
a *Grace Notes* publication

1st Epistle of Peter

Dr. Grant C. Richison

1 Peter

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Lesson 1: The 5

Foreword

These lessons in 1 Peter are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, which were published on the Internet beginning in 1997 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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Introduction

I AUTHOR

A. Peter (1:1, 8; 5:1)

1. Peter's given name was Simon.
2. Jesus gave him the name Cephas (John 1:42). Cephas means stone or rock. The Greek translation of the Aramaic word Cephas is **petros** which also means stone or rock. Peter is the only man in the New Testament called by this name.
3. Peter occupied a favored place among the apostles.
4. He occupied a central place in the book of Acts (first 12 chapters).
5. He married and lived in Capernaum.
6. He worked in fishing business with his brother Andrew.
7. The Lord came to him in a special appearance after the resurrection (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5).
8. God used Peter to win 3,000 souls to Christ on Pentecost.
9. Peter had an important part in the first Church council in Acts 15 (AD 50; Peter is not mentioned after this in the book of Acts).
10. Paul refers to Peter in Galatians 1:18; 2:11; I Cor. 1-4; 9:5.

B. Peter was literate but unschooled.

1. Called from his trade as a fisherman.
2. Called to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:1-11).

C. Peter's public ministry spanned 30 years and stretched from Jerusalem to Rome.

D. Peter employed Silas as his secretary to write the letter (I Pet. 5:12). Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:36-37).

E. Parallels between I Peter and his sermons in Acts: Cf. I Peter 1:20 with Acts 2:23; cf. I Peter 4:5 with Acts 10:42 Cf. I Peter 2:7-8 and Acts 4:10-11 In each passage, Psalm 118:22 is quoted and applied to Christ to refer to his rejection by Jewish leaders.

F. I Peter is quoted extensively in early church history. This epistle was quoted extensively in the early church in such writings as the letters of Polycarp, Clement and Irenaeus. Martyred by

Nero (Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius; Clement of Rome, Dionysius of Corinth tell us he suffered martyrdom). Origin said he was crucified with his head downwards. He died AD 67-68.

II DATE

A. AD 64

B. This was shortly before Nero's persecution. Peter warns that persecution is imminent.

III DESTINATION

A. Peter wrote to the five Roman provinces of Asia Minor in what is modern day northern Turkey.

B. Many Jews lived in these provinces therefore many quotations from the Old Testament are found in I Peter (1:1). "Dispora" (Jews who lived outside Palestine and yet looked on it as their native land)

C. To Christians everywhere (1:18-19,23; 2:10,24).

D. Peter was especially the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-8).

E. The epistle was written predominantly to Hebrew Christians but also includes Gentile Christians.

IV PURPOSE

A. The purpose of I Peter is to enable Christians to face persecution in the grace of God (5:12), to prepare them for suffering.

B. A secondary purpose is to encourage believers to face persecution and suffering (1:6-7; 5:8-9).

C. Peter encourages believers to lift their eyes above present difficulties to God's grace. He shows them the hope ahead (1:3). He points to the example of Christ (2:21-23).

V OUTLINE

I. Salutation (1:1-2) A. Author (1:1a) B. Addressees (1:1b-2)

II. Perspective in Suffering (1:3-2:10) A. The perspective of hope (1:3-12) B. The perspective of the Word (1:13-25) C. The perspective of a new position (2:1-10)

III. The Pressures of Suffering (2:11-4:11)

A. Pressure of evil desires (2:11-12)

B. Pressure of the state (2:13-17)

C. Pressure of employment (2:18-25)

- D. Pressure of the home (3:1-7)
- E. Pressure of social life in the church (3:8-12)
- F. Pressure of the world (3:13-4:6)
- G. Pressure of service (4:7-11)

IV. Prescriptions for Suffering (4:12-5:11)

- A. Prescriptions for endurance in suffering (4:12-19)
- B. Prescriptions for right attitudes in suffering (5:1-11)
 - 1 Attitudes of elders (5:1-4)
 - 2. Attitudes of all believers (5:5-10)

V. Conclusion (5:12-14)

VI CANONICITY (PROOF OF WHY THIS BOOK BELONGS IN THE BIBLE)

A. External Evidence

1. Irenaeus quotes it (175)
2. Tertullian quotes it (190)
3. Clement (Alexandria) quotes it (195)
4. Clement of Rome quotes it (96)
5. Polycarp quotes it (116)
6. Epistle of Diognetus quotes it (117)
7. Testament of the 12 patriarchs uses it (120)
8. Papias uses it (120)
9. Hermas uses it (130)
10. Unanimously cited as authentic

B. Internal Evidence

1. Calls himself Peter (1:1)
2. Acquainted with the life of Christ and his teachings 5:5 - allusion to Christ girding himself with a towel (John 13:35) 5:2 - feed the flock (John 21:15-17) 4:14; 5:7,8 - sayings of the Lord 5:1 - "witness of the sufferings of Christ" (3:18; 4:1) Lingers over the person of Christ in his sufferings (2:19-24)

VII BACKGROUND

- A. Asia Minor was highly heterogeneous.
- B. Asia Minor was prosperous.
- C. Religion was eclectic.
- D. Jews had privileged position in Asia Minor.

VIII PLACE OF WRITING

A. Babylon (5:13), the city on the Euphrates, not Rome. B. Babylon was the center of the Eastern Dispersion.

IX OCCASION

- A. Ominous shadow of persecution was the occasion for the letter.
- B. After Nero's persecution in Rome, Christians lived in fear for their lives.
- C. The persecution was unofficial, sporadic and social rather than legal (3:17; 4:12-19).
- D. The nature of the persecutions were slanderous attacks (4:14,15; 4:4,5; 2:13-17,11,12,16; 5:2-3) F. Suffering is mentioned 16 times (cf. 1:6; 2:19; 3:14,17; 4:12-16; 5:9)

X THEMES

- A. Comfort for suffering Christians
- B. Hope in time of trial C. Cf. 1:6,7; 2:12,19,20,21; 3:13,14,16,17; 4:1,4,12,14-16,19; 5:9-10

XI KEY VERSES

- A. 1:3-7
- B. 4:12,13

XII KEY WORDS

- A. "Hope" (5 times)
- B. "Glory" (16 times - with cognates)
- C. "Precious" (5 times)
- D. "Grace" (10 times)
- E. "Suffering" (16 times; implied 6 times)

XIII PECULARITIES

- A. Parallelisms with other epistles (especially with Romans and Ephesians)
- B. Emphasis on the suffering of Christ (1:11,19-21; 2:21-24; 3:18; 4:13; 5:1)
- C. Many Old Testament allusions and quotes
- D. Excellent Greek
- E. Primarily practical rather than doctrinal epistle

XIV MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

- A. Peter's name occurs 210 times in the New Testament, Paul's name 162 times and all other apostles 142 times.
- B. I Peter was copied by Silvanus (5:12). Mark was with Peter.

C. There are 5 chapters and 105 verses.

1 Peter 1:1

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

Peter

Peter is set forth here by name (“Peter”) and by office (“apostle”). He was a pillar of the church (Galatians 2:9).

Peter’s name is mentioned 210 times in the New Testament. Paul’s name occurs 162 times. Peter is dominate among the persons of the New Testament. We cannot ignore him.

The author of this book was a unique individual. Peter was not celibate. We know this because his mother-in-law lived with him. He was a fisherman by trade and had a partnership with James and John. He did not fish for fun; he fished for money. He was a profane and professional fisherman (John 1:36-44). He was a coarse man.

Sometime later God called him to be a fisher of men (Matthew 4:18,19). He already knew Christ as his Messiah. Now God called Peter to discipleship. And later, Jesus called him to be an apostle (Luke 6:13). This was a promotion.

Peter’s training was in his home and synagogue. He received two calls from the Lord:

1. to discipleship (John 1:41-48);
2. to apostleship (Mark 3:13-21).

We do not think of Peter as a scholar or literary person. We think of him as a burly fisherman. Yet this erstwhile fisherman wrote two of the 27 books of the New Testament. We think of him as a loud-mouthed leader of men. We may even think of him as the preacher of Acts 2. But rarely do we think of him as an author.

Acts 4:13 describes him as “unlearned and ignorant.” That doesn’t mean he was stupid but it means he didn’t have a formal education like Paul. Peter’s training was at the feet of the Savior.

Principle

God will use us in ways beyond our background if we submit to him.

Application

Have you put limitations around yourself? Have you put yourself in a box of your own

perceptions? Let God stretch you beyond your boundaries. He may use you in a way beyond your imagination. If we step out of our comfort zone, it will demonstrate an act of trust in God’s provision for our lives.

an apostle of Jesus Christ

Before I married my wife, Joyce, I wrote her a letter in the same style as a New Testament writer. I first signed my name and then proceeded with the letter. It went something like this, “Grant, a disciple of Jesus Christ, to Joyce who is in Detroit, grace be unto you, and peace be multiplied.” For some reason that letter did not go over very well! She wanted a mushy letter.

Usually a writer of Scripture gives his name and then his credentials. By what authority does Peter have the right to write these Christians in Asia Minor (Turkey)? He claims to be an “apostle” of Jesus Christ. He does not claim to be “the” apostle. There were 12 apostles at the beginning and more came later.

“Apostle” was the official name of those Jesus chose to found his church. One qualification of an apostle is to have seen the resurrected Lord (Acts 1: 22).

The Greek word “apostle” comes from two words meaning “from” and “to send.” So an apostle means to send someone from another, to send someone with credentials to carry out a mission.

The English word “apostle” is from the old English word “postel” from which we have derived the word “postal” as in postal service. A postal servant is one who delivers the mail. The function of an apostle is to deliver the message of the New Testament.

The word “apostle” was used hundreds of years before the New Testament. The earliest reference is in the area of nautical terminology. About 300 years before Christ, apostle described ships that were being readied with cargo or being sent on an expedition. The term “apostle” described a naval squadron before it was dispatched.

Two hundred years before Christ, the term was used for a person who was sent bearing a letter, like an early “Western Union boy.” It also described an ambassador sent by a king to represent him to another country. He was a “sent one.”

This is the highest office in the church (I Cor. 12:28). An apostle was personally chosen by

Christ. He had the ability to perform miracles and thereby demonstrate authority as an apostle. His jurisdiction of power was beyond any other gift in the New Testament.

There is no apostle today. The office of the apostle disappeared with the closing of the writing of Scripture (the canon). The apostle had the power to execute miracles to demonstrate his authority over the church. We do have the function of the apostle today. That person is a missionary. However, the office of the apostle does not exist because the canon of Scripture is closed. God has completed writing his revelation. Therefore, there is no need for an apostle.

The mention of his apostleship is the statement of his authority to write a book of the Bible.

Principle

God wants us to carry the message of the gospel to the world.

Application

The “sent one” today is the missionary. Everyone is a missionary. Just as all believers are priests so all Christians are “sent ones” (Acts 1:8; II Cor. 5:18-20). Every person who has accepted Christ is an ambassador of Christ.

Every heart without Christ is a mission field; every heart with Christ is a missionary.

If we have ever been gripped by an overpowering sense of personal indebtedness to Christ, we cannot rest until we share him with the world. If we have encountered the living Lord, we cannot but share him with others.

Interest in the world-crusade of Christianity stands in direct ratio to the vitality of our personal faith. Our personal missionary impetus depends on our fellowship with Christ. It is a sad reflection on the spiritual climate of the Western world that we do not reflect the reality of Christ with urgency and joy.

If we are going to gird ourselves with the missionary task, our deepest need is not more information or better technique, it is a deeper sense of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Suppose you were a biochemist and found the cure for cancer. Could you hide that remedy? It is against all ethics of humanity to do so. Yet this is precisely what we do when we do not share Christ.

God gives us a message and sends us on a mission. If we have an important message we do not send any Tom, Dick or Harry to carry it. We would be afraid that they would deflect from their destination or that they would tarry too long somewhere along the way. They would get there with the message but it would be too late. Or, they might alter the message and garble it in such a way as to distort the idea we wanted to convey.

God has called us to be ambassadors for Christ (II Cor. 5:20). An ambassador is a representative or replica of the Savior. We are a small-scale model of Christ. We come in “Christ’s stead.” We stand in his shoes. He is not here. He is busy interceding for Christians in heaven. We must represent him here. We may not be a good representative here but we are the best that he has here. We do not have to be brilliant. All God expects us to do is to make ourselves available. He wants us to put ourselves at his disposal.

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

Peter now pinpoints the physical address to those to whom he is writing. He gives their physical address, then their spiritual address

(1:2). Today we discuss their physical address.

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion

Peter writes to Christians dispersed to the countries noted. These were Christian Jews dispersed in Asia Minor (northwest Turkey today).

The word “pilgrim” comes from three words meaning “alongside,” “upon” and “people.” The word here describes those who settled down alongside those who were not Christian (2:11). The English word “epidemic” is derived from this word. An epidemic is a disease that comes upon a great number of people. Peter does not let us forget that we live among those without Christ. They carefully observe our lives.

The word “dispersion” refers back to the captivity of the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC by Assyria. In 586 BC the Southern kingdom (Judah and Benjamin) went into captivity. In AD 70 the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem. Many in Israel dispersed throughout the Roman world.

The word “dispersion” means to “sow through.” God has sown Christians throughout the world. God providentially sows us where we are in the world to become disseminators of the Gospel. That is why you are where you are. We are

pilgrims because we are Christ's. Our souls cannot satisfy themselves with the trivialities of earth any more than a human can satisfy himself with eating hog slop. Coming to Christ means we have new desires, tastes, aspirations and affinities. God has kindled new life in us.

There is no loneliness like standing for Christ by ourselves. The Christian who draws a line of separate distinction will make an impact on those without Christ. We cannot forget the imperial connection to Christ. Our citizenship is in heaven.

in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

These are the names of the provinces to whom Peter wrote in his first book. He addressed Jews who had lived in these parts for about 200 years.

These provinces are bounded on three sides by water. On the south is the Mediterranean, on the west by the Aegean Sea and on the north by the Black Sea.

These provinces were in Asia Minor during the writing of I Peter. Christians in these provinces were going through great persecutions by Nero. The sixth verse talks about "manifold trials."

Principle

God has called us to come alongside those without Christ to share our personal testimony.

Application

The nature of the Christian's life upon this Earth is only temporary. That is why God calls us pilgrims. This world is not our home. We are merely pilgrims passing through this world. We are temporary residents upon earth.

God has given us a deeper attachment than allegiance to our native country. Everything in this life is transitory. Christians are not to look on the things that are seen (II Cor. 4:18). Rather, God wants us to fix our eyes on the eternal (Hebrews 11:13-16). Soon we will pull up stakes and leave for another country (heaven).

1 Peter 1:2

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

The previous verse described the addressees of I Peter by their geographical address. This verse describes them according to their spiritual address.

Elect

"Election" is to special privilege. Often, as here, the New Testament uses of the election of salvation. It means election to eternal life. "Election" is a title of dignity, which applies only to the Christian. The preeminent thought in election is privilege, not deliverance from judgment.

The word "elect" means to pick out or choose out of a number. It was used in Greek literature to select a gray hair out of a number of black hairs. In other ancient literature it was used for "picked troops." Some soldiers were chosen over others because of their unusual gifts in the art of war. They were crack troops. They were hand picked men.

God hand picked the believers scattered over Asia Minor. In an election we chose a candidate from a slate of contenders. God is the one who makes the selection. Both God's selection and our decision are involved in the process. Both election and free will are equally taught in Scripture. They are the corresponding halves of the doctrine of salvation. Election is the God's side and free will is our side.

Election is one of the greatly misunderstood subjects of the Word of God. A great mirage of doubt and pride has arisen around this doctrine. On one side, a perversion of the doctrine of election leads to fatalism. Election does not mean that God chooses some to be saved or others lost. The Scripture clearly teaches that all men are lost and need to be saved.

On the other hand we often hear people say they "found the Savior." The Savior was never lost. We have it backward; he found us. We did not choose him; he chose us first.

It is amazing that God chooses us knowing what he knows about us. Of all the creatures on this earth, he chooses us. He knows everything about us. He knows our sin. We are undeserving, yet he selects us. He watches over us so that we will not die before we come to know Christ. He sends ministering angels to watch over our salvation (Hebrews 1:14). Everyone elect will come to him (John 6:37).

The test of whether we are elect is whether we come to Christ (John 6:37). Just as steel always attracts to a magnet, the elect always attract to Christ.

None of this lessens our responsibility to make a decision for Christ. The Bible also teaches the freedom of the will.

John 1:11-13, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 5:40, "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."

John 6: 37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

Rev. 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

Principle

Scripture teaches both sovereign election and the free will.

Application

The Bible teaches both the sovereign election of God and the free agency of man. Man, however, is free only in a relative sense, or else there would be billions of semi-gods and God would no longer be the first cause of all things. Therefore, we are only free to choose within the framework God has set up for us.

Think of an architect who designs a building. The architect draws up the plans but there is latitude. When the carpenter constructs the building, he follows generally the plan of the architect. The architect does not plan how the carpenter should drive each nail, lay each board. He leaves that to the choice of the carpenter.

God has elected some to be saved, but he has given to each person a human will to choose to be saved or not.

Elect (continued)

"Elect" simply says we are in the plan of God. It anticipates the suffering the believer is to face. I Peter deals with how the Christian relates to suffering from God's viewpoint.

Scripture observes election from a number of viewpoints. God elects us out of the world (John 15:19). He elects us to salvation (I Thess. 1:4, 5). He chooses us to special service (Acts 9:15; I Peter 2:9). He elects us to conform to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29). He does all of this according to his own will (Ephesians 1:11).

Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

John 15: 16,19 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." God chose us to bear fruit.

Romans 8:33 "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."

Ephesians 1: 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

I Thessalonians 1: 4 "Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake."

II Thessalonians 2: 13,14 "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to

which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here we have eternity dipping into time and stretching forward unto eternity. Of course there is no such thing as past or future eternity. We use that language to understand it from a finite viewpoint. We use this language to differentiate eternity from time, calendars and clocks.

Colossians 3: 12 “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.”

Titus 1:1 “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness.”

II Peter 1:10 “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.”

Revelation 17: 14 “These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Principle

The plan of God fully anticipates all our suffering.

Application

Nothing will ever touch us that is not in the plan of God. Nothing is too great for the plan of God. God’s plan is greater than any suffering, any heartache, disappointment, difficulty or loss that we might sustain. Nothing is too great for his plan. God has made provision for any disaster that we will ever face. Whether we experience blessing in these disasters or not depends on your appropriation of his provisions. In other words, we understand his promises and lay hold of them.

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father

Each person of the trinity has a part in our election. The Father is the source, the Spirit is the sphere and the Son is the sign.

The words “according to” mean norm or standard. What is the norm or standard of God’s provision for us? It is the foreknowledge of God the Father. God has the good sense to know of any problem we might face in life. He knew this billions of years before we were born. This comes out of his omniscience.

People often confuse predestination with foreknowledge. Foreknowledge is simply the knowledge that something will take place. God sees all things at once from the beginning to the end. However, this pre-knowledge does not mean that he is the cause of all things he foresees will come to pass.

The word “foreknowledge” comes from two Greek words: “before” and “know.” So, God knows beforehand that the elect will come to him (Acts 2:23; Romans 8:29, 11:2; I Peter 1:20).

