise — The promise is found in Isaiah 65:17; 66:22. It is yet to be fulfilled according to Revelation 21:1.

we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. — The new heaven and the new earth—the Holy City, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2)—will be a beautiful, wonderful home of righteousness. There will be no pain, no crying, no death, no mourning (Rev. 21:4). This will be possible because there will be no sin there (Rev. 21:27). Who wouldn't look forward to a home like that!

V. 14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. — Since sin can never enter heaven we should make every effort to be found pure when Jesus comes and to be at peace with our Lord. I want to be found "pure and blameless until the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). The doctrine of the return of Christ should have a purifying effect on the church (I John 3:2, 3). Will he find you and me without spot or blemish?

V. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, — God's longsuffering means salvation for us (I Peter 3:20; II Peter 3:9). Where would we be without the forbearance of the Lord?

just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you — Paul also wrote about the longsuffering of God as it related to man's redemption (see Rom. 2:4).

Peter refers to Paul as a "blessed brother" (KJV). Those who have tried to build a wall between Peter and Paul can certainly find no material here for their fanciful construction. Even though Paul had once publicly rebuked Peter (Gal. 2:11), there is not the slightest tinge of bitterness in Peter's words.

How was it that Paul had also written to Peter's readers? Remember that Peter wrote to Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (I Peter 1:1). Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:2) and to churches in Ephesus and Colossae as well (both cities were in the previous Asia).

with the wisdom that God gave him. — Peter certainly accepted the writings of Paul as inspired Scripture when he notes that Paul wrote "with the wisdom that God gave him."

V. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. — In all of Paul's writings there is marvelous consistency concerning this great theme of God's patience resulting in man's salvation (see Rom. 3:25; 9:22).

His letters contain some things that are heard to understand, — No honest student of the Scriptures would ever deny this. But please note that Peter is not recommending that we throw out the letters of Paul because they contain some difficult passages. The book of Revelation is probably the most difficult book in the Bible to understand but we are urged to read it anyway (Rev. 1:3).

which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. — Those who are ignorant of the message of the Bible should not fake it and twist them to their own destruction. They should seek competent help to understand the meaning of Scripture like the man from Ethiopia did (Acts 8:31). Peter has already mentioned how some distorted the doctrine of grace (II Peter 2:10-22). Paul's teaching on grace was also perverted by some as was his teaching on Christian liberty (Gal. 5:13) and salvation by faith (James 2:14-26).

V. 17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, — This was his second epistle to them (3:1). And Paul had written to some of them as well. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."

be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men — The growing Christian must always be alert to the danger of false teaching that would take him away from the truth. Paul warned of those who would arise in the church seeking to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30). Even good Barnabas was temporarily “carried away” by religious error (Gal. 2:13). Peter should know—he was the one who led Barnabas away! Similar warnings are found in Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 2:1-3, *et al.* The church had survived the attacks of Satan through Nero. Would they now survive this internal attack of Satan through false teachers?

and fall from your secure position. — Can a Christian fall from grace? Why would Peter warn of the danger if it weren’t a possibility? There are over 2,500 warnings in the Bible that caution us about the potential of falling out of favor with God! Consider Romans 11:20-22; I Corinthians 9:27; 10:1, 2; 15:2; Galatians 1:6; 5:4; Colossians 1:23; I Timothy 4:1; 5:8, 15; II Timothy 2:17, 18; Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 12:15; James 5:19, 20; II Peter 2:20-22. But we do not *have* to fall from grace. If we make our calling and election sure by adding to our faith we will *never* fall (II Peter 1:10).

V. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. — God does not want us to fall from grace. He wants us to grow in grace. We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8, 9), we live by grace (Gal. 2:20, 21), and we are to grow in grace (I Peter 2:2). We are also to grow in knowledge (see comments on II Peter 1:5). The more we learn about Jesus, the more we can grow in His grace. “More about Jesus would I know, more of his grace to others show” (E. E. Hewitt). Get to know Jesus in the Word, especially the four gospels. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). As He appears in the gospels, so He is today. As He is today, so He will be forever. Know Him and you will be like Him.

To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. — What a majestic and triumphant close to a truly magnificent and stirring epistle! Peter, the lowly fisherman whom Jesus raised to heights of glory, ascribes all glory for time and eternity to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

“All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain. Who has borne all our sins and has cleansed every stain. Hallelujah! Thine the glory. Hallelujah! Amen!”

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the stated purpose of II Peter according to 3:1?

2. How can we know that we are now in "the last days"?
3. Why were men scoffing at the doctrine of Christ's second coming?
4. Why do we not believe in Uniformitarianism?
5. What Scriptural proof is there that the flood was universal?
6. What is the reason for the Lord delaying his coming?
7. What will happen to the heavens and earth at Christ's return?
8. In view of all this, what kind of lives does Peter urge?
9. What does Peter mention about Paul and his writings? What is the significance?
10. What doctrines of Paul did some people pervert?
11. Is it possible for a Christian to fall from grace? Explain.
12. How can we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ?

"Not with my head up:
My Master died that way!
Crucify me head downward.
I die for my Lord:
but I am not worthy to die like Him."

—Peter
(according to Origen)