Foreknowledge can mean counsel or appointment as in Acts 2: 23 -- “Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.” Jesus’ death was not only foreseen, it was foreordained (I Peter 1:20). This is the meaning here. We are elect according to ordination of God.

The word “foreknowledge” only occurs seven times in the Bible. Two of those seven times occur in this chapter (cf. v. 20, Jesus as the lamb of God was foreordained before the foundation of the world).

“God the Father” is the first person of the trinity. The Father is the one who plans in the trinity. The Bible attributes the plan of our redemption to the Father. The Word ascribes reconciliation to the Son. Scripture ascribes sanctification to the Holy Spirit. Each person of the trinity has their own role. God chose us on the substructure of his omniscience. Election is in his eternal will and purpose.

God does not call upon us to understand everything in the Bible. When we get to heaven we will have greater capacity to understand these things. Our times are in God’s hands at the present time (Psalm. 31:15).

Principle

God knows everything beforehand that will happen to us.

Application

It is awesome to know that our Father knows everything beforehand. We can leave everything secure in his hands.

Election looks at the place from which God took us – sin and the world. Predestination looks at our future – sanctification and heaven.

Some people are dumb enough to think that God is caught short or flatfooted by something we do or others might do to us. God knew everything that has happened or will happen to us. That may mean millions of things over our lifetime. Yet he knew every one of them before they ever occurred. There never was a time when he did not know. He knew all adversity we would ever face. He made provisions for them in eternity. He makes provision for everything in life.

in sanctification of the Spirit

Before salvation can occur, every person who receives eternal life must be 1) sanctified by the Spirit and 2) cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Note that we find the concept of the trinity in this verse. There are groups on the fringe of Christendom who deny the deity of Christ. We call them cults or sects. This verse plainly teaches the trinity. If you reject the trinity, you are caught in a cult.

The sanctification of the Spirit makes us fit for our calling. This is the means whereby God brings us into the family of God. Only those to whom the Holy Spirit ministers will become a child of God.

The word “sanctification” means to “set apart.” It is like a person who shops for a suit and finds one he likes. He asks the clerk to set it aside. The Holy Spirit sets us aside for God. He sets aside every person God elects (Romans 15:16; I Corinthians 6:11; II Thessalonians 2:13). The Holy Spirit convicts them while they do not know Christ (John 16:7-11).

Calvary sets the child of God apart from a sinful life. His new position is in Christ and no longer in the world. The Christian is unable to achieve sanctification in his own strength. God has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (1:3).

God places us into union with Christ. We fall heir to all that he is before God. God accomplishes this through sanctification which is a grace means of operation. Sanctification is a system of grace. God

is the one who sets us apart. It is his act. So sanctification is a grace word.

Principle

The Holy Spirit sets us apart forensically or judicially before God.

Application

Sanctification here is positional sanctification. This is our status in God’s eyes. It is not personal conduct. In the Christian life the divine always precedes the human. God imputes that he might impart. A man is first accounted righteous that he might eventually be made righteous.

for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

The end in view is obedience. This obedience is not the effect of our obedience but for (unto) obedience.

Three prepositions carry the three roles of the trinity in our salvation: “according to,” “through” and “unto.” “According to” gives the fact of our salvation; “Through” gives the means of our salvation; “Unto” gives the purpose of our salvation. The purpose of our salvation is that we might be conformed into the same image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

The meaning of “obedience” here is the exercise of faith for our salvation. The Bible refers to obedience in the context of salvation a number of times (Acts 6:7; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 1:5; 6:17; Galatians 3:1; I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7,9).

“Obedience” refers to a standardized way in which a person enters into the plan of God. God has a standard operating procedure for entering into His plan (Acts 16:31; John 20:31).

Obedience here then is the obedience of faith. God calls us to obey the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the initiator of our salvation. He causes us to obey by setting us apart unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

The “sprinkling” in Peter’s mind is that of the Old Testament offerings (Exodus 24:3-8). This is the blood sprinkled on the altar. The blood of the Old Testament sacrifice pointed to the blood of Christ. The entire basis of our salvation rests on Christ. It is not enough that the blood be shed; it must be sprinkled. The sprinkling shows that God imputes Jesus’ blood to the believer.

Sprinkling then has to do with blood, not water (Hebrews 9:21). The blood of Christ speaks of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. God knows of no other way of forgiving than through the blood of Christ. Only the blood can wash away our sin. It is the basis by which God forgives us (John 10:11; Colossians 1:20; I Corinthians 11:27; Hebrews 9:11,14; 10:17,19; 13:20; I John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 5:9,10; 7:14; 12:20).

“Sprinkling” emphasizes propitiation.

Propitiation means to satisfy. God is satisfied with the death of Christ for our sin. God is satisfied with the work of God the Son on the cross.

The animal in the Old Testament died by losing his blood. This is what we call a representative analogy. There is an analogy between priest cutting the throat of the bull upon the altar and the death of Christ. Christ bore our sins upon the cross.

Principle

God has one standard way of delivering us from our sin – the death of Christ.

Application

Many people today are immune to the gospel message. They acknowledge it from the Adam’s apple up. It is not a matter of the heart to them. They have heard about the blood of Christ all their lives but the gospel has never personally impressed them. They have never obeyed the gospel.

Have you personally received from God the sacrifice of his Son on the cross? Do you believe that God is satisfied with the death of Christ for your sin? Do you believe that you can do nothing for your salvation? If the answer to these questions is “no” then you are not a Christian.

A Christian is one who accepts from God the gift of the death of his Son upon the cross for our sin (Romans 4:5). Will you do that now? If you do, you will become a Christian.

Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

The salutation desires two blessings for the Christians in Asia Minor: 1) grace and 2) peace.

Grace always precedes peace where they appear together. We cannot know the peace of God without first knowing the grace of God.

Peter wants more than addition of grace and peace; he wants multiplication. He wants both grace and peace multiplied in our lives. We never graduate from the grace or peace of God. We never outgrow our need for grace and peace. The Christian needs the grace of God for his financial and domestic problems. Grace is available for those who know God personally. We cannot orient to suffering unless we first orient to the grace of God. Grace correlates peace in the midst of suffering.

Grace is more than unmerited favor. It is something we receive from God that we did not earn or deserve. It is the favor of God with all the effects that come with it: forgiveness, assisting, and providential care. Grace is all that God is free to do for us because of the death of Christ for us.

Grace implies that God’s plan is perfect because God is perfect. The perfect essence of God produces a perfect plan of grace. If man does anything in God’s plan it is no longer perfect. Man cannot participate in providing grace. If he does, he preempts grace.

Grace always excludes human merit, human responsibility and human good. Grace means that God does all of the providing. It is impossible for any believer to get out of the sphere of grace. Once we accept Christ we are never free from grace. No matter how contrary we may act to grace, we cannot get away from it.

In our “do-it-yourself” generation, this is hard for some people to grasp. Someone says, “How can a person do such a thing and still be a Christian?” This shocks some Christians but the believer who did it is still alive! God still has a plan for him. We forget the extent of our sin and sin capacity. We live every moment under God’s grace.

Grace is all that God can and will do for the believer in Christ. This is apart from his merit, works or cooperation. It is a matter of believing God has made this provision in Christ. Belief is a non-meritorious system of action. The greatest thing God can do for any member of the human race is to make him like his Son Jesus Christ.

There is a catch to receiving the grace of God – we must humbly accept it by faith (James 4:6; Hebrews 4:16). When things are going well we do not need the grace of God. However when things go wrong, that is a different matter. We can get along on our own wit, on our own ingenuity, on our own schemes and plans. When we come to

the end of ourselves, then that is the opportunity for God to help.

God operates with four spheres of grace toward the believer:

1. Salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9)
2. Restoration (I John 1:9)
3. Spirituality (Ephesians 5:18)
4. Maturity (Hebrews 5:6)

God gives **grace in prayer** (Hebrews 4:16), **fruit** (I Corinthians 15:10; II Corinthians 6:11; 9:8), **suffering** (II Corinthians 12:9), **power** (II Timothy 2:1), **growth** (II Peter 3:18), **stability** (I Peter 5:12) and **restoration** (Hebrews 12:15).

Principle

God is free to bestow his grace on us because Christ satisfied his absolute demands.

Application

Grace always precedes peace in our lives.

It is not true that God helps those who help themselves. People think that that concept is in the Bible. That is like the phrase “cleanliness is next to godliness.” Neither phrase is in the Bible. The Biblical principle is God helps the helpless. When we come to the end of our rope and cry, “I cannot solve this problem. I do not have any solutions” then God will help us. Then we are a candidate for God’s help. Then God’s grace will gird us. We must come to a place of surrender – “I give up, I am going to stop trying to wiggle out of this thing. I am going to stop resolving this myself by virtue of my brain or brawn.” God waits until we view ourselves as bankrupt then he comes to our aid (I Peter 5:10).

Peace is always the result of grace. There are two kinds of peace:

- 1) peace with God (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14) and the
- 2) peace of God (Philippians 4:7; Isaiah 26:3,4). Peace with God is our salvation. Peace of God is our personal peace with him day by day.

Peter intends all sorts of peace here: domestic, civil, ecclesiastical peace in the church, and personal, spiritual peace with God.

The Bible does not promise world peace for the present age. Jesus said that there will be wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6,7). There will, however, be peace in the future millennium

(Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). That is when the swords will be beat into plowshares. The Bible says that there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 48:22).

Many carnal Christians out of fellowship know nothing about the peace of God. They are bitter, critical and cynical. They will always be miserable when they are out of fellowship with the Lord.

“Multiplied” – not added, subtracted or divided. The word “multiplied” implies that the Asia Minor believers already had some measure of grace and peace. Peter wants these blessings multiplied in their lives.

Principle

Christians who experience of the grace of God in their lives experience personal peace.

Application

We cannot enjoy peace in our lives if we have not appropriated the grace of God.

The peace of God always follows the grace of God in introductions to Bible books. We will not know the peace of God until we experience the grace of God.

This is God’s personal peace filling the heart of the Christian. It is an internal tranquillity that keeps us from pushing the panic button when something goes wrong. Instead of heading for panic palace, we draw upon the grace of God. There is no reason why we should fret and stew. Why should we be disgruntled and dour about life? All the non Christian can do is go out and get drunk. All he can do is escape and get away from his problems.

1 Peter 1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Verse three begins the body of I Peter.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

The word “blessed” means praised and applies only to God in the New Testament (Mark 14:61; Luke 1:68; Romans 1:25; 9:5; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 11:31; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3). “Blessed” indicates that God is worthy of praise or

commendation. Peter breaks out in a doxology of praise at the beginning of his book.

“Blessed” here is not the same word we meet in the beatitudes (Matthew 5; Luke 6). This is the word from which we get our English word “eulogy.” We give a human eulogy when a person dies. We speak in their praise. In this verse we eulogize God who is alive eternally. Do you have something good to say about God? Do you exalt and extol him? Both Ephesians 1:3 and II Corinthians 1:3 begin with an affirmation of God.

Peter advances this exaltation of praise in the recognition of God’s mercy.

Principle

God wants us to celebrate God’s resources.

Application

It is wonderful for a parent to hear children speak well of them. We often hear of parents praising their children but we do not often hear a child praising his parents. God deserves our praise.

God wants us to be more than a sponge that simply absorbs the benefits of Christianity. He wants to hear of our appreciation for his provisions. We speak well of God when we proclaim his attributes and works. There is too little praise of God today and too little speaking well of him to others.

How easy is it for you to break forth in praise to God? If we understood what he has done for us, our lives would explode with glory to God.

who according to His abundant mercy

“According to” means according to the standard. Commensurate with God’s mercy, he has given us a living hope.

“Mercy” is the outward manifestation of pity. It assumes a need on the part of the person who receives mercy. It also assumes that the person who gives mercy has the resources to adequately meet the need.

Mercy is God’s action toward us while we are in a hopeless condition. It is grace in action. Grace depends on the character of God. Peter himself received the grace of God. He vacillated hot one day and cold another. His spiritual roof fell on him a number of times yet God demonstrated grace to him over and over.

The New Testament uses the mercy of God in the sense that He is rich in it (Ephesians 2:4) and has provided salvation for all men (Titus 3:5; for Jews--Luke 1:72, and Gentiles--Romans 15:9).

He is merciful to all who fear Him (Luke 1:50). We find mercy when we pray (Hebrews 4:16). When Christ comes back, Christians will receive mercy at that time (II Timothy 1:16; Jude 21).

There is a distinction between grace and mercy. Grace describes God’s attitude toward the law-breaker; mercy is His attitude toward those in distress.

Principle

Mercy is God’s grace in action toward us.

Application

Do you view yourself as unworthy of God’s mercy? Worth has nothing to do with receiving God’s mercy. We receive God’s mercy by his grace. Grace is what we receive without merit.

Maybe the reason it is so hard for you to accept God’s mercy is that it is hard for you to accept God’s grace. We have nothing to offer God. He has everything to offer us.

who according to His abundant mercy

“Abundant” means that God’s mercy increases geometrically with our need.

II Samuel 24:14, "And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

Micah 7:18, "Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy."

Ephesians 2:4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us."

Lamentations 3:22, 23, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

I Timothy 1:13, "Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

I Timothy 1:16, "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life."

Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

God is rich in mercy. The multiplied mercy of God is great toward us. God's mercy is "abundant." His mercy has inexhaustible resources to extend to the needy.

The Father has the capital to invest in our lives. It takes money to make money. God is in the business of investing his capital daily into our lives. God's plan for us demands that he relinquish his capital. Some of his people are risky ventures yet he gives his resources without any strings attached. He must risk his capital to gain profit in the lives of believers. Grace is his capital. Grace in action is his "abundant mercy." He bestows mercy constantly to the Christian. He also bestows mercy to the non Christian in offering his Son as a substitute in exchange for sin.

No matter how far off the tack we get, God has the resources of mercy to bring us back. His operating capital of mercy is infinite. No matter what sin we commit or how many times we do it, he has mercy for us.

It is amazing how many Christians do not realize how much capital God has in his company. That capital is available with no strings attached. All we need to do is draw on the unlimited resources of the bank of heaven.

God gives his mercy not according to our merit, ability, morality, talent or human experience. His

mercy does not depend on us. It depends on his character.

Principle

God's mercy is great enough to meet us no matter how guilty we may be.

Application

Mercy implies guilt. Abundant mercy implies abundant guilt. God shows his abundant mercy in the death of Christ for our sins.

Any blessing we have from God is due to his mercy, not our merit. As sinful people we have reason to mourn. We also have reason to rejoice because of God's mercy toward us in Christ. We owe every blessing to the mercy of God.

"**Begotten us again**" means born again. The word means literally "beget again" or "cause to be born again." The only other time the New Testament uses this term is in verse 23 -- "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

Peter may recall here Jesus' story of Nicodemus (John 3:1-21). Jesus said that we "must" be born again.

Peter is blessing God because we are born again. We may be blind, but we are born again. We may be poor, but we are born again. We have troubles, but we know Christ as our Savior. Just think of the future of those who do not know Christ. God calls upon us to bless God because we are born again.

"Begotten again" means regeneration. "Re" is new and "generation" is life. Regeneration is new life. Regeneration is an act of God. He effects it by Christ's resurrection and the Word of God (1:23). We are born again when we accept the death of Christ to forgive our sins. At that point we are born into the family of God. God changes our eternal future in one moment.

The born again experience results in a living hope. The living hope is based on the resurrection of Christ (I Peter 1:21). The assurance of our salvation is as sure as the resurrection of Christ.

Principle

Our salvation is a reason to extol God.

Application

We are to "bless" (extol) God because he caused us to become born again. This is reason enough to praise him for all eternity.

Jesus said to the disciples who were rejoicing in their new-found power. Jesus rebuked them by these words, "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven," (Luke 10:20). That took the wind out of their sails.

It is one thing to rejoice in our Christian work, it is another to rejoice in our salvation. We are on our way to glory. The time will come when our service on earth will finish. We will still have eternity ahead. There will be a time when we can no longer preach, sing or serve. If service is the basis of our personhood, then our joy will flee. We will die a bitter old man or woman. We rejoice in our work rather than our future.

There never will be a time when we will not have Christ. There never will be a time when our names are not written in the Lamb's book of life.

We become so accustomed to our new birth that we take it for granted. Some of us have been born again so long that we have forgotten what it was like before we became a Christian. We assume that everyone is a Christian. When we get into this condition we are in bad shape spiritually. If a husband takes his wife for granted the relationship will begin to break down. All of us are guilty of this at varying degrees. If we take God for granted it is a reflection of our spiritual condition.

Job asked the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). The subject of eternity holds universal interest to every human being.

Sophocles wrote, "Not to be born at all – that is by far the best fortune; the second best is as soon as one is born, with all speed to return thither whence one has come." There is not much hope in that statement! Christianity offers hope, hope that goes beyond temporal optimism.

to a living hope

Hope in the Bible means confident expectation. It means to be confident about the future (Romans 8:24,25). It means to anticipate the good (Titus 1:2; I Peter 1:21).

The New Testament uses hope with the concept of resurrection:

Acts 23:6, "the hope and resurrection of the dead." The two ideas are regarded as one. The resurrection defines our hope.

Hope is also used with the idea of promise:

Acts 26:6,7, "the hope of the promise." This means we expect God to fulfill his promises.

Galatians 5:5, uses hope with righteousness: "the hope of righteousness."

This hope (confidence) is our assurance that we will stand in the righteousness of Christ at his coming. We will stand in complete conformity to God's will at that time because of Christ.

Colossians 1:23, "the hope of the Gospel"

This is the hope of the fulfillment of all the promises presented in the Gospel.

Romans 5:2, "(the) hope of the glory of God"

This is the confidence that we will be in the presence of God.

Titus 2:13, "the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Colossians 1:27).

I Thessalonians 5:8, "the hope of salvation"

This is the hope of the rapture of believers when Christ comes back to earth.

Ephesians 1:18, "the hope of His (God's) calling"

This is the prospect of those who respond to His call in the Gospel

Ephesians 4:4, "the hope of your calling"

Our hope here is regarded from the point of view of the called

Titus 1:2; 3:7, "the hope of eternal life"

This is the full manifestation and realization of that life that is already the believer's possession.

Acts 28:20, "the hope of Israel"

This is the expectation of the coming of the Messiah.

Romans 15:13, "the God of hope"

God is the Author, not the subject, of hope.

Principle

The Christian has a hope beyond the grave.

Application

Do you have confidence in your eternal future? If you are a Christian you should anticipate eternity with confidence.

a living hope

Not only do we have hope; we have a "living" hope. The New Testament uses the word "living" for life in the absolute sense – life as God as it (John 5:26; I John 1:2).

Man became alienated from this life as a result of the fall of Adam (Ephesians 4:18). We become partakers of God's life through faith in Christ (John 3:15) His life becomes our life (Colossians 3:4). We possess present eternal life (John 5:24; I John 3:14). This life will one day extend to the domain of our physical body (II Corinthians 5:4; II Timothy 1:10).

In the New Testament, death is not natural. It is due to sin. Death came through sin (Romans 5:12) which is rebellion against God. Sin thus involved the forfeiting of the life.

Peter uses the word "living" six times (1:3, 23; 2:4-5; 4:5-6). Living means that our hope is real. It is not an empty hope.

True life, God's life, is not destructible. The life that is subject to death is only provisional (I Corinthians 15:19). Those bound to it are "dead." True life is future (I Timothy 4:8) and indestructible. It is eternal (Mark 10:17; Romans 2:7; Galatians 6:8), and linked with salvation. As natural life is given by creation, God's life is given by resurrection.

The giving of life to the one who violates God must be by death of Christ's life - "It is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life." Sin separates us from God. Separation from God forfeits spiritual life. God removes spiritual death by a sacrifice in which the victim and the offerer become identified. God identified us with the substitutionary death of Christ giving us eternal life.

Since Christ had no sins of his own for which to die, his death was voluntary and vicarious (John 10:15; Isaiah 53:5, 10, 12; 2 Corinthians 5:21). In Jesus' sacrifice he suffered God's judgment due to our sin. By this means we become identified with Jesus in his deathless life, through his

resurrection, and we enjoy conscious and eternal fellowship with God. He took our hell that we might have his heaven.

Principle

God has given us life as he has it - eternal life.

Application

No other group of people on earth have a hope beyond the grave except Christians. All of the founders of religion are dead except the Lord Jesus. He is the only one alive today. We cannot say that about Mohammed or Buddha or any other religious leader of history. They are dead and gone! Not the Christ of God. That is what makes Christianity unique. We have a living hope.

The Christian is not temporally optimistic or hopeful. He has confidence that he will one day live eternally with the Lord Jesus.

We have a hope that is actively alive. The Christian presently looks to eternity with expectancy. Why should we look on the dark side of things? The Christian's future is immortal - not subject to death. Therefore, nothing can extinguish the Christian's hope. Probably one of the worst "pests" around is the pessimist! Why should a Christian be pessimistic about life?

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the foundation for the Christian's hope. It is the assurance of our own resurrection. Jesus resurrection and our resurrection are inseparably connected (Colossians 3:1).

"From the dead" means "out from" the dead. Jesus was the first to come out from among the dead. Those who believe in him will come later. Daniel 12 and John 5 speak of resurrection of believers from the dead. At that point God inducts the Christian into the eternal state.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead sets apart Christianity from all the religions of the earth. The sequel to the death of Christ is his resurrection. He died but rose again. He would be better than no other religious leader had he come and gone. Acts 1: 3, "To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Jesus predicted that he would rise again (John 2:9, 21; 10:17,18). The New Testament emphasizes the resurrection as the sequel to his death (Acts 2:23, 24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 17:30, 31; 26:22, 23; Romans 6:4; 7:4; 8:11,34; 10:9; 14:9; I Corinthians 6:14; 15:20; 15:3-5). This is what gives us hope.

The grave is not the bleak, barren terminus of all human existence for the Christian. Death is not a leap into the dark. For the Christian, death is a servant that leads us into the presence of the Lord of Glory. People may place our bodies into caskets and graves. We are in neither (II Corinthians 5:8). Our soul goes instantaneously, automatically, as soon as death strikes our body, into the presence of the Lord. That is why we do not sorrow as those who are not Christians (I Thessalonians 4:13).

God grounds our future life with him in the resurrection of Christ (Luke 24:9; Romans 6:10; 14:9; II Corinthians 13:4). Jesus brought life and immortality to light (II Timothy 1:10). He is the author of life Acts 3:15. We are saved by his life (Romans 5:10). He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). He is the true and eternal life (I John 5:20).

God's gift of eternal life is by an act of grace (Romans 5:15). Our hope rests on this (Romans 1:17). When we believe in Jesus Christ we have eternal life (John 3:15-16). The gospel destroys death and gives immortality (II Timothy 1:10). The gospel is God's power to salvation (Romans 1:16).

Our future life has already been effected by Christ's substitution for our sin. Our resurrection from the dead is simply the consummation of that work. It is grounded in a completed act and therefore living and sure (I Peter 1:3).

Principle

We do not worship a dead man.

Application

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we will rise from the dead as well. Because Christ was raised from the dead, so will we. His resurrection guarantees our resurrection. The personal significance of the resurrection of Christ for us is that we have hope. He will usher us into his presence one day. This is the crown of the Christian experience

1 Peter 1:4

“to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

God gives generously from his grace in time. That, however, is nothing in comparison with eternity. There his generous giving will never stop. We will receive from his unlimited resources at that time.

to an inheritance

Peter describes our inheritance of heaven as future yet secure. Heirs to present estates have no assurance that they will receive their inheritance. They may die before they fall heir to their possessions. It is a different story for Christians.

Christ falls heir to all things (Hebrews 1:2). God has one Son. He is heir to God's possessions. We are born into the family of God through Jesus Christ. God bases our heirship on sonship (Romans 8:16, 17). God wants us to have an appreciation in time for the provisions he gives us. He wants us to appreciate in time what will become his unlimited resources in eternity. This orients us to eternal values.

Heirship demands that we enjoy eternal life (Titus 3:7). If we fall heirs to the resources of the eternal God, we must have eternal life to enjoy it. God bases our heirship on election as well as sonship (Hebrews 9:15). In eternity we will have an unlimited charge account for the elect. As heirs we share the destiny of Christ (Ephesians 1:11).

God has already given us the down payment on our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). The indwelling Holy Spirit is the earnest of our salvation.

The Word of Grace gives us an inheritance among those whom God sets apart. Acts 20: 32, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

We receive an inheritance at the point of salvation. Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

Principle

Our inheritance is our title to future eternal fellowship with God.

Application

An inheritance is what gives title to spiritual possessions. It is that which we receive by virtue of birth – spiritual birth. It is the acquisition of property by succession. We pass earthly inheritances from family to family through birth. Spiritual inheritance is the same process. God places us into his family when we put our trust in the death of Christ to forgive our sins. A member of the family of God inherits heaven.

Have you placed your personal trust in the death of Christ for your sins? Why not enter into the family of God now?

to an inheritance

God gives the Christian a joint account in Christ's inheritance (Romans 8:16,17). When people get married, they go to a bank and open a joint account. It is always a happy little excursion as they trot down to the bank with their money. They think that a joint account means, "Half is yours and half is mine." A man is not married long when he finds out that it doesn't mean that at all. A joint account means whoever gets there first gets the money and somehow she beats him there every time!! A joint-heir with Christ is not a 50/50 deal. It means everything he has belongs to me (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

Principle

The Christian falls heir to all of Christ's inheritance in heaven.

Application

The Christian possesses great privileges because of Christ. He holds these privileges solely because of his status with Christ.

The corollary truth is that everything we have belongs to him. We cannot hold to our possessions if we love him. He gave us health, physical strength, mental ability, position, power, money and fame. He gave them. He can take them away. He adds and he knows how to subtract. He is great at math. Our health belongs to him. Our children and grandchildren belong to him. There may be a time when he takes these away, then we will know he is God (Job 1:21; 9:12).

We need to learn with Job that everything we have belongs to God. Once we settle that with God conclusively, then our lives will get on track. "Lord, we had that out when I was 24 years of age. No problem, Lord. You do all things well. You are too good to do wrong, too wise to make a mistake. It is all right, Lord."

This is the Lordship of Christ. He will not be satisfied until we come to the place of total capitulation. If God should be pleased to subtract from us, he is simply taking of his own. We gave it to him – remember? Did we mean it? This is not something we should debate. He is Lord. If we fudge on that, we trifle with the Lord.

Peter describes our eternal inheritance with three adjectives.

incorruptible

"Incorruptible" means not liable to corruption or subject to decay. The New Testament uses this term of God (Romans 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:17). He is not subject to decay. "Incorruptible" is used when speaking of the raised dead (I Corinthians 15:52), rewards given to the saints hereafter ("crown," I Corinthians 9:25), the eternal inheritance of the saints (here), the Word of God, as incorruptible seed (I Peter 1:23), and a meek and quiet spirit (incorruptible apparel, I Peter 3:4).

Incorruptibleness is deathlessness. Death cannot destroy our inheritance. I Corinthians 15:53, 54 renders this term "immortality." The glorified body of the believer is immortal. The nature of God is immortal (I Timothy 6:16). Immortality is freedom from death. Our inheritance is not liable to corruption or decay.

Fruit rots, spoils and decays. No grave is ever dug on the estate of heaven. Our inheritance cannot be destroyed by death.

Secular Greek used the term "incorruptible" for a state unravaged by an invading army. Many times alien armies invaded Palestine. That land was fought over, blasted and destroyed. The Christian possesses an inheritance that no invading army can ravage or destroy. It is beyond the reach of eternal death.

and undefiled

"Undefiled" means free from contamination, pure. Whatever is "undefiled" is without flaw or defect. Jesus Christ is undefiled (Hebrews 7:26). James 1:27 uses this term of the eternal inheritance of believers (here). Hebrews 13:4 uses

"undefiled" of the marriage bed. We can defile the marriage bed by adultery.

Our inheritance is untainted by sin. We cannot pollute God's inheritance. No sin can taint it. It is unstained by evil. We cannot destroy our inheritance by our sinful nature.

It is beyond the blight of change. It lasts forever.

and that does not fade away

"Fade away" means our inheritance is everlasting. It never becomes old. It never wears out. It is imperishable. Its beauty never fades. It never dries up. It is everlasting and forever undiminished. Our inheritance is perennially fresh. It never becomes old and worn. Time does not impair it.

Extra-biblical Greek uses this term for a flower that does not fade. Some flowers are beautiful, but then they wilt after a very short time. Eternal life will not lose its wonderful, pristine character. It does not fade or lose its brightness. Our inheritance retains its wonderful character.

Peter uses an associated term in I Peter 5:4 where he says "you will receive a glorious crown which will not lose its brightness." It is unimpaired by time.

The Bible often describes heaven in negatives. Human language is not adequate to describe the reality of heaven. The book of Revelation describes heaven in term of negatives as well, Revelation 21:4, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Because heaven transcends human language the Bible has to resort to what it is not rather than what it is. Therefore our place in heaven is untouched by death, unstained by evil and unimpaired by time.

Principle

Our inheritance is untouched by death, unstained by evil and unimpaired by time.

Application

Many earthly inheritances wither away before being received. Our inheritance maintains its fragrance forever. God keeps our garden forever. Why should we worry about our eternal future? The grave is not a blind alley but a thoroughfare,

an expressway leading to a much richer life beyond.

Our inheritance is a perpetual, imperishable, preservation in eternity. Heaven is far more than a happy hunting ground. It is a place preserved by God for fellowship with him.

reserved in heaven for you

The New Testament uses "reserved" 60 times. It may mean to guard (Matthew 27:36; Acts 12:6), to keep (John 2:10; I Peter 1:4), to protect (I Corinthians 7:37).

God lays up and keeps our inheritance for us. The tense indicates that God reserved our inheritance in the past with the result continuing into the future. We can translate this phrase "which has been reserved" for us. God laid up our inheritance at the point of our salvation and personally keeps it for us into the future.

The word "reserved" means keeping as a result of guarding (John 17:11). The voice (passive) indicates that God put the inheritance in the reservation for us. The idea is he preserves it for us.

"Reserved" is a military term. It means to keep safe with a garrison. God is guarding our inheritance. His guard never changes. No one will ever take our inheritance away from God (John 17:11,12; John 5:24). This is God's protection of the believer's eternal destiny. He is on duty 24 hours a day. God places a perimeter around the Christian (John 10:27-29). No one or no thing will defeat or disrupt God in providing salvation for us. Our salvation centers on God's purpose (Romans 8:28-30) not on human merit.

Principle

God promises to preserve our inheritance.

Application

Children are sometimes cut off from their inheritance. God guarantees in the Bible that none of his children will be cut off from inheriting eternity.

Legislation protects those who have died and want their inheritance to go in a given direction. Very few people succeed in contesting a will through litigation. The courts have a high regard for the wishes of those who have died. God is no less committed to his promises. No force is able to

sever the believer from God's love (Romans 8:35, 38,39). This is an indissoluble bond.

God promises to preserve our inheritance. Our inheritance is salvation. No matter what may come our way, God himself will preserve our salvation. This is the effect of the power of God.

Many people who expect to inherit something, die before they receive it. God keeps the believer for his or her inheritance! Many Christians fear that they will lose their salvation. It is a matter of God's promise (II Timothy 1:12).

1 Peter 1:5

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Now we come to God's lay-away plan. God lays our inheritance of heaven away with his guarantee that we will receive it. I Peter

1:5 is one of the greatest verses in the Bible on the full assurance of faith.

Who are kept

The word "guard" is a military term meaning to keep by guarding, to guard with a garrison.

Plutarch, in his *Plutarch Lives*, tells the story of an insurrection of gladiators. These gladiators devastated Italy in the war of Spartacus. Lentulus Batiatus had a school of gladiators at Capua (most were Gauls and Thracians). He kept them in confinement reserved for gladiatorial combat. Seventy-eight gladiators escaped. On the road they seized a wagon carrying gladiators' weapons to another city. They elected three leaders one of whom was Spartacus.

At the beginning, the gladiators repelled the soldiers and took their weapons. Then the Roman government sent General Clodius against them with 3000 soldiers. He laid siege to them on a hill which had but one descent, and that a narrow and difficult one. Plutarch says Clodius closely "watched" the descent. This is our term in this verse. It means to throw a military garrison around. God throws the military garrison of his power around our salvation.

The tense indicates that God continuously guards the Christian's salvation. We can never lose our salvation because God keeps it under guard. God throws the garrison of his person around the believer. God guards us throughout our earthly pilgrimage. There is never a moment when God

does not guard our inheritance. God always keeps those he saves. We can never lose our salvation. If we are a Christian, we are eternally secure.

Principle

The onus for keeping our salvation is upon God.

Application

To many Christians, the Christian life has no solid foundation. It is like a man sitting at his desk on the 70th floor of a recently constructed building. After moving into the building a short time, a light falls upon his desk. He does not call the architect to examine the foundation of the building. He examines the fixture to find if there is a flaw. Unfortunately, many Christians do not examine the immediate cause when they sin. They examine the foundation of their faith. "Am I saved? Has God forsaken me?"

The issue is not the foundation (salvation) but the immediate cause (our sin). If we have violated God's holiness, then God expects confession of that sin (I John 1:9).

What about the foundation? How can a person know he is eternally secure with God? The next studies on this verse will answer those questions.

by the power of God

God guards us by nothing less than his omnipotent power. It is God's power that guards the believer's eternal security. This is the power that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 1:4; I Corinthians 1:18; 5:4; 6:14; 13:4; Philippians 3:10). This work is strictly God's work.

Our salvation is not maintained by our personal power but by the power of God, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek," (Romans 1:16). The same power that delivered us from the penalty of sin delivers us from the power of sin and ultimately from the presence of sin.

Principle

God's omnipotent power is operative in our salvation.

Application

Our eternal foe is bent on robbing us of our salvation. However, God throws the military garrison of his omnipotent power around our

salvation. This is an impregnable ring of defense. God posts the sentinel of his all-powerful being around us. The enemy cannot possibly break through this kind of defense. God never changes his guard. He is on duty until we arrive in heaven.

There is an inconsistency in believing that God can save us originally but not keep us saved. It is an insidious form of unbelief on the part of a Christian.

through faith

The human qualification for our salvation is faith. Faith trusts the guarding garrison of God's omnipotent power for our salvation. Omnipotence does not operate on our faith. Faith operates upon its object – God's power in our salvation.

Faith is a non-meritorious system of perception. Faith is the one thing that every member of the human race possesses. We have different IQ's but we all have faith. The idiot has faith; the genius has faith. There is no particular value in faith. It is the object of our faith--Jesus' death on the cross--that saves us. Only He has the power to forgive our sin and give us eternal life.

Salvation is through faith, not feeling. It is through faith, not through fiction.

Ephesians 2:8,9 says God saves us through faith, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Romans 5:1 God declares us righteous as he is righteous by faith, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Galatians 2:16 argues that our status quo before God is by faith, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."

Galatians 3:26 declares that we enter the family of God through faith, "For you are

all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

Principle

The means of our salvation is the faith that we place in the death of Christ to pay for our sins.

Application

When we are falling, we reach out to grasp the hand of someone who has their balance. It is not the faith in their hand that keeps up steady, it is their hand. It is God who saves and it is God who guards us.

Have you personally placed your faith in the death of Christ for your sins? Why not allow God to save you from eternal separation from him?

for salvation

Our salvation is the aim ("for") of God's omnipotent protection. We will certainly possess the inheritance of our salvation. Not only does God keep our inheritance for us, we are kept for it!

God guards our "salvation." The word salvation conveys the double idea of being safe and being made sound. Before we became Christians we were sick unto death, eternal death. The poison of self-will ran hot through our veins. Now that we have come to Christ, God makes us whole before him.

Salvation means negatively, the deliverance from all evil, whether evils of sorrow or evils of sin. However, it means far more than that. God's salvation is more than saving us from hell. Positively, it is deliverance from the power of sin in our lives.

There are three tenses in the word "salvation" in the Bible: past, present and future.

Past: Jesus, by his blood, paid for all the sins we ever committed and washed them away (Titus 3:5). Present: We are in the state of being saved from the control of sin in our daily life (I Corinthians 1:18). Future: We will one day be ultimately saved from all moral and physical evil (Romans 8:23,24).

Principle

God's power saves us from the penalty, power and presence of sin.

Application

God's power completely saves us.

If you are not a Christian, God will save you from the penalty of sin (eternal separation from God). If you trust in the death of Christ on the cross to forgive your sins, God will forgive you eternally from the penalty of your sin.

If you are a Christian dominated by sin, God will give you the grace to overcome that sin (Romans 6:14).

If you are a Christian, God will deliver you from the very presence of sin. He will eradicate your sin nature completely so that you will not be tempted with sin again.

ready to be revealed in the last time

God will protect or salvation until the Lord comes back. Then he will completely destroy the siege of Satan upon our lives. God will save our soul no matter what trial may come our way.

The word "ready" means prepared. Are you prepared to be revealed? Or, is your old nature showing? One way or another we are going to leave this world, either through the rapture or physical death. The Christian has nothing to fear in death. There will be no more tears, no more death in eternity (Revelation 21:4). Death to the believer is a very exciting experience.

"Revealed" means unveiled. Clothes cover a lot of defects. When we take them off, we reveal a lot of problems! At the coming of Christ, a lot of defects would be unveiled if it were not for Christ himself. At that time we will have a resurrected body minus the sin nature.

The wraps will be taken off at the rapture (I Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 14; Revelation 19:14). Jesus will say to the world, "May I present my bride – no flaws, no defects."

Principle

It is God's purpose to show off his bride (the church) who is pure because of Christ.

Application

It is God's purpose to show off his bride. God cannot show off his bride now. Did you ever see a groom who did not want to show off his bride? Most grooms do. Jesus says, "I want you to meet my wife." He is very happy to introduce us as his bride. One day we will go to the eternal party completely dressed for the occasion.

In heaven there will be no need for Aspirin, Anacin or Alka-Seltzer. We will no longer need dentures, toupees, glasses or artificial limbs. We will be free from pain in that day.

The point is that we cannot become lost between the first and the last coming of Christ. God will not lose us in the shuffle. He will not lose one of us. He does not fail. We are the ones who fail. God cannot change his character just because we blow it. People actually think that just because they blow it, God will fail us. We superimpose our distortions on God. God's love remains the same.

God keeps us right to the end. He will not lose us.

Summary of the doctrine of eternal security (vv. 4-5):

Who is responsible for our salvation? It is the work of three persons:

1. The Father: The Father is able to keep us. He is sovereign and supreme. No power can rise against him: Romans 8:31-34, 38-39 (God lists every spiritual and natural enemy here; no enemy has enough power to attack our salvation).
2. Jesus Christ: John 10:27-28 (nothing [neuter] can pluck us out of his hand); Romans 4:25; 8:1; Ephesians 2:6; Hebrews 7:25; I John 2:1,2.
3. The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit seals our salvation: I Corinthians 6:19; 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30. God seals us unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). No one can break that seal. The seal is a person – the Holy Spirit.

Note the declarations of Scripture about the guarantee of our salvation:

John 6:47, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." God gives eternal life, not spasmodic life or intermittent life.

Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." God keeps our salvation until he comes back again.

II Timothy 4:18, "And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!" No question, no doubt, no equivocation but absolute assurance that God will preserve us for eternity.

Hebrews 5:9, "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." God gives eternal salvation, not temporal.

Hebrews 7:25, "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." The finished work of Christ saves us from the penalty of sin but the unfinished work of Christ at the right hand of God is saving us from the power of sin.

Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. He will complete what he starts.

Jude 1, "To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ." God preserves us because of our association with Christ.

Jude 24-25, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen."

One day we will be faultless and sinless; now we are blameless (free from censure by God because of Christ's death for our sin).

Principle

We can have the assurance of our salvation.

Application

Have you come to the place of full assurance of your salvation? You should be able to say, "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day," (II Timothy 1:12). That is assurance.

Do you have doubts about your eternal salvation that bedevil you? Do you wonder whether you are a Christian? You have slipped off the rails and you do not know whether you are on foot or

horse-back spiritually. You can gain assurance of your salvation by claiming God's promises such as the verse we are studying.

Many people have never accepted Christ in the first place. This is another issue. Examine yourself as to whether you ever truly came to know Christ.

1 Peter 1:6

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials."

In this you greatly rejoice

"In this" -- the living hope (vv. 3-5) produces present joy. The joy of the believer rests in God's grace. Joy is independent of circumstances because the Christian life transcends circumstances. The Christian has an eternal future. He will never lose this joy no matter what comes his way. True joy comes from eternal possessions. Peter rejoices in his possession in Christ Jesus.

"Rejoice" means to experience a state of great joy and gladness. The term often expresses exceeding verbal joy, to exult, rejoice greatly. It conveys the idea of jubilant exultation, spiritual gladness.

This is joy, often carrying the idea of being overjoyed.. In Mary's song she says, "My soul rejoices greatly because of God my Savior" (Lk 1:47). The Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to "be exceeding glad." The Philippian jailer "rejoiced greatly" (Acts 16:34) after he came to Christ.

"Rejoice is mainly used to mean exulting in God's acts (Rev. 19:7). We can anticipate exalting joy here and now by faith (Mt. 5:12). We will exalt with joy at the return of Christ (I Pet. 4:13; Jude 24).

Christ's shares this joy (Heb. 1:9; Lk 10:21).

Most people experience grief and joy consecutively. It is one or the other, not both. If they experience joy they cannot endure trial. If they endure trial they cannot experience joy. A godly Christian can have both trials and joy simultaneously:

"...I am exceedingly joyful in all my tribulation" (II Cor. 7:4) "...in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy" (II Cor. 8:1,2).
 "...longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col. 1:11).

"...in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit"
(I Thes 1:6)

Principle

The Christian can rejoice in the midst of suffering.

Application

We all feel our problems are unique. Many people experience the very same problem but they face it with a different attitude. It is possible to have joy and grief at the same time. What a blessed attitude to have toward pain!

It is possible to stand at the freshly grave of a Christian with a sense of joy.

When we lose the joy of our salvation, we also lose the thrill of the Christian life. Without the thrill, the enjoyment of our salvation grows more dim as the years go by. That is what makes a nominal Christian.

Nothing stirs a nominal Christian. They have heard it all. They know it all. Their favorite hymn is "I shall not be moved!" They deem themselves spiritually sophisticated yet they are not burdened for anyone. Compassion rolls off them like water off a duck's back.

We forget what the Lord did for us at salvation. Do you remember your life before Christ? Have you lost the luster you first had when you received Christ?

Are you out of harmony with heaven? Have you stepped out of fellowship with the Lord? Did you used to lead the pack? Stage a spiritual come-back.

God's design is not that suffering hurt us but that it bless us with joy. God can take any trial and turn it into blessing. There is no catastrophe too great for God. We will never face any suffering that is too great for us to bear or is too great for the plan of God.

though now for a little while

Sorrows last only for a season. Peter presents a perspective on suffering. It is an eternal perspective. Even if we suffered for our entire life, in the light of eternity it would be but a little while.

Suffering lasts for a short season. It is only for a "little while"

Romans 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not

worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

II Corinthians 4:17 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Some of us have more trouble than others. The more we suffer here, the greater the reward hereafter.

I Peter 5:10 "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." Seasons of suffering will pass. Winter is here; spring will come; we will enjoy summer.

If we suffer from loneliness, we are in our late 40s and it does not appear that we will marry, it still is only for a little while. If our bodies are racked with disease and pain, it is for a little while. Time is little in comparison to eternity.

Principle

God designs suffering with time parameters.

Application

Winter is here but spring is coming. God knows how much we are able to suffer. Although, we may face deep waters now, they will eventually recede.

God knows when suffering is necessary. He knows when we need encouragement. He knows when we need pressure. He knows exactly what we need and when we need it.

Some people say, "Why does this have to happen to me?" We think that we get more than our fair share of pain. Yet it could be worse. Look at the pain of some others. They face far greater difficulty than we do. Evidently God knows they have the character to take it. On the other hand, they may be too rebellious for him to take off the pressure.

Trouble will not continue without end. The difficulty we presently face will look different a year from now. You may face slander or gossip. This will pass. You may be in deep financial waters. It will eventually pass. You may fear the future. We fear what we cannot see. God's sustaining grace can meet any situation.

God measures out a certain amount of trial to each of us (I Thessalonians 3:3; I Peter 2:21). We

each will get our share. Trial will do us good. Medicine does not usually taste good. Bitter experiences taste bad. We cannot always have things our own way. God has a purpose for everything.

Most of us react to trouble as if trouble was not in God's design for us. We sing the blues. We get out the crying towel. We push the panic button. From our reaction you'd think God was dead. Our spiritual reflexes are not very good.

Our children watch us and wonder. They can detect inconsistency in us. In the process we mark them indelibly when they are young and impressionable. They cannot see what our faith does for us. When they grow up, they drop out of church. We gave the impression that God is dead. You did not mean to do it but you did it anyway.

God is training us for eternity. This is boot training down here. Some of the lessons are hard to learn. Some lessons are bitter. At times we flunk the course and God makes us take it again.

God wants us to view trial from his vantage point. When we look at our problems from his viewpoint, they look insignificant. If we stand at the mouth of the Grand Canyon from the south rim it looks immense. We cannot see it all. However, if we fly over the canyon, from 30,000 feet it looks like a hole in the ground. The difference is the perspective from which we view it. Like viewing the Grand Canyon from the south rim, our problems look vast. When we look at those problems from God's viewpoint, we put them in perspective.

if need be

Sorrow is necessary for the Christian's development. It is a must for spiritual growth. God appoints us to sorrow (1 Thessalonians 3:3). These sorrows never stay longer than they must.

The word "need" signifies that which is needful, due, proper. It is what must take place, and it often implies inevitability (Mark 13:7). The events of our lives are part of God's plan and purpose for us.

"Need" connotes the element of necessity in an event. Under God's economy it is logically necessary that we face suffering. Suffering is God's personal will for us, not neutral fate.

Jesus uses "need" for the imperative to do God's will. It is the "need" of God's sovereignty that governs his work and leads him to suffering and

glory. Luke 4:43 But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." Luke 9:22 Saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." Luke 17:25 "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." This is God's will as laid down in Scripture.

The followers of Christ stand under the same necessity Acts 9:6 "So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?' Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'" Acts 9:16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 14:22 "Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'" It is a demand for obedient faith in every situation of life.

The New Testament uses "must" when referring to the coming of Christ. It is impossible to evade the reality of it happening. The necessity of it happening comes from the very nature of the God who has committed himself to this plan. Jesus in Matthew 24: 6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Mark 13: 10 "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations." Revelation 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place."

Luke uses this term for the necessity of prayer in the Christian life. Luke 18: 1 "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." Romans 8: 26 "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Principle

Suffering is necessary.

Application

Suffering should never surprise us. The Christian should expect suffering. Everything that God sends our way is necessary. Every sickness is

necessary. Every trial is necessary. Our trouble is part of the plan of God.

Some people say, "I never have trouble." Just wait, it will come. If you do have trouble, join the club, we all face it.

God never sends one unnecessary tear drop. Suffering is a must. God does all things for a purpose.

This same word "must" appears when Jesus introduced the term "born again." John 3: 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

Acts uses "must" for salvation as well. Acts 4: 12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts uses "must" of the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation. Acts 16: 30-31 "And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'"

Will you respond to the imperative to receive Christ?

you have been grieved by various trials

The word "various" means variegated or multicolored. The trials we face have many hues and colors. Some are small but others are king-size.

In the New Testament, the word "various" in "various trials" is used only one other time and that is in reference to trials as well – "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials," (James 1:2).

The Christian will face many kinds of trials. Peter again indicates that God's grace manifests itself in various ways. "Various" is translated "manifold." "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," (1 Peter 4:10).

God mixes the bitter and sweet. He is training us for glory. This is boot camp down here. We all face personal and family sorrow. We see sorrow in our community and nation and world. Paul carried sorrow for the lost (Romans 9:2,4).

Principle

God mixes the bitter and the sweet to train us for glory.

Application

Every Christian will face all sorts of trials--trials of faith, persistence, patience, loyalty. These trials will not necessarily come separately or successively. They can come all at once. They come from all angles. The piling up of these trials results in grief – personal heaviness.

This is the plan of God for our personal maturity.

grieved by various trials

"Grieved" means to cause pain, or grief, to distress. It is a state of sadness. Mentally, grief is the anguish of misfortune, death, annoyance, insult, or outrage. The main idea of "grief" is sorrow (John 16:6; Romans 9:2; Philippians 2:27).

Grief leads to empathy. Jesus entered into grief in Gethsemane. We identify with the sufferings of Christ better when we suffer.

Grief is an integral part of the Christian life. It affords an opportunity to grow in the power of Christ's death and resurrection. Acceptance of grief is acceptance of the cross (Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:10-11; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Christ's death on the cross plunged the disciples into grief. The very isolation from Jesus brought out the significance of fellowship with him (John 16:33). The pain of unjust suffering carries a rich reward when accepted in commitment to God (1 Peter 4:21).

Trial means to try, to learn the nature or character of someone or something by submitting them to thorough and extensive testing -- "to test, to examine, to put to the test, examination, testing."

God permits or sends trials for character development: 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

Suffering always causes grief to our souls.

Principle

God does not test our faith as much in prosperity as in adversity.

Application

Though we live in hope we still grieve. Hope rises above grief but it does not eradicate it. Christians need the process of sorrow. We need to deal with it, not deny it. We need occasion to hurt and weep. We sorrow, but not as others who have no hope. Glib answers do not help the sorrowing process. We need to learn the value of grief. It will lead us to a fuller fellowship with God.

No one is free from trouble. These are the many colored trials of those who are in the family of God. Trouble comes in all forms: financial, marital, family. A great variety of trouble will come our way over a lifetime. Christians are not immune from trouble. God weaves a certain amount of hurt into our lives to develop our value of eternal things.

God does not enjoy putting us through pain. He does not glee in watching us flinch. Everything that comes into our life, including pain, comes by divine design. God has a reason for everything he does. We may understand it by and by.

Jesus faced trouble – "For if they do these things in the green wood (Jesus), what will be done in the dry? (Christians)" (Luke 23:31). Jesus was the green tree and the fire consumed him. What will happen to us who are dry twigs?

What kind of trouble do you presently face? The problems you face may not seem severe to someone else but they are intense to you.

Has trouble come to you in the large economy-size package? How are you handling your problems? Do you take God's viewpoint on pain?

1 Peter 1:7

"That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This verse informs us as to the purpose of trials. Once a person becomes a Christian, does that mean he/she is free from problems?

No, the Christian is not exempt from pain and problems. We all experience trouble and setbacks in this life.

That the genuineness of your faith

The word "that" indicates purpose. God's purpose in trial is our tryout, not our ruin. Two results

come from "many colored trials": 1) they refine our faith and 2) they test for approval the reality of our faith.

The word "genuineness" means to test for approval. It means to test to find if something is genuine. This is the act of putting someone to the test to determine whether he/she is worthy of being approved or not. The test aims at approval if possible. Note these New Testament uses of the word "genuineness": "I bought five pairs of oxen and am on my way to test them out," Luke 14:19. "Everyone should examine himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup," 1 Corinthians 11:28. "Being tested severely by the troubles," 2 Corinthians 8:2. "The testing of your faith produces endurance," James 1:3. "When your fathers tested and tried (me)," Hebrews 3:9.

Greek literature used the word "test" for examining candidates for a medical doctorate. Candidates for a medical doctorate must be tested. It is crucial to find out if they are the genuine thing. We do not want an incompetent surgeon operating on us. When doctors prove genuine by examining, they meet the attestation.

It is obvious that God wants to discover what constitutes our character. Character is best ascertained when we are placed under duress. God will detect our weakness and strength by giving us an exam. It will be a difficult exam. Get out your blue books. God is about to find out the genuineness of your faith!

Principle

God refines our faith by trial.

Application

When it comes to trials, everyone is in one of these three stages: They are experiencing a trial, coming out of a trial or about to go into a trial!

In the Detroit, Mich., area there are proving grounds for automobiles. The purpose of these proving grounds is to test the mechanical soundness of cars before they are out on the market. Test drivers run these cars for days without turning off the motor. The cars are put through bumps, curves, water, hills and many more obstacles for long periods of time. The manufacturing companies want to know whether the shocks and brakes are going to hold up under punishment. In the same way, God wants to develop our faith so that we will stand up to the bumps of life.

Have you assayed your life? Have you found it genuine? Will you pass the exam?

Will God regard you as appropriate for His service? God makes His assessment after He puts us to the test. He will judge us to ensure we are real and genuine, and if we are He will approve us for service.

That the genuineness of your faith

The New Testament uses the word "genuineness" in the context of purifying and strengthening metals by passing them through fire. The fire melts the ore and brings the dross to the surface, where it can be skimmed off. After the metal cools, it is much stronger.

If a gold mining company wishes to develop a new site, it sends someone to assay the metal to see whether the gold is genuine and of sufficient quantity to warrant investment in the mine. The assayer takes a sample of the gold to the laboratory and examines it. He then sends his report about the quality of the ore to the company. The report is more valuable than the gold sent with the report. On the basis of the report the company will make a decision as to whether it will proceed with the project. In the same way, God wants a faith that can take the test. God is looking for people He can trust. If God finds our faith one He can approve, then He knows that we stand the tests of life. He wants to know the quality of our faith.

Something is genuine if it is without alloy. An alloy is a mixture of more than one metal. Lesser metals mixed with stronger metals weaken the stronger metals. God does not want the metal (character) of our lives mixed with lesser things.

The fiery tests of our faith bring greater strength to our spiritual lives. They remove the impurities in our lives. We may say that we trust God but we often mix that trust with dependence upon self. Our faith then needs purifying. We need tests to cleanse these impurities.

Principle

A purpose of trials is to test our faith.

Application

Do you have a heavy heart? Every Christian faces disappointments and discouragement. Some people get the idea that a Christian should be immune from trouble. But trouble and trouble

will come to all of us, in different shapes and sizes.

What does your faith prove? When God sends an ordeal into your life, how do you react? When God gives you a bitter pill, do you swallow it as God's will? Many wounds make up our lives. It is not enough to simply endure them.

We increase our faith by the assimilation of God's Word (Romans 10:17) and by the application of what we know (Hebrews 4:1-3). The approval of our faith is more important than the approval of gold.

being much more precious than gold that perishes

Gold is a precious metal, but the test of our faith is much more precious than the test for gold.

This phrase describes our faith, not the trial of our faith: "being much more precious." Similar uses of the phrase "much more" also occur in: Romans 5:9 "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Romans 5:10 "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Romans 5:15 "But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many." Romans 5:20 "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."

Our faith is much more precious than anything else we possess. We have nothing more valuable than our faith. The closer we get to death, the more we realize how precious it is.

Peter uses the word "precious" seven times in 1 and 2 Peter. We use "precious" for just about anything. We say, "Isn't that a precious necklace." The Bible, however, uses this term for that which is of ultimate value. Acts 20:24 says "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."

The word "worth" is the same as the word "precious" in our passage. Paul's testimony is the value here. Hebrews 13:4 says marriage is precious. "Marriage should be honored by all, and

the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

The contrast between gold and our faith in 1 Peter 1:7 is between material and spiritual wealth. Material wealth perishes; spiritual wealth does not (Psalm 119:127; Proverbs 8:11).

After gold liquefies in fire, the impurities rise to the surface, where they can be skimmed away. When the goldsmith sees his face in the gold, he knows he can turn down the heat. He knows that the gold is purified. God compares our faith with gold because He deems it a precious commodity. Yet gold is of only temporal value. The Christian's faith is of eternal value.

Principle

God deems a faith tested by fire as being of eternal value.

Application

One day gold will perish. Our faith will never perish. This passage says if your faith is real, it cannot perish. If you lost your faith you never had a true faith in the beginning.

though it is tested by fire

The word "tested" means--test to approve, to prove with a view to approving, test for approval. The trials test for proof that our faith is genuine. God wants to certify the worth of our faith. Our faith is the foundation of all other character qualities we possess. If our faith falters, everything falters.

We put metal into a crucible to determine whether it is genuine (Proverbs 8:10; 17:3). God tests, proves and scrutinizes us by fire to show that we are worthy for His service.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:4, the apostle and his fellow missionaries were "approved of God to be entrusted with the Gospel." God gives approval for us to preach after He puts us to the test.

The Corinthians did not find in Paul the proof of the power that they sought (2 Corinthians 13:3). However, Paul reminds them that what ultimately counts is not what men think but what God thinks. God's commendation at the end of the day is what matters. 2 Corinthians 10: 18 says, "For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends."

God proves our attestation in affliction. The pressure put on us when we are under strain will

either produce endurance or failure. Suffering produces endurance (Romans 5:3-4). The Macedonians remained both joyous and generous under duress (2 Corinthians 8:2). Testing sifts out authentic believers (2 Corinthians 9:13; 11:19). It attests to our love for God (2 Corinthians 8:8).

God sets the believer under His searching eye. We learn the will of God by testing (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:9-10; Philippians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Testing protects Christians from caprice and brings them into the sphere of God's will.

When Jesus prayed for Peter, He asked God to strengthen his faith: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren," (Luke 22:31-32). Now in 1 Peter, Peter writes about the importance of faith holding up under fire. Our faith improves by trial.

The nature of our test is a fire-test. The trial of faith is more precious than the test for gold already refined.

Here is a double comparison of the trial of gold with the trial of faith. Gold at the time of writing of 1 Peter was the most valuable of all the metals. Faith is the greatest among Christian values. The trial of faith is of greater value than the trial for gold. Both trials purify. The purification of gold separates the dross from the precious metal. The purification of faith separates the garbage from the Christian life.

Principle

God uses extreme adversity ("fire") to force out the impurities and the things that are unimportant in our lives.

Application

Peter compares our faith to gold that is precious from the human viewpoint. Suffering brings the impurities out of our lives and makes us useful to God. This kind of faith is more valuable than gold. God takes the slag out of our lives.

God does not test our faith in prosperity but in adversity. God kicks out the crutches from our lives. He skims off the slag of dependence on other people, upon our social life, upon health, beauty, sex or material possessions. Trouble will come that can wipe out these things. These things

will not sustain us in times of duress. Good times do not sustain us; only God can sustain us by his promises.

How many times have we prayed, "Lord, take it away." God put it there. He wants it there. He wants us to learn to trust Him in adversity. Some people quote 2 Corinthians 10:13, "but with the temptation will also make the way of escape" with the interpretation that they will "escape" from problems. They want to get out from under the trouble so that it does not hurt anymore. Escape does not prove a thing.

For some people, the only time they think seriously about God is when they are in a jam. If they were honest they would say, "Now God, I'm in this terrible jam. It hurts terribly. Make it stop hurting. Wave your divine wand to make it stop." That is why they want a God. They want a divine pacifier. As soon as the trouble passes, they forget all about God again.

God's way of escape is IN suffering. He allows suffering so that we can know joy while going through trouble. We will get out of the trial sooner or later. But that is not the answer. The answer is what we do while under pressure.

may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ

God is the one who does the finding here, not us. God will find whether our faith glorifies Him or not. Long after gold is gone our faith will remain. If our faith meets the test, it will redound to the glory of God.

The word "found" means to find after a search. God puts our faith to the test to approve us for the glory of God. Trials put our faith to the test. If we trust Him to meet us in our need, it glorifies Him. It is not the testing of our faith that glorifies God. It is whether our faith meets the test.

The trial of our faith will produce three results: praise, honor and glory. These results are all in the future.

If we reduce 1 Peter 1:7 down to its least common denominator it would read like this, "That the genuineness of your faith...be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Our faith produces something for the future.

2 Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Trials will not last forever. And

God furnishes the equipment to support us while we are in them.

Material wealth perishes; spiritual wealth is imperishable. The person who places spiritual values above temporal values operates on genuine, eternal priorities.

Principle

The trial of faith is producing something for us in the future.

Application

Jesus is coming again. When we meet Him, the character of our faith will be manifest. The greater the refining process, the brighter it will appear. Trials will disappear but the luster of the trial will proceed into eternity. This should reconcile us to our present afflictions.

Christians do not judge their life based solely on time but on eternity as well.

to praise, honor, and glory

"Praise" is the expression of honor. Jesus will express His approval at that day. The word "praise" is a compound of two words "upon" and "a tale." It meant to tell a tale about someone. It came to mean "praise" with the idea of commendation or approbation.

"Honor" is the esteem that someone has for someone else. God will honor our faith when we meet the Lord Jesus.

Proverbs 18: 12 says "But humility comes before honor." We know little about humility. The station this side of honor is humility. We cannot get to the second station without stopping at the first station. If we receive honor without humility, it might go to our head. We would inflate with our own importance.

One day we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We will get our grades then. Some of us will receive more honor than others. Some will have crowns. Some will have none.

"Glory" means to manifest the attributes of a person. This is the glory that results from a good opinion. Does God have a good opinion of us? The New Testament uses "glory" to refer to the blessed estate of the children of God when they are brought into the glorification of the likeness of Christ.

God will make a big deal of the quality of our faith on Earth. In the marketplace of eternity, gold

will be of little value. The quality of our faith will be of much greater worth.

Very few of us receive glory here on Earth. The reason faith is more valuable than gold is that when we meet God, He will find it to have honor, praise and glory.

Principle God has established a day when we will get our due.

Application

We do not get much praise here on Earth. That's life. If you are inclined to praise someone down here, don't hesitate to do so. If you fear that they will think it is flattery, do it anyway.

One day we will receive praise from the most important person of the universe.

1 Corinthians 4:5 says, "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

When the Lord comes back and we stand before Him, we will receive our due then.

at the revelation of Jesus Christ

The word "revelation" means unveiling. This refers to the return of the Lord Jesus. 1 Peter 5:4 says "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Principle

God will manifest the eternal value of the life of faith when Jesus returns

Application

Do you anticipate His return? He may come today.

The three results of the glorification of the believer: praise, honor and glory will take place at

the coming of Christ. God honors those who prove their faith.

1 Peter 1:8

"Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"

Whom having not seen you love

The Greek says "toward whom you now do not see." Our faith finds full expression in the direction of our faith – the Lord Jesus. We find joy in a person.

The emphasis in this phrase is upon the person of Christ – "whom." The Greek implies the idea of "toward whom" placing emphasis upon the direction of our faith toward a person.

Joy resides in a person. He is the ground of our joy. God accomplished salvation through the work of His Son Jesus Christ. Joy stems from the possession of that salvation.

The word "seen" means to catch a glimpse. Asia Minor's Christians had not even caught a glimpse of the Lord Jesus on earth yet they loved Him. They never had eye to eye personal contact with the Lord yet they loved him dearly.

We do not need a picture of Jesus to love Him. We do not rely on some artist conception of Him to appreciate what He has done for us. However, we cannot love someone unless we have a clear conception of who that person is. We must know a person before we can love him or her properly. 1 John 4: 7 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

To know Him is to love Him; to know Him better is to love Him better.

The Old Testament's saints had not seen Him either yet they lived by faith (Hebrews 11). The Holy Spirit paints a vivid portrait of Him in the Word. Without the Holy Spirit's revelation of Him in the Word, we cannot love him. Romans 5: 5 says, "Now hope does not disappoint, because

the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." If you do not know the Lord Jesus you are missing out on life with a capital "L."

Napoleon made a powerful point about the Lord Jesus when he said, "An extraordinary power of influencing and commanding men has been given to Alexander (the Great), Charlemagne and myself. But with us the presence was necessary, the eye, the voice, the hand. Whereas Jesus Christ has influenced and commanded His subjects without His visible bodily presence for eighteen hundred years."

One day we will see Jesus: "They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads," (Revelation 22:4). Do you anticipate the day that you will see the Lord Jesus Christ? Unless we have the eye of faith in time, we will never see His face in eternity.

Principle

The more we know the Lord Jesus the more we love Him.

Application

We did not fall in love with our spouses before we saw them! A marvel is that multiplied millions have fallen in love with the Lord Jesus without ever seeing Him. Very few people saw Him during the brief 33 and a half years He spent on earth, yet thousands have given their lives for Him.

When we utilize God's provision for us in time, the result is a wonderful love affair between us and God. The focus of a believer's faith is not on abstract knowledge but on the person of Christ. Yet we cannot know the person of Christ without the Word of God.

Whom having not seen you love

Remember that Jesus challenged Peter to love Him in John 21. Jesus interrogated Him three times about this love. Now Peter expresses his love for Him many years later.

The Bible promises reward for those who love him: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him," (James 1:12).

We should love the Lord because He first loved us; "We love Him because He first loved us," (1 John 4:19). Once we come to grips with the fact

that Jesus died on the cross for our personal sins (in our place), we cannot help but love Him. It melts our heart. No one ever loved us like the Lord Jesus.

Principle

We love the Lord Jesus because he took the initiative to die for our sins.

Application

If Jesus does not mean anything to you except a name in a history book, then you are not a Christian. You may be religious but you are not a true Christian. A true Christian loves the Lord.

You can always tell when a person loves the Lord Jesus by the way he or she talks about Him. People do not talk about Julius Caesar the same way they talk about the Lord Jesus. Everything we have is because of Him.

"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22). Do you love the Lord Jesus, yes or no? You reply, "Well, I am neutral. I don't know. I've never heard it put quite like that." But the truth is that if we do not love the Lord, then from God's viewpoint we are "accursed."

Though now you do not see Him

We find the same words "though now" in verse six. The word "now" speaks of present tense. This is the time in which we live. Yesterday is gone; tomorrow we do not yet possess. We have the present right now.

Unlike Peter, the people of Asia Minor to whom he is writing had never seen Jesus face to face. They were disciples of the apostles. We have not seen Jesus, but we will see Him one day (Revelation 22:4; 1 Corinthians 13:12).

yet believing

The Lord Jesus is worthy of our trust. "Believing" is an issue of the trustworthiness of Christ. Nothing spreads peace over our hearts like putting our trust in One so worthy. The Greek indicates that this is an active reliance upon Him. We put our trust upon a person.

"Believing" is how a Christian sees. The non-Christian world says, "Show me; seeing is believing." We cannot come to Christ that way. The Bible's idea is "believing is seeing." "I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would

see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," (Psalm 27:13).

Principle

Believing is seeing.

Application

We cannot see until we believe. If you do not believe you cannot see, thus you are blind spiritually. When people come to Christ, God removes the scales from their eyes. They see spiritually for the first time. Their reaction is "Why did I not see this before? Why didn't anyone tell me?"

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed," (John 20:29). Have you come to believe in Jesus Christ? This is the single requirement to become a Christian: John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." John 3:15, "That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." John 6:35 "And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." John 20:31 "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

you rejoice

Peter uses this word "rejoice" in chapter 4, verse 13. In ancient Greek the word "rejoice" meant to plume oneself in the sense of joyful pride.

Joy is the inner animation of the soul. Biblical joy is not happiness. Happiness depends on

circumstances. If we have good circumstances we are happy; if not, we are unhappy. Joy, however, is independent of circumstances. Joy depends on our present relationship to God. Revelation 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

We rejoice when we look to God's saving work in Christ. I John 1:3 "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."

Principle

Present joy depends on our present relationship to Jesus Christ.

Application

Present joy depends on our present relationship to Jesus Christ. Yesterday's faith will not contribute to today's joy. Yesterday's meals will not satisfy today's hunger. Present joy depends on present trust in Christ. It springs from our sense of forgiveness, our appreciation for the cross.

Joy does not depend on whether Caesar stops persecuting Christians; it depends on our relationship to Jesus Christ. What is your relationship to Jesus Christ like at this moment?

Has your faith grown lukewarm? Are you existing rather than living? Maybe you are going through deep trouble as you read this devotional. Is it unbearable? The key issue is how you resolve the problem. Are you merely bearing up under the pain? Are you experiencing the joy of God?

Someone asked J. D. Rockefeller, "How much money would it take to make a person happy?" He answered, "Just a little bit more." All of us have known the staleness of excess and intemperate indulgence. Indulgence is fleeting enjoyment based on things, circumstances and people. These things do not ultimately satisfy.

The Bible has a different system for the possession of joy. We find joy in fellowship with a person.

Joy is not an end in itself, but a result. Joy comes from the fact that we are daily in a right relationship with God through faith in Christ.

"Very well," you say, "I know that my joy comes from God. That is not my trouble. What happens

when I lose my joy?" Joy does not rest on us but God. If God planned it and initiated it, He will see it to fruition in our souls. Many failures in the Christian life originate right here. People say, "I'm through, I've failed, I cannot live the Christian life." Nothing could be more true. We cannot live the Christian life. We cannot produce or maintain the Christian life.

God must empower us or we will indeed fail. Joy is strictly contemporaneous with faith. If we tear away an electric cord from its source of energy, the light goes out. The same is true in the Christian life. If we separate ourselves from the person of Christ, we lose the source of our joy. He is our source of power. If we do not plug into Him, we cut off fellowship with him; we cut off our source of joy.

The joyous Christian is not necessarily the one with the least trouble. Often, he is the one with the greatest trouble. He has found the truth that Christ is with him in his difficulty. Nowhere does God promise us an easy path of roses. Anyone can glory in prosperity. To say with Job, "though he slays me, yet will I trust him" is true Christian living.

Did you ever notice that Jesus sang before He went to the garden of Gethsemane? Matthew 26:30 "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." On His way to the cross He was singing! He knew that the cross led to the empty tomb and victory over sin. He knew His Father was with Him. These principles transcended circumstances.

Why wait till we get to heaven to receive true joy? We can find joy as we travel along. It is foolish to wait for the heights before we enjoy the scenery. Yesterday's meals will not satisfy today's hunger. Neither will yesterday's faith satisfy today's joy. Present joy depends on present faith.

with joy inexpressible

There are two qualifications that describe joy. These qualifications will help you determine whether you have joy.

Qualification number 1 – "joy inexpressible"
Qualification number 2 – "and full of glory"

The first qualification of this joy is the word "inexpressible." Biblical joy is beyond description. Joy is found in the "whom" of this verse. Joy is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is the object and ground of the believer's joy.

"Inexpressible" means unable to tell out. Our joy surpasses our ability to describe it. We cannot express properly our joy in God. It passes all human speech. All attempts to circumscribe it will end in frustration. Still water runs deep. This goes beyond personality and psyche. This is not psychology but spirituality!

We can count a poor man's wealth. Often, extraordinarily rich people cannot count their wealth. They have their riches in many forms: stocks, banks, businesses. We cannot count our riches in Christ. He is a limitless resource to our spirituality.

We can cram shallow emotions into the limits of human vocabulary. However, deep emotions cannot be fully expressed. How can we explain the love for our spouse or child? We can broach the subject but we can never fully describe that kind of love. It is impossible to describe to others precisely how much and what kind of love we have for them. In shallow streams, we can see pebbles below the water, but in the ocean there are depths that have never been searched by men. So it is with Christ. "But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him," (I Corinthians. 2:9).

Are you thinking on the things God has prepared for you? The joy of your life depends on the character of your thoughts.

Joy is not an end in itself, but a result of our faith. We reside in right relation to God through faith. We cannot live the Christian life; we need to trust God to empower us to live it.

Principle

Joy is the flag of the heart that shows the King is in residence.

Application

If we fly high enough, we will get into clear skies. The joy of our lives depends on the character of our thoughts. Joy does not depend upon circumstances, so joy is not happiness.

Happiness depends upon what happens to us. "Do I have good health? Do I have congenial company? Am I financially set? Do I have pleasant circumstances?" Happiness then is not joy.

A person may have joy when he does not have happiness. It is possible to lay on a hospital bed

with joy. We can have physical affliction and rejoice in it. Happiness and unhappiness do not exist together but joy and sorrow can exist together.

The Lord was called "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," (Isaiah 53:3), yet we read that he held both joy and pain at the same time, Hebrews 12:2 says "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Another example is Paul. Paul was in prison. This is not a very happy situation, but he sang praises to God there. As a result the Philippian jailer came to Christ. It is foolish to wait until we have reached the heights before we view the scenery.

We find joy in a person, not circumstances. Do you remember when you first came to Christ? You could not hold your joy. It burst forth everywhere. You were full and running over. Somewhere along the way it leaked out.

Christian joy is an exulting joy. This is the joy of the prisoner on the day of his release from prison. We breathe out the joy from within. This joy spreads throughout our soul like a newly broken bottle of poignant perfume. The aroma penetrates our proximity until its fragrance moves everywhere we go.

Do you have personal joy? What is your view of Christ and His provisions for you?

and full of glory

The second qualification of our joy is the phrase "full of glory."

There are many ordinary joys of men. For example, "The Yankees won the pennant!!" This kind of joy is fragile and hollow. It is like bubble that breaks on its own accord. This is not the "glory" of this verse.

The phrase "full of glory" means glorified. This phrase should be translated "having received glory." The Christian's body is not yet glorified but his joy can be. Joy depends on our mental attitude toward Christ not on our external resources. This would be an obvious platitude were it not for the fact that 99% of Christians do not believe it!

Principle

The joy that Christians have receives glory when they orient to the Lord.

Application

Christians can radiate with the glory of heaven. The believer is not yet glorified but his joy is if he enters into fellowship with the Lord.

This is not the glory of clapping hands or some overt emotional activity. This is the inner mental joy that comes from exposure to the glory of God. This is the glory of Christ. If we dislodge love for the Lord Jesus Christ based on the Word of God, then inner glory will leave us.

Glory is something we receive. We receive glory only in conjunction with joy in God. This is the glory of inner orientation to God, no matter what circumstance may come our way. God gives glory to everyone who experiences joy in him.

Glory is an overt word. When we come to grips with what Jesus has done for us, then we enter into glory. This is all inside. As a result, God gives us a glory or glamour. Glory and glamour are often synonymous terms that describe the manifestation of genuine Christian living.

"Glory" does not mean to scream and holler and jump around. It is a command to inner animation. We can only experience glory by fellowship with God. A person in fellowship with the Lord is free from attitudinal sins.

If we have a day when things are not going right, glory liberates us from attitude sins. Mental attitude sins produce misery. Envy, jealousy, bitterness, pride, vindictiveness all produce self-induced misery. All this bile will come to the surface at a time we least expect it. When we experience the glory of fellowship with the Lord, it will expel attitude sins.

1 Peter 1:9

"Receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls."

receiving the end of your faith

The word "receiving" means to receive back. The secular Greek language used this word to define the recovery of debts. The tax-collector would go from place to place collecting what was coming to him. In the same way, we collect a whole life in

Christ. He meets every need. He fills our soul with joy (v.8).

The word "receiving" also has the idea of acquiring for oneself. In the Greek it means to carry off for oneself, to get what is promised. We need to personally appropriate the end of our faith in order to enter the joy of our salvation.

The secular Greek language used "receiving" to refer to winning prizes in games. "Receiving" is the basis of our joy of verse 8. We rejoice with a joy that has already attained its full perfection. This is the ultimate reception of glory.

Whatever we receive from God we receive by faith (II Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 2:6). We can develop our faith by exercise.

The word "receive" is present tense. This receiving is not future; it is a present reality. We can receive the end of our faith right now, the blessing of our salvation. We have already received the end of our faith in the person of Jesus Christ. Joy has already attained full perfection in Christ.

The "end" is the culmination of our faith. This is not the cessation or conclusion but the goal of our faith. Here it refers to the object to which we direct our faith. This word alludes to a prize received in a game. Our salvation is the crown of the Christian life. The end of our faith is the completion, conclusion and consummation of our faith. It is that for which we believe.

Principle

We can enjoy heaven now; we do not need to wait till we get to heaven.

Application

It is foolish to wait until we have reached the heights before we view the scenery. We can enjoy future reward now.

We can enjoy our eternal reward and can receive the goal of our salvation right now. We do not need to wait until eternity to enjoy salvation. God wants us to personally appropriate and enjoy these blessings in time.

the salvation of your souls

The word "salvation" occurs in verses 5,9 and 10. We live in a day of religion. The Bible uses the word "religion" but never uses it as a synonym for salvation. It is possible to have tons of religion but not one ounce of salvation.

In verses 1 to 12 we read the name of our Lord Jesus Christ seven times. Apart from Him there is no salvation (Acts 4:12). Religion will teach us ethics but not afford salvation. It will give us a veneer of ethics but not eternity. God does not give us heaven on the basis of religious ideals. God's system of salvation pivots around the person and work of the Lord Jesus. These are the facts of the Bible.

Christians rejoice because they are in the process (present tense) of realizing the goal of their faith -- salvation. Salvation in the New Testament has three phases. 1. The past - our sins were once for all cleansed on the cross of Christ (Galatians 1:4) 2. The present - we are being saved from the power of sin (Romans 8:2). 3. The future - we will be saved from the presence of sin (II Corinthians 5:1).

Salvation means deliverance. God saves the soul in two ways: 1) we are being spiritually saved in the here and now; 2) the soul is physically saved when it receives its resurrection body. The resurrection body is where the soul will be housed forever. So there is both a spiritual and a physical deliverance of the soul. This is positional and ultimate sanctification. Both are involved here.

The "soul" is the central personality of our being. The salvation of our souls brings salvation to the being that lives within our body. Every human body has a soul inside it, which persists after we put the body into the casket and buried.

We are not our body. If we lose a leg we are still the same person. We are not our body; we live in our body. Our body eventually dies but our soul continues forever. If a person dies without Christ he or she goes to hell; if a person dies with Christ he or she goes to heaven.

The present salvation is the salvation from the pain of persecution. When God saves, he does a total job. At the point we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, not only is we're saved from hell but we now have the potential of salvation from daily sins (Romans 6: 6,7).

Principle

We not only have a Savior but a Sustainer.

Application

Salvation began at one point and continues into eternity. We presently possess eternal salvation. Every Christian also daily receives the salvation

of the soul. This is progressive salvation. Those in deep distress need to focus on the long-range view of our salvation. God is saving him in the trial he faces.

A wonderful thing about knowing the Lord is having a Savior and a Sustainer. If we fall into sin, there is the temptation to despair. If we feel that we are not getting our share, we do not draw upon the end of our faith. If others say it is not right that we should suffer so, we put our eyes on the wrong place. The Lord both understands, knows and concurs with everything that happens to us.

We need to cast all our heartaches at the feet of the Savior (Hebrews 4:16). Then we can get up from our knees and go out with a life of joy. Troubles have not changed; we have changed. Our vantage point is nowadays different; we now look at problems from God's viewpoint, not our own viewpoint.

If we look at problems, they are mountain high. When God looks at them, the problems are as pebbles. God is still on the throne and Jesus is still seated at the right hand of the Father. Are you open to stage a spiritual comeback?

Do you know you possess salvation? You say, "I hope I'm saved." That is like saying, "I hope I am married." If you do not know whether you are married or not, you are not married! God does not save you without letting you know about it! We cannot be saved without making a definite decision. Just like we cannot be married against our will, we cannot become a Christian against our will. You must make a decision, "I will accept the death of Christ as payment for my sin."

If we wait until we die to find out whether we have salvation we have waited too long (Mark 8:36).

1 Peter 1:10

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you."

Of this salvation

The salvation mentioned in verse 9 was the object not only of the search of Peter's generation, but also of the Old Testament prophets.

Luke 1:77 "To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins."

The purpose of Jesus' first coming was to forgive sins.

Acts 4:12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The Bible asserts that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

It is God's power that saves us.

Romans 10:10 "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Faith in the suffering of Christ on the cross for our sins is God's way of salvation.

Ephesians 1:13 "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

Trust, faith, believe are synonyms for the way to become a Christian.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."

Revelation 7:10 "And crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Revelation 19:1 "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!'"

Principle

From eternity God plans our salvation and by faith we receive it.

Application

God plans salvation from eternity past. We can, therefore, can take assurance that our salvation was planned and prophesied centuries ago. It is liberating to know that we do not have to work for salvation but God offers it as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8,9).

the prophets have inquired

Clearly the prophets wrote more than they knew. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible as well as human authors.

The two verbs "inquired" and "search" are emphatic. Because they're at the beginning of the Greek sentence, there is great emphasis on these words.

"Inquired" means seek to out or after, to search for, to examine, inquire thoroughly, to make a careful search, to seek diligently to learn. So then, "inquired" has the idea of making considerable effort and care to learn something.

The New Testament uses this word in this word in different ways: Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." God rewards those who diligently seek Him by faith. Hebrews 12:17 "For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." It is possible to diligently seek God with great emotion.

Principle

Positive volition is necessary to understand the implications of salvation.

Application

The prophets dug into the Word of God like someone who digs for gold to understand salvation. They needed to study the books that they themselves wrote. If it is necessary for the prophets to seriously search their own books, it is true for us as well. Are you serious Bible student?

and searched carefully

"Searched" means to look diligently, examine. The general sense is "to search after."

The New Testament uses "searched" in reference to animals who "sniff out" food or other things!

The secular Greek language used this word for searching a house or a crime scene. It also carries the idea to investigate, either legally or more generally, and to test, to examine. Plato and Philo used the term for academic, scientific, and philosophical inquiry. Philo used it for rabbinical study of Scripture.

The New Testament mentioned this word in a number of contexts:

Revelation 2:23 "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."

Jesus searches our minds and hearts.

John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

This is the search of Scripture with a view to finding its truth.

John 7:25 "Now some of them from Jerusalem said, 'Is this not He whom they seek to kill?'"

This is a statement by Nicodemus as commanded similarly by the chief priests and Pharisees.

John 7:52 "They answered and said to him, 'Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.'"

The chief priest and Pharisees command Nicodemus to search the Scriptures.

Romans 8:27 "Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

God searches the heart of those who pray.

I Corinthians 2:10 "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God."

The Holy Spirit enables believers to see God's purpose and work. If you have only searched the New Testament, you don't have the whole Bible. (The reverse is also true.) You've shortchanged yourself. God invites you to search His Word. We cannot know the New Testament sufficiently without the Old Testament. The New Testament is in the Old Testament contained. The Old

Testament is by the New Testament explained. The New is in the Old enfolded.

The Old is by the New unfolded. The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. The Old is by the New revealed. In the Old Testament, Job raises the question, "If a man die, shall he live again," (Job 14:14). We must come to the New Testament for the answer – "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," (John 11:25). Truth in the Old Testament is germinal. In the New Testament it is terminal. Doctrine in the Old is in seed form.

In the New it blossoms in full harvest (II Timothy 1:10). We find the doctrines of immortality and resurrection in the Old Testament in shadow form. The New Testament sets them forth fully. The prophets were interested in salvation. And more than that, they inquired about and searched for it in the Word. This is a picture of the Old Testament prophets pouring over the scrolls.

Principle

God expects us to master the Word.

Application

Do you pour over the Word of God? If not, are you better than the prophets?

who prophesied of the grace that would come to you

Salvation by Christ is no new doctrine. God revealed grace in the Old Testament. Our living hope (v. 3) originates not only from the present appropriation of our eternal inheritance but from the Word of God itself.

Peter characterizes our salvation as "grace." He says the Old Testament prophets prophesied that this grace would come. Grace is a person. That grace is the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:16 "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Jesus is grace personified.

Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,

righteously, and godly in the present age." Jesus is the grace that brings salvation.

The Old Testament prophets could not understand fully how a Messiah could both suffer and reign at the same time. Some thought there were two different Messiahs and they didn't know the Messiah was to come twice. The cross comes first, then the crown.

The concept of grace surpassed the thoughts of Old Testament prophets. They made an exhaustive inquiry to find what it was all about.

Principle

Jesus is the personification of grace.

Application

Jesus personalizes grace. Christianity is a relationship. When we come to Christ, he conveys God's grace in person.

Grace is all that God is free to do for us because of the death of Christ. God is free to give you salvation. God is free to empower you for the Christian life. You do not have to earn or deserve it.

1 Peter 1:11

"searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

searching what, or what manner of time

In this verse Peter picks up the second of the two verbs of verse 10, "searching." The prophets scrutinized their own writings to find the content and timing of the coming of the Messiah.

"What" refers to time (or subject) and "what manner of time" refers to what kind of time. They wanted to know the kind of time that would usher in the period of the Messiah and the character of this salvation.

The prophets searched "what manner of time." They wanted to know when Jesus was going to come, which is set forth in Daniel chapter nine. The Messiah was the subject of their studies.

There are two Greek words for time. One is **chronos** from which we get the word chronology. This refers to a succession of moments. The other word is **kairos**, which is time with an emphasis

upon kind of time. This latter word is used in this verse. Kairos carries the notion of suitability and is often translated "season," which may refer to the epoch of Christ.

Both Greek words occur in Acts 1:6 to 8, which says,

"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times (chronous) or seasons (kairous) which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'"

The kairos is an epoch-making season. This has to do with the kind of time, not the time of time. It's the period when all that was maturing through the ages comes to a climax in the coming of Christ.

The prophets wanted to know the relation of the coming of Christ to the economy of God in the sufferings and glory of Christ.

Principle

God rewards study of Scripture with revelation of His future plans.

Application

Christians today often knock the study of the future. However, the spirit of the Old Testament prophets was to understand God's revealed plan for the future. Three quarters of the Bible deals with the future, so God obviously wants us to place focus on this area of study.

Some Christians exclusively study prophecy. This is a distortion. Some Christians completely neglect prophecy. This is also a distortion. What interest do you have in prophecy? Does it match the desire and search undertaken by the Old Testament prophets?

the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating

There are many titles of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. We find a similar title to the one in this verse in Philippians 1:19, "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your

prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

We discover another title in Romans 8:9 "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." We find other titles of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 10:20; John 14:16,17;15:26; Romans 8:2,11,14,15; I Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 4:6.

There are two types of titles for the Holy Spirit: 1) personal and 2) functional. By saying "Spirit of Christ," Peter is using a functional title of the Holy Spirit. The central function of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit was "in them." The Holy Spirit wrote the Old Testament enabling the human authors to write God's Word without error. The Holy Spirit was not "in" the prophets like He is in every Christian since Pentecost. The Holy Spirit permanently indwells every Christian from the moment of salvation.

Note the word "who." The Holy Spirit is a person.

This is a picture of the Old Testament prophets scratching around in their scrolls. The Holy Spirit gave evidence beforehand of the certainty of Christ's coming. He gave the prophets success in their inquiry.

God promised the gospel through the prophets of the Old Testament long before the gospel was present in the person of Christ. Romans 1:1,2 says, "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh."

The phrase "was indicating" means the Holy Spirit took over the personality, vocabulary and mind of the authors of Scripture to write the Bible. That's why fallible men can write the Bible without error.

Principle

The central function of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Application

How do you view the glory of Jesus Christ as your central function of life?

when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ

The words "testified beforehand" mean to bear witness before. The implication states with assurance what is to happen in the future, to predict or to foretell. The Holy Spirit reveals both advents of Christ in the Bible (John 15:26; Romans 8:16,17; I John 5:6,10; cf. Acts 1:8).

There were two things the prophets were trying to find out: 1) the sufferings of Christ and 2) the glories to follow.

Acts 1 tells about His suffering. It says in verse three, "to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." His suffering came first.

Why does the Messiah suffer? How can the Messiah suffer and reign at the same time? This truth seemed like a paradox to them. If He is to suffer and die, how can He be crowned king? Some invented another Messiah to resolve this tension. They postulated two Messiahs, one to suffer and the other to reign. However, the truth is the Messiah was to come at two different times.

The "sufferings of Christ" is one of the greatest themes in the Bible (1 Peter 2:20,21; 3:18; 4:1,12,13; Acts 1:3). The sinless, stainless, spotless Son of God was made sin for us. He took our suffering on the cross. He took our hell that we might have His heaven.

Principle

By His suffering on the cross, Jesus took our hell that we might have His heaven.

Application

The reason Jesus came to Earth in a physical body was to die for our sins. Every person must come to grips with this truth. Have you claimed Christ's death as your guarantee to enter heaven? His death for our sin is the only ticket to enter God's presence. Why not make that decision for yourself right now?

and the glories that would follow

First the cross then the glory. First the cross then the crown. "Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!' Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His

glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," (Luke 24:25-27).

The "glory" is future. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," (Romans 8:18). We share His sufferings now but then we will share His glory, (Psalms 73:24).

Some estimate that there are eight times as many prophecies of the second coming than the first coming (i.e. Psalm 22,24,72; Isaiah 53).

Matthew 13 expounds on that period between the sufferings and the glory of Christ, the things that would take place between the two advents (comings) of Christ. The parables in Matthew 13 present a preview of the period of the church. Matthew 13:16,17 says the Old Testament prophets wanted to see the glories of our day. "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." Old Testament prophets did not see the age of grace (Ephesians 3:1f). They only saw the first and second comings.

There is no indication that anyone in the Old Testament had the personal status of sonship before God like New Testament Christians have. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ," (Galatians 4:6, 7).

No one in the Old Testament would call the Father "Abba Father" or "Daddy." They would not pray -- "Father, my spouse is going into surgery next week. If it pleases you, would you bring her through safely."

Principle

God gives the New Testament Christian the privilege of the glories of sonship in this life.

Application

There is no need to change the tone of your voice or assume an unnatural posture for God to hear us. It is normal for a child of God to speak to God as Father.

1 Peter 1:12

"To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things which angels desire to look into."

To them it was revealed that

"To them" refers to the searching prophets of verse 11. They are the human authors of the Bible. The Holy Spirit is the divine author.

God the Holy Spirit revealed to the human authors what to write. The word "revealed" means unveiled. God unveiled Himself by revelation.

not to themselves

The Old Testament prophets were not writing simply for themselves but for future generations as well.

but to us they were ministering the things

The "us" were the believers of the first century. The Old Testament prophets wrote for all generations.

The Old Testament had been consolidated for hundreds of years by the time the New Testament was being written. The Word of God is eternally relevant. The Word benefits all believers of all ages.

which now have been reported to you

This anticipates the writing of the New Testament.

Principle

The Bible is eternally relevant for all generations.

Application

Do you have confidence that the Bible is relevant for your life?

through those who have preached the gospel to you

The prophets wrote for those who would live later. They wrote for our generation.

The last thing that Jesus said while on Earth was, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen," (Matthew 28:19, 20). The last thing on Jesus' mind was getting the gospel out to the world.

Sharing the gospel should be the burden of every Christian. 1 Corinthians 9:16 says, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel."

God deposited into our lives a trust to dispense the gospel to the world. As 1 Thessalonians 2:4 says, "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts."

by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of Scripture. Jesus said that the Father would send the Holy Spirit. In John 15:26, He said that He would send the Holy Spirit as well. The Holy Spirit now represents both the Father and Son to us.

Principle

God deposits a stewardship in us to preach the gospel.

Application

The gospel does not commend humankind. Therefore, the gospel does not sit well with those without Christ. The gospel never was popular. The gospel asserts that we have stark spiritual need. We have violated a holy God. That does not please people. The better people deem themselves to be the less the gospel appeals to them. The more respectable they are, the more they hate the gospel. They think that they are good enough, honest enough, religious enough. They think that they can have an eternal relationship with God based on their good works.

Romans 4:5,6 declares we need to ditch reliance on our good works to become a Christian: "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who

justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works."

Have you come to the place where you trust the death of Jesus Christ and nothing else to give you eternal life?

God wants those who know Him to dispense the gospel to the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this verse we find God's university for angels.

things which angels desire to look into

This section of 1 Peter sets forth three kinds of Bible students: 1) the prophets who searched their own writings diligently such as Daniel; 2) The New Testament believers such as the Bereans who studied the prophecies of the Old Testament; and 3) angels who studied salvation.

The word "angel" means messenger. An angel is one who carries the message of the gospel.

Angels do not comprehend and understand all they carry. They just deliver the message. Angels are incorporeal beings - they do not have a physical body. They also cannot be redeemed because they were individually created. Since angels cannot be saved or converted, the whole area of salvation is curious to them.

Angels cannot know this whole experience of complete salvation. It is a mystery to them. They are not participants of salvation. They are merely spectators (1 Corinthians 4:9).

The word "desire" is passionate desire. Angels have a passionate desire to understand what salvation is all about.

The words "to look into" mean to stoop and look into, to stoop sideways. It means to make considerable effort in order to try to find out something--"to try to learn, to desire to learn." Angels stoop to see what our salvation is all about.

John 20:5 uses "look into" for John when he looked into the tomb through the low entrance. The glance is not necessarily a fleeting one (cf. 20:11). A figurative use occurs in James 1:25 where more than a fleeting glance is at issue--we need to ardently look into the Bible to understand His will.

Principle

The church is God's university for angels.

Application

Angels cannot participate in salvation. They are simply spectators of that salvation. The angels peer into salvation. The church is the university for angels.

Angels watch each salvation of every Christian. They watch and wonder.

1 Peter 1:13

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Peter submits in this section five pointed exhortations:

Prepare your mind for action
Be self-controlled
Set your hope
Do not be conformed to evil
Be holy

God bases these exhortations on the blessings in the introduction.

Therefore

The "therefore" is the platform for appeal to the five imperatives that follow. It gathers up all the wealthy result of vv. 3-12. Commands always come out of privileges.

The word "therefore" draws an inference from all that has been said in the book thus far. The "therefore" also draws an inference from the believer's honor. Because Christians hold distinction, they can live out their privileges. They are elect, sanctified and sprinkled with the blood of Christ (1:2). Therefore, they have a living hope (1:3) and a reservation in heaven (1:4). God himself keeps His salvation (1:5). They have inner peace under duress (1:6-9). We can center our hope on these things.

Christians are now sons of God since they have come to Christ. (Galatians 3:26). If we do not have faith in Christ, we are not a child of God. After we are spiritually born our status before God changes. We now are as a child to a Father. This is a totally different relationship than a creature to the Creator.

Those without Christ are only capable of religious drivel. Their mind is reprobate (Romans 1:28) and

carnal (Romans 8:7,8). Therefore they are blind to spiritual things (2 Corinthians 4:3,4). Colossians 1:21 says that one without God is an enemy of God in one's mind (Ephesians 4:17,18).

Principle

Christians live out God's standards because of their status in God's eyes.

Application

Christians, be ready for trials. Be ready to rejoice in the midst of them. Look at your inheritance. Make sure that Jesus Christ is the source of your joy and not circumstances.

We must be ready. We are not ready if fear burdens our minds. If we are fearful, conflict is double: inner and outer. Not only do we face the problem but we face inner turmoil as well.

The only way out of this is to possess an objective philosophy of life based on the Word of God. In this passage that objective philosophy of life revolves around the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, not on our own thoughts about ourselves.

Those without Christ cannot think perpendicularly. They can only think horizontally. They can categorize natural phenomena and think intelligently about mathematics, zoology, biology and physics. They cannot relate to God because they do not have the spiritual apparatus to do so. They have not been born spiritually. They are dead to God. That is why brilliant people talk baby talk when it comes to God (1 Corinthians 2:14).

gird up the loins of your mind

"Gird up" is an oriental assertion. It refers to folding up of the long, loose robes worn by people of Palestine at the time of writing 1 Peter. If someone in that day wanted to run, he had to tuck his long robes in a broad belt around his waist. Otherwise it would impede his speed. It was also difficult to work with long robes. The idea in this verse is "to gird up one's loins," for travel, work, or battle.

The thought is that of vigilant readiness. This is an admonition to be ready and watchful. It is an idiom meaning to bind up the loins of the mind, to prepare oneself for learning and thinking. This is to get one's mind ready for action, to be ready to learn and to think, to be alert.

Our idiom today would be "pull yourselves together." Pull out of the way anything that

impedes free action of the mind. If we harbor hate in our minds, this will impede our progress in the Christian life.

Peter uses "gird up" for the alertness necessary for sobriety and for setting one's hope perfectly on "the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Principle

God wants us to roll up the sleeves of our minds.

Application

Many people become so engrossed in the affairs of this life that they neglect their spiritual life. They envelop their state of mind with worry and anxiety. Thus their thinking thrusts them into uncertainty. This verse shows us how to deal with impending misfortune and disaster.

We will never put anxiety out of our minds by subjective thinking. We will never change a thing in the world by fear and wishing. If we beset our minds with problems, we will create an artificial world of our own making. We cannot elude an earthquake by fear.

A mentally healthy person is someone who is objective. He can see the problem as it is, not as it might be. He does not say, "Well, you don't know my problems. My children are impossible. Everything I do fails." Someone else may say, "You don't know the situation at my job. The boss will fire me if I don't come through." Again, "That next door neighbor! You have never seen such a witch! She spreads such nasty, baseless rumors about me. How can I help but worry about that?"

We live in an environment of many conflicts. We can react to everything that happens either negatively or positively. We can face the problem or worry about it. Which will it be? Once we come to grips with the problem, once we tackle the problem, then the solution will ensue.

We must remove hindrances before we can serve Jesus Christ. When Olympic athletes prepares for a race, they wear clothes that will not impede their movement. If we are going to run in the Olympics we do not run with street clothes! We must put off every weight (Hebrews 12:1,2).

gird up the loins of your mind

"Gird up" occurs in Ephesians 6:14 for girding up the truth: "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness." God wants us to gird ourselves

with truth so that our character is guarded from hypocrisy and falsehood.

The Greek Old Testament uses this word in Proverbs 31:17: "She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms." This is preparation for serious work.

2 Kings 4:29 uses this word as well: "Then he [Elisha] said to Gehazi, 'Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child.'" Gehazi was to prepare himself for an urgent errand.

"Gird up" is a figure expressing vigilance for the coming of Christ (cf. Luke 12:35; Ephesians 6:14). Exodus 12:11 takes this figure from the circumstances of the Israelites as they ate the Passover in readiness for their journey: "And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover."

God wants Christians to have their mental powers alert in expectation of Christ's coming. The verb indicates that the believer will have personal interest in so doing.

Principle

God wants us alert to the expectation of Christ's coming.

Application

Negative thoughts can blot out the anticipation of meeting Jesus Christ one day.

We cannot help what strikes our minds but we can choose what we allow to rest on our minds. We can choose whether we will harbor or foster negative thoughts. A rat may get into our room but we do not have to feed it and make a pet of it! God wants us to exterminate certain thoughts! Anything that keeps us from anticipating the coming of Christ is a rat in our mind.

be sober

This is the second "mind" word in this verse. Not only must we gird up the loose ends of our mind that hang down but we must also have a wholesome mental state.

"Sober" has a positive meaning--to possess a calm and collected spirit. Sober people are circumspect in their judgments. They are mentally calm,

steady, steadfast and solid. They possess a state of mind whereby they are self-controlled and able to see things without distortion. Fear or worry do not distort their thinking.

The New Testament uses this word figuratively--be vigilant against all spiritual dangers and enemies (1 Peter 5:8). Be temperate and modest in eating, drinking, apparel, recreation, business, and in the whole of your behavior.

When the word is used figuratively, the subject is a person. The idea is the opposite of every kind of fuzziness. We value sober judgment in both individual and public life.

Be sober-minded also in opinion, as well as in practice and humble in your judgment of yourselves. It does not in itself imply watchfulness, but is used in association with it (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5). It means to be free from every form of mental and spiritual "drunkenness" or excess. Rather than being controlled by outside circumstances, we should direct our lives from within (cf. 4:7; 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8).

The New Testament uses the word "sober" in five instances (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). It means acknowledgment of the reality of revelation and discharge of the resultant ministry in worship, hope, love, and even conflict.

Principle

God wants us to be sound and balanced in judgment.

Application

For centuries, society has used alcohol for a sedative. Only in the last decade have we begun to face the scope of its deadly impact on human behavior and society. Rampant domestic violence and carnage on the highways are a prime example. At the same time, scientists are discovering new ways which alcohol causes illness and shortens lives.

If we are going to manage our mind under God's standards, we must gird up the loins of our minds. The most mature Christian needs this exhortation. God requires this of a "bishop" (1 Timothy 3:2) and aged men (Titus 2:2). God wants leaders to teach young women and men to be sober (Titus 2:2,4,6).

God does not want us to become intoxicated with the latest craze. It is easy to be taken with the latest fashions of this world.

A life free from worry is not a life devoid of the responsibilities of life. Do not cripple your life by worry, hate and fear. If there is a film of dust on our telescope we may miss great dimensions of the heavens. If we cover our spirits with the film of earthly preoccupation, we will lose sight of the glories of eternity.

The allurements of the world can intoxicate our minds. A calm, steady mind will weigh and estimate things accurately. We only have a certain quantity of attention to expend. If we fling it away on things other than God's will, we will have little to offer God.

and rest your hope

God wants hope to predominate our lives. He wants us to live in hope. This was especially true for suffering Christians such as those in Asia Minor to whom Peter was writing. Those who suffer need something beyond their present circumstances. They need a transcendent life.

Christian hope is transforming hope. It opens a new world. It supplies new guarantees. To the Christian, hope is no dream; it is absolute anticipation of certainties. The Christian hope appropriates eternity now. We can enjoy the grace of our eternal future now.

The meaning of hope in the Greek language is not like the anemic English connotation: "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow." Rather it is the robust idea of confidence in the future (Romans 5:1,2). That is why we call the Lord's return the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

Principle

God gives the Christian confidence about the future.

Application

In life, we often promise according to our hopes and perform according to our fears. The Lord, however, wants us to perform according to our hope. One of the earmarks of the Christian life is that it is a life of hope. This is not hopefulness: it has nothing to do with hope as it relates to length of time. It is a quality of hope. It is no nebulous and vague hope.

The Christian can look death in the face without flinching. No non-Christian can do that. To them,

there is nothing as final as death. They are afraid of death (Hebrews 2:14,15). But for the Christian, death is just the room attendant who ushers us into the presence of God.

Anyone can endure suffering if they are certain that it leads somewhere. Athletes will rigidly train for an event if they feel sacrifice will help them win the competition. Students will spend hours in study if they feel they will get better grades. If Christians suffer with a view to fulfill God's purpose, their sufferings have eternal purpose.

God wants us to have hope without reserve for what Christ will bring in His coming. This will bring buoyant hope to present suffering. This is transforming hope. It opens a new world and supplies new guarantees.

Hope is no pleasant dream for the Christian. It is far more than a pretty thought. It is absolute anticipation of the certainty of God's grace when we meet Him. Increased energy and mental health are the result.

Human hope is the anticipation of good without certainty; it is anemic and preoccupied with present problems. The Christian hope is absolute anticipation of certain benefits. The future for Christians is as certain as the past. Their future is unalterable because God is unalterable. His promises are unalterable. We hope, not because of who we are but because of who He is.

All three commands in this verse relate to mental attitude.

fully upon the grace

It is one thing to rest our hope on grace; it is another thing to rest our hope completely on grace. "Fully" is an idiom meaning "into end." This is a degree of completeness, with the possible implication of purpose or result - "completely, totally, entirely, wholly."

God wants us to hope perfectly. He wants us to develop a mature hope. He wants us to acquire a thorough hope of the grace that Jesus brings by the unveiling of himself. Mature hope rests on grace.

This means to have a hope that is in a state of completeness. God wants us to live in hope. An individual who has this hope is complete. He does not want anything. He has complete expectation based on God's provisions in grace.

Jesus Christ personifies grace. Titus 2: 11 says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has

appeared to all men." All that we have before God is from the grace of Christ. It is because of Him that we have rights before God.

Principle

God wants us to rest our hope completely on grace.

Application

God does not want us to waver in our hope. The only way our hope cannot waver is to stabilize it with grace. Grace gives our hope a strong base.

It is not enough that we receive grace at the point of our salvation. We need grace for daily living. We need grace to hope for the eternal state. We need to rest completely on grace.

that is to be brought to you

When Jesus comes back again He will bring full grace to us. We will need grace to enter the presence of God. This is the grace of salvation from the very presence of sin.

Jesus brings grace unto us. "Be brought" can translate "is being brought." Eternal life begins at the moment a person trusts Christ as his Savior (v.3). Hebrews 6:18 says, "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil."

Principle

When we stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will stand in the grace of Christ.

Application

When God judges Christians at the Judgment Seat of Christ we will not stand in our works. We will stand solely on his grace. That is all we will plead.

at the revelation of Jesus Christ

This phrase refers to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. At this time the Christian will receive the fullest possible life. We find the reason for this life in the word "revelation."

"Revelation" means unveiling. Jesus Christ, as in no other point in history, will be unveiled for who He is. We will vitally relate to Him at that time. That will be complete grace to us.

When we meet Jesus, He will give us inexpressible privileges (grace) that we have never know up to that point. In the past He was never fully revealed to us. In that day He will be revealed fully.

God wants us to cultivate the reality of that revelation now! He wants us to experience the reality of Christ now. We do this by cultivating our hope in Christ. This makes for robust Christian living.

I live in the Pacific Northwest. We get weeks of clouds. Many Christians drape heaven in clouds. They do not let the glories of Christ shine through in their lives.

The "revelation" in 1 Peter 1:3 is the same word as the word "appear" in 1 Peter 5:4. God calls us to look forward to the consummation of our salvation. This is a great and glorious hope to a Christian who is blind or paralyzed (Philippians 3:20, 21). Perhaps today the Lord will come and deliver us from pain. There many not be any cure down here. Jesus may come today--glad day. This is a bright teaching of the Word of God.

Principle

Jesus will be fully unveiled before the Christian one day.

Application

Those without Christ cannot think beyond the grave. They cannot see farther than the casket. They are ignorant of life after death. All they see in death is the bleak, black terminus of all existence. They cannot see beyond that because they have no faith (Hebrews 11:1). Because of that they have come to the erroneous conclusion that there is nothing beyond the grave.

Those with Christ look forward to meet their Savior one day. They see beyond the grave. They hold a blessed hope.

1 Peter 1:14

“as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance.”

If the Christian follows the three admonitions of verse 13, he will not conform to evil desires. In verse 14, we find the fourth responsibility - to conduct ourselves under God's norms.

as obedient children

"Obedient children" is literally "children of obedience." When we come to Christ, we become members of God's family. Our whole attitude changes because we are in a new family. Obedience is the indication of trust in God.

"To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). This was a statement by Samuel after Saul disobeyed the Word of the Lord. The Lord had said, "Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them" (v. 3). "But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed" (v. 7). The problem here was not obedience but total obedience.

Samuel came to Saul again and Saul said "Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (v.13). Saul tries to make brownie points with the preacher Samuel. He claims personal innocence from this problem but blames the people "for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed" (v.15). He shifts the blame to his people.

Saul also tries to justify his sin by religion, "We are going to make sacrifices with these sheep!" It is to this comment that Samuel says, "to obey is better than sacrifice." Religion means nothing without the right heart. God takes no interest in religion, His interest is in revival. God is not interested our sacrifice but in our soul. The Lord cares very little about our gifts or service if we do not have the proper heart towards Him. Saul obeyed, but only in part. "But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me" (v. 20). The Lord is not the Lord if he is not Lord of all. Saul was willing to give to God as long as there was no loss on his part.

Saul repented, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord" (vv. 24, 25). This is the original point! God does not want formal obedience. He wants the believer to obey because of personal

affinity with Himself. However, God disciplined Saul for incomplete obedience.

Principle

God is not interested in religion but in a relationship.

Application

Is your relationship with the Lord mechanical? Do you have a vital relationship with Him?

Saul did not listen to God. He carried out what was convenient for himself. He was not concerned with God's will. The will of the superior should be the implicit command of the follower.

The attitude in the church today is, "Sure, I'll minister in church - as long as it is convenient for me. I'll lead a small group because no one else will." God does not want that kind of sacrifice. If Samuel were here he would say, "to obey is better than sacrifice." Action based on personal relationship with God is far more important than duty to church.

as obedient children

This verse contrasts what Asia Minor Christians were at this time to what they were before they came to Christ.

The word "obedience" comes from two Greek words: "to hear" and "under." This means to subordinate oneself to the person heard. Obedience is a response, a refrain. An obedient child of God will listen to God and obey.

"Obedience" is to obey on the basis of having paid attention to someone. Christians who follow God's norms prove their relationship to him. All Christians surrender to lust at times. There was a time when all Asia Minor Christians did was gratify their lusts. They lived without standards and therefore all they could do is accommodate their whims of lust.

We find the supreme illustration of a proper response to the will of God in the person of Christ. In Philippians 2, Paul speaks about Christ's attitude toward obedience, "Let this mind [attitude] be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the

point of death, even the death of the cross." Hebrews 5:8 says, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Through suffering Jesus learned to listen to the voice of God.

The will of God should be our command. The test of our love for Jesus Christ is to hear when he speaks, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you," (John 15:14). "These things I command you, that you love one another," (John 15:17).

Obedience here is not legal or moral obedience. It is an obedience that results from a relationship. A child obeys his parents because of his relationship to his parents.

God wants us to be children marked by obedience. He wants us to hold that kind of distinction, "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name," (Romans 1:5).

This is obedience not merely to explicit commands but to whatever may come from His will. This obedience applies even to thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Principle

God wants our obedience to stem from a relationship, not legalism.

Application

A requirement for living in a family is obedience. Did your parents ever say to you "If you are going to live in this house, you will live by our rules." As parents, that is their privilege.

Our Heavenly Father brings us into His family and says, "It is your responsibility to live up to the standards of my house." The difference between the Heavenly Father and the human father is that the Heavenly Father never loses His temper or gets indigestion. He is never bedeviled by high blood pressure.

The Father is never sloppy in training His children. He never says, "Why should I spoil my dinner with all this commotion?" Some human fathers let their children get away with murder. Not God. He cares about us. He loves us too much not to train us in godliness. He is a faithful Father.

not conforming yourselves

Now we come to the fourth directive. This is no suggestion or hint. It is not good advice but a divine directive from heaven.

The words "not conforming" mean do not be shaped by those desires you had formerly. "Conforming" means to fashion or shape one thing like another, to form or mold after something. It means to conform one thing to another, to give the same figure or appearance as. This verb has more special reference to that which is transitory, changeable, unstable.

"Conforming" is an act of assuming an outward appearance patterned after some certain thing. This is an appearance that does not come from and is not representative of one's inmost and true nature. Here "conforming" refers to the acts of a child of God shown by habits, mannerisms, dress, speech and behavior from which God saved him.

The believer here masquerades in the costume of the world. He relates to outward, changeable fashion in contrast to intrinsic reality. This verse warns against conforming to something changing and illusory. To fashion our lives after the world means our lives will orient to something fleeting and unstable. If we fashion our lives after the Lord, our lives will be sure and secure.

The word fashion means to make a copy out of a thing. Fashion is the reflection of the lives we lead and the way we lead them. Fashion is like a mirror that reflects the true condition of our face. If our face is dirty, the mirror will reflect that. If a person has a dynamic relationship with the Lord then his life will reflect that. The business of fashion is making norms suit our times and lives. Napoleon said, "A man becomes a creature of his uniform."

Principle

God does not want us to fashion our lives after the fickle fancies of men.

Application

When a disobedient child of God develops a scheme that revolves around lusts, he is not allowing God to fashion him. When the believer masquerades in the costume of the world, he does not give true expression to who he is. He is controlling his life, not God. He assumes the dress of the world. His fashion reflects his life.

God does not want us to control our lives. He wants to control them. As Christians, when we devise own scheme for life, we will make a mess of it. We are then disobedient child. We need to take our hands off the steering wheel of our lives. We should give our lives to Him lock, stock and barrel; body, soul and spirit. We should let the Lord fashion our lives.

We do not have to pull strings to make openings for ourselves. We do not have to know the right people; we do not have to play politics. All we need to do is commit our lives to God's will: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

not conforming yourselves to the former lusts

There was a time when the whole scheme of life for Asia Minor Christians revolved around lusts. They fashioned their lives around lusts. When they came to Christ, He changed their whole orientation.

What is in style spiritually? What is the pattern God wants us to use to trace our spirituality? The next verse says that we are to be holy because God is holy (v.15). We should fashion our lives after Him. God wants us to mold our lives after that which is essential in character and thus complete or durable, not merely a form or outline

The other time the New Testament uses "conforming" is in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

In this verse being outwardly conformed to the things of this age is contrasted with being transformed (or transfigured) inwardly by the renewal of the thoughts through the Holy Spirit's power.

A similar distinction holds good in Philippians 3:21; the Lord will "fashion anew [or change outwardly] the body of our humiliation [earthly body], and conform it in its nature to the body of His glory [resurrection body]."

Fashion is a reflection of the lives we lead and the way we lead them. The business of fashion is the business of making our lives suit our times.

There are two standards by which we may fashion our lives – the world's or God's. To fashion our lives according to the world is to fix them to the "former lusts." In this case the Christian reflects the world with his life. If we

fashion our lives according to fellowship with God, our lives will reflect his life. The next verse in I Peter says "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (v.15).

Before we became Christians, lusts drove us to frustration. We made a mess of our lives, why go back to that life? Ephesians 4:17-19 says: "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

This is a picture of those without Christ. They have no eternal purpose. Their lives are "vain." Their hearts are "blind." This is God's view of those without Christ whether we are good or bad, clean or dirty, rich or poor, fat or thin, black or white, non-religious or religious.

Principle

God wants our dress to be up-to-date spiritually.

Application

Some people keep up with the latest fashions. They buy the latest clothes and the newest cars. They wear the current hair style.

When it comes to being in fashion spiritually, we are often way out of date. Our fashion of spirituality is passé. We live legalistic lives. Our Christianity is not in vogue. We do not embrace the true design of the Christian life. We would rather be religious than own a vital relationship with the Lord. When it comes to spirituality we are old-fashioned. We live by the old man.

to the former lusts

"Lusts" means to greatly desire to do or have something -- to long for, to desire very much, to crave. It means to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else. It carries the idea of engaging in desires that are morally wrong -- to covet, to lust (Acts 20:33; Matthew 5:28; Galatians 5:16; 1 Timothy 6:9; 2 Timothy 2:22). Ephesians 2:1-3 says: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

In Romans 6:12, the injunction against letting sin reign in our mortal body to obey the lust thereof, refers to those evil desires that are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. They are equally the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16, 24; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Peter 2:18; 1 John 2:16). "Lusts" describes the emotions of the soul, the natural tendency towards evil things.

Principle

Every Christian has a proclivity to sin.

Application

It is helpful to know that inherent within the Christian is a proclivity to sin. It is the desire that drives the orientation to sin.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us that there are certain sins toward which each Christian aligns himself, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." God wants us to lay aside sin that we lean toward.

as in your ignorance

"Ignorance" here is ignorance of God and His norms. Without God, Asia Minor Christians were vulnerable to lust (1:18; cf. Acts 17:30; Ephesians 4:17-18). They owned no purpose for their existence. Ephesians 4:18 says: "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

God wants to save us from shipwreck. If in our ignorance we go our own way, disaster will result. God expects us to plan and build a future. It is responsible to have well placed goals. However, to set goals without God is to trivialize Him. When we do this, He may let us make a shipwreck of our future. "My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me" (Psalm 31:15).

Principle

We can trust God to work out His will in our lives.

Application

Can you trust God to work out His will in your life? Younger people have their whole lives in front of them. But if they stubbornly plan without God in the center, God will derail their train. The only place we will find lasting satisfaction is in the center of God's will.

Ignorance keeps us from discovering God's plan for our lives. We make plans in ignorance. We chose the university we will attend without consulting God. We plan what we will become without asking the Lord. We dream about the future and do not take God into consideration. Somewhere along the way God will flag us down. God is interested in saving more than our soul, He wants to save our lives as well (Luke 9:56).

1 Peter 1:15

"but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."

We come to the fifth of five directives.

but as He who called you is holy

"But" – conjunction of contrast.

"Called" is the point of our salvation. At that point, we received the characteristics of our Father. We received inherent characteristics from Him. God called; we answered.

"For many are called, but few are chosen," (Matthew 22:14).

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified," (Romans 8:28-30).

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord " (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 1:24).

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel," (Galatians 1:6).

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace," (Galatians 1:15).

"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began," (2 Timothy 1:9).

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus," (Hebrews 3:1).

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light," (1 Peter 2:9).

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you," (1 Peter 5:10).

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble," (2 Peter 1:10).

God is our pattern of holiness. Although we must imitate Him we cannot equal Him. God is absolute in holiness. As the suit is a reflection of the pattern, so our lives should be a reflection of the one who saved us. God does not conform to a standard; He is the standard. God is immediately holy from all eternity. His holiness is not derived.

Principle

God calls us to bear family resemblance.

Application

God is holy and produces holy people. Are you in the process of becoming more like God?

you also be holy

"Holy" means set apart. God wants us to be set apart from sin to God's righteousness. God does

not want us to be ordinary. He wants us to fashion our lives after Himself.

When they sew, women use patterns to fashion clothing. If we are going to be in style spiritually, we must fashion our lives after God. He is our pattern. Christians are not to cover up their characteristics as Christians by assuming an outward masquerade, patterned after the costume of this world.

The root of "holy" is different. The believer is to be different from other people. This is the fashion after which we are to pattern our lives. Holy is the way God is. "Be" means to enter a new state. It means "to become" -- "become holy." This is an imperative. We effect our holiness by participating in God's holiness.

"Holy" here is experiential holiness. Creed and conduct are inseparable. We cannot have practical conduct without doctrine. Knowledge and action are inseparable. Without the knowledge of God, humans would have no standard or norm for living.

God gives the title "holy" to his children, Hebrews 3:1 -- "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus." "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Principle

The Christian is exclusively God's.

Application

The basic underlying meaning of "holy" is set apart. This means we are exclusively His. When we came to Christ, God set us apart from the rank and file of humanity. We are now the sons of God.

We are his exclusive property by both the right of creation and the right of redemption. He has the right to curtail our years or lengthen them. He has the right to do with us whatever He pleases. He has the right to subtract from us or add to us. We belong to Him body, soul and spirit.

If we recognize this, then things will go well for us. If not, then He may have to break us like a wild horse. If we rebel against the Lordship of Christ and resent His authority, then He may break our back.

God wants His children to be malleable, given over to His will. He wills nothing but the best for us. He charts a course for our lives. He knows where the booby traps are and leads us around them. That is why His path is not always a straight line between two points. At times He leads us on a zigzag path. Sometimes He leads up and at other times down. Although His leading may appear erratic to us, He guides us past the traps of life (Romans 8:14).

in all your conduct

"All" means every manner of conduct whether it be work or rest, business or pleasure.

"Conduct" comes from two words "up" and "to turn" meaning "to turn upside down." "Conduct" is our manner of life. God wants us to turn about or go about from place to place with a holy life. This is a mode of life.

"Conduct" is the whole outward life. God wants us to exhibit His holiness in the grubby business of everyday life. The issue here is general deportment or behavior.

What is the outstanding characteristic of your life? Humanly speaking, what is it? How you answer this question depends on your understanding of the phrase "manner of life." Most people answer by what they do. That is not accurate. Your manner of life is what you do based on what you think. What you really are is what goes on in your mind. What you do is a result of what you think. Our manner of life is what you think and do. This manner of life consists of acquired characteristics as well as inherent characteristics.

This is no mere pious fantasy. It is more than a nice idea; it is a divine directive. God wants our lives to match the gospel. So often our lives clash with the gospel. God is greatly exercised about how we behave ourselves with the gospel. He is concerned about the quality of our lives because our lives reflect on Him. "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," (Philippians 1:27).

God wants us to be holy in all our deportment: "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your

hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints," (1 Thessalonians 3: 12). "For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness," (Hebrews 12:10). "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord," (Hebrews 12:14).

Principle

God is concerned lest we bring his name into disrepute.

Application

God is concerned about the quality of our lives because our lives reflect Him.

As the centre relates to the circumference, so Christians are to pattern their life after God's holiness. God's holiness is the cause of holiness in Christians.

What our children do reflects on us. At times they embarrass us because they act just like their parents! We can see ourselves in our children. This is not the same with God because He is absolutely holy (set apart from humanity).

God wants us to be like Him. God does not have any bad habits, so this is a big order. Human parents have many faults. Their children walk in their footsteps. They learn the bad things easier than the good things.

If we are leaders and our children act badly, it reflects upon us. It will hurt our place in society or ministry. God wants us to be a credit to Christ. He wants us to be an asset rather than a liability. Everything we do reflects upon the Lord.

God saves us by grace, not works. He keeps us saved by grace, not works. However, if our works are shoddy, he will execute family discipline. His discipline is not punitive. He is not in the business of retaliation. God is not vindictive. His discipline is educational, remedial. He is in the business of building lives that will glorify Him (Matthew 5:16). Good works do not save us. They demonstrate that we have come to Christ.

Some non-Christians put Christians to shame when it comes to works. Many non-Christians work with the United Way, March of Dimes or Red Cross. When we try to challenge some people to give a few hours to the ministry of Christ they say, "Well, I don't have much time. We are busy

with our family activities. We are working overtime. We don't have time for ministry."

1 Peter 1:16

"because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

because it is written

The word "because" indicates the reason why holiness is necessary. God effects our holiness by our participation in His holiness. God is absolute in His holiness.

Our authority for believing in absolutes lies in the written Word of God – "it is written." We may argue that our society will crumble without absolutes. However, those who do not believe in absolutes will answer, "Who sets the standards? The standards of society are capricious. Why should I live up to random standards?" If there is no ultimate norm for morality, why should they care about the standards of society?

This is where Christians have the answer. When they receive Christ, they have a new motivation for living. They possess an inherent standard that gives them principles for living. Personal faith in Christ appeals to the written Word of God. This is why Peter uses the formula "it is written."

The Word of God reveals God's essence. It shows His person and character. It declares that He is set apart from human sin and is therefore absolute.

Spiritual birth gives us an affinity with God. We imitate Him as a child imitates his parents. We cannot imitate our Father unless we know Him. We know Him through the Word of God.

'Be holy, for I am holy'

God says "I," in contradistinction to anyone else, "am holy."

"Be holy, for I am holy" is a quote from Leviticus 11:44. "For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy." This is to document verse 15.

Principle

God wants us to be without sin because He is absolute.

Application

The question of absolutes predominates university campuses today: "Is there any absolute?" "What is right?" "If there are absolutes,

who says so?" "Is not sex a normal function of life?" "Who sets up these standards anyway?" That last question is a good question. If our authority rests in human values, then there are no absolutes. Practical questions such as "Will we have a baby?" are all that remain.

Everything is relative to the modern mind. Morality is simply personal preference. If someone thinks that it is good for him or her, then that is fine. That's why we hear people say, "what difference does it make if no one is getting hurt?"

The Christian answers these questions from information that comes by revelation. There is no other way to own an absolute.

1 Peter 1:17

"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear."

And if you call on the Father

Peter further develops the personal relationship of verse 16 in this phrase. The Holy Spirit does not base the appeal of verse 16 "Be you holy" - on duty but on relationship. We are holy because our Father is holy. We appeal to God as a child to a parent.

The word "if" assumes that Christians will call on the Father. The "if" in the Greek indicates the reality of their prayer life. The Greek does not suggest an hypothetical but assumes they do in fact pray. If they do, they will live their sojourn here in awe of God. "Call" is a synonym for prayer.

We should address our prayer to the "Father." We approach the Father through the Son (John 14:13,14) in the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). Jesus makes intercession to the Father (Hebrews 7:25). Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26,27). "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is,

because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Because the Son intercedes and the Spirit intercedes for us, we should address all prayer to the Father (Matthew 6:6,9).

Principle

Prayer is a relationship with the Father based on grace.

Application

Some people say, "I can't understand why my prayers are not answered. I have not done anything wrong." That, however, has nothing to do with it. Puffing up what we have done for God does not twist His arm to answer prayer.

Many of us have the idea that God answers prayer because we are good, moral or upright. Just because we may impress people, this does not mean that God is impressed with us.

God, however, does respect His Son. Prayer is a privilege of grace. The reason God hears us is because of His own character. God loves without respect. God respects our prayer solely because of Christ. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," (Hebrews 4:16).

And if you call on the Father

God does not answer prayer for these reasons: lack of faith (Matthew 21:22 compared with Romans 14:23) no relationship with God (not a Christian) carnality (Psalm 66:18) selfishness (James 4:2,3) lack of compassion (Proverbs 21:13) domestic difficulty (1 Peter 3:7) pride (Job 35:12,13) lack of filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18) failure to obey God (1 John 3:22) failure to be compatible with the will of God (1 John 5:14)

Effective prayer life comes from understanding who and what God is and who and what we are. It is easy to tangle ourselves in self-pity. When we come to understand that we have nothing to offer God and God has everything to offer us, then we will understand the essence of biblical prayer.

Principle

We pray effectively when we realize that God answers on the basis of his grace.

Application

We should not pray, "As the sun rises across the hills and the wind drifts softly through the trees." God has seen all the scenery anyway! We do not impress God with elocution. He is impressed with the work of His Son and the appeal of His Son for us (Hebrews 7:25).

who without partiality judges

The words "without partiality" mean without respect of persons. Literally these words mean "one who does not receive face." God operates without prejudice. He is impartial and therefore just. He has no favorites. He does not look at the face of someone and then make His judgment.

God is without partiality in judgment. He judges according to the standard of our true behavior. God does not operate on the basis of favoritism. Wealth, culture, social position, family, education, beauty, intellect make no difference to God. "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart,'" (1 Samuel 16:7).

There is an impartial character to God's judgment, "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him," (Acts 10:35). God is consistent in His nature. He doesn't use different standards of evaluation. God does not disregard evidence. He is honest in His assessments, "For there is no partiality with God," (Romans 2:11).

"Judges" means evaluation. God is in the business of objective evaluation of our lives. His judgment is not primarily to find fault. God is not a critical person. He is not in the business of seeking defects merely to criticize.

The strictness of God's judicial process has reward as its primary aim (2 Corinthians 5:10). "What can I give this believer on the basis of his usage of my assets?" God will honestly appraise things. God expects to find in the life of each saint that which He can place His approval. It's just like a parent who loves to approve the life of His child.

Principle

God rewards without favoritism.

Application

God has no partiality toward persons. No one has an "in" with God in prayer. Inevitably people ask clergy if they would pray for them thinking so their prayers have God's special ear. Any Christian in fellowship can pray as any pastor.

God hears our prayers because of His Son. We can never earn His respect. We approach God on the merits of Christ. God judges all our personal sins on the cross.

according to each one's work

"According to" refers to a norm or standard. God judges according to a standard. It is the objective standard of what a believer does in time.

There is a difference between God's judgment of believers and His condemnation of unbelievers. This is the difference between the judgment seat of Christ (Christians) and the white throne of judgment (non Christians).

God will condemn those who do not believe in the death of Christ to forgive their sins. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," (John 3:18,19).

God does not condemn Christians. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," (Romans 8:1).

God, however, does evaluate the production of the believer's life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad," (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The "judgment seat of Christ" is the place of judgment for Christians. At that judgment God will not condemn Christians for rejecting Christ. He will evaluate their production in time.

The primary aim of the judgment seat of Christ is reward. His judgment is not to find fault. God is not critical in His attitude. He does not seek to find fault or defects. God expects to find in the life of each saint upon which He can place His approval--much like a parent who loves to approve the life of his child.

Principle

God will evaluate our life at the judgment seat of Christ.

Application

Since you will stand one day at the judgment seat of Christ, have you taken your spiritual stock lately? Are you continuing to advance in your spiritual life? What is your spiritual inventory like? Are you farther along than you were last year?

Do your children detect any spiritual development in your life? Do they observe any trend toward a taller testimony? Is it easier to live with you than it used to be? Have you taken off some of those rough edges of your character? Is your temper more under control? Are you as quick on the verbal draw? Do you retaliate as quickly as you did in former years? Are you developing more and more into his likeness? All of these things are evidence that God is working in your life.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord," (2 Corinthians 3:18).

conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here

Christians should view themselves as pilgrims passing through a foreign country (Psalm 30:12; Hebrews 11:13). Our values are under pressure from the foreign culture in which we live. The Christian today lives in changing, relative values. We are strangers to this world because we live according to absolute values. "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead," (1 Peter 4:3-5).

Christian pilgrims are to keep priority on the things of greatest value. "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your

good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation," (1 Peter 2:11).

The word "conduct" means to turn back, return, to move back to a point or area from which one has previously departed, but with more explicit emphasis upon the return. Hence, it means to move about in a place, to sojourn. The idea is to order one's conduct. It is also an urgent command. "Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others," (Ephesians 2:3). "For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you," (2 Corinthians 1:12). "But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," (1 Timothy 3:15)

Principle

God wants us to keep absolute eternal values in view.

Application

This world is not our home. We are in Satan's territory. We must have a clear, genuine, ringing testimony in the face of the pressures of relative values.

"Time" refers to a series of events. How much time do you have left on earth? God wants us to live our lives in view of eternity. Keep eternity always before your life! This will produce a holy life.

in fear

"Fear" refers to the fear of awe. This is not personal cringing fear, nor a phobia. This is not anxiety but awesome regard for God. It is not self distrust or apprehension of a terrible time on earth but an awareness of the presence of God.

God wants us to spend time on earth worshipping Him. This means to accept His authority reverently. God wants us to live every moment conscious of His presence.

"Fear" then is not torment, not a sentiment of emotion towards God. It is the objective appraisal of who God is. Once we appraise God for who He

is and see ourselves for who we are, then holiness results. We need the Word of God to do this.

Principle

Reverence for God produces holiness.

Application

Is God trivial to you? Is He a detail of your life? On the other hand, is God the center of your life? Do you hold Him in absolute distinction?

1 Peter 1:18

"knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers."

Peter adds a second argument for a holy life. The first argument is in verse 17: God has given us the privilege to call on the Father.

Verses 18 and 19 give the second argument-- our redemption. These verses are two of the most precious verses in the Bible for

those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, because redemption is what makes it all possible!

Peter views redemption from both the negative and positive viewpoints here. First -- the negative, v.18.

knowing

The Greek language has a word that does not occur in this translation -- the word is "because." We could translate this phrase "because you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things." Peter is presenting a reason. The Christians in Asia Minor understood their redemption. They could not plead ignorance.

The Greek word translated "knowing" here is intuitive knowledge. Our salvation is self-evident. Reverence for God (v.17) rests upon knowledge of redemption. Our redemption cost the death of Christ. This is what we "know."

Note that verse 17 did not close with a period: "...throughout the time of your stay here in fear (v.17); know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things... (v.18)." We pass our time here on Earth with a sense of awe because we know about our redemption.

Principle

Redemption is an incentive to holiness.

Application

The appeal to our redemption is an incentive to do God's will. God expects us to live with loyalty to what we know.

The inestimable gain of salvation furnishes a new reason for living. "Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am," (Psalm. 39:4).

We cannot live the Christian life without the Bible. Neither can we live the Christian life until we have the Christian life to live. We soon learn that there are things not proper for the Christian to do. These things may not be sinful but they are beneath the dignity of the child of God. They may not be sinful but they are a weight, a handicap. They will hold us back and may become superfluous to the priority of our lives.

What we need is the necessary, the indispensable. We learn from the Bible to put priority on the things of greatest value. The Word of God shows us that certain things are good and other things are priority.

that you were not redeemed

"Redeemed" means to release on receipt of ransom, free by paying a ransom. People of the first century would release captives solely on receipt of ransom.

"Redeemed" then signifies to set free by the payment of a price. It is that work of God whereby He himself pays a ransom for those held helplessly in captivity to sin.

The price (ransom) is the blood of Christ. Jesus rescues us from our sin by ransom and releases us from the penalty of sin. Redemption is the means by which God accomplishes our salvation.

Due to lack of funds, someone takes his diamond ring to the pawn shop to exchange it for cash. Because the ring is of such great value he is unable buy it back. His own ring is beyond his means to purchase back. Someone else sees his plight and purchases it for him. The friend does it simply because he is a friend and loves him. This is redemption.

There is a dual dimension to redemption: redemption from and redemption to. Redemption is from the law, from the penalty of the law, from sin, from Satan and from all evil. Redemption is also redemption to a new freedom in Christ, a new relationship to God and new life in Christ.

God redeems us from:

1. the law, Galatians 4:4,5; Romans 6:14; 7:4
2. the penalty of the law, Galatians 3:13
3. the power of sin, Titus 2:14; Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 1:18,19
4. the power of Satan, 2 Timothy 2:26; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 2:15
5. all evil, Ephesians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12; Romans 8:23

Principle

God paid the price for our sin.

Application

The wages of sin is death. Every sin necessarily subjects the sinner to the wrath of God. God initiated salvation for sinners by redemption from the curse. Until God did this, sinners were of necessity separated from God.

Christ redeemed men from the curse of the law by being "made a curse" for them (Galatians 3:13). We do not pay the penalty for sin. Jesus did. He became a curse for us. He took our hell that we might have His heaven.

God made all the provision in grace. Our part is to accept the finished work of Christ in paying for our sin. We do this by faith. Have you accepted by faith that Jesus has suffered all that needs to be suffered for your sin? If you have, you have become a Christian. If you have not, will you do it now?

that you were not redeemed

In the first century "redeemed" conveyed the idea to purchase from the marketplace of sin. God sets Christians free as prisoners released from captivity.

In the Roman Empire, "redemption" was used primarily in relation to the slave market. When Rome conquered nations, it sold its citizens into slavery. The only possible way to gain freedom was that someone should buy them out of the slave market. Manumission of a slave necessitated the price of a ransom posited at the shrine of a god.

How did we become slaves to sin? How did we end up in the slave market of sin? Jesus said that if we commit one sin, we become slaves to sin (John 8:32-36). All members of the human race

are, therefore, in the slave market of sin (Romans 3:10,23).

Jesus personally paid for our salvation. He came with the right purchasing power. He bought us out of the slave market of sin.

Principle

Jesus personally paid the price for our redemption.

Application

Redemption gives an individual the right to be forgiven because Jesus paid the price for forgiveness. This frees the forgiven person to live for God without strings attached. We love God freely because Jesus paid the price for our sins.

that you were not redeemed

Mark 10:45 sets forth the vicarious death of Christ for our sin, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." The word "for" means "in place of." Jesus died in our place.

Jesus does for us what we cannot do for ourselves and what no other can do for us. He took our place of suffering for sin. Jesus vicariously suffered death on behalf of those who fall victim to death (Mark 14:24).

Jesus' vicarious ministry involved the necessity of dying. Mark 10:45 does not explain why God requires a ransom instead of just liberating us freely. God does not owe explanations to anyone but follows His own wise and righteous will.

Jesus accepted this. In doing so, He disclosed to us that His death was obedient service to God on the one hand and vicarious service for us on the other, whereby He secured our freedom from sin. By His death Jesus fulfilled the condition of God's standard for eternal life.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood," (Acts 20: 28).

"being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Romans 3: 24).

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly

bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction," (II Peter 2: 1).

"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth,'" (Revelation 5: 9-10).

with corruptible things

Jesus redeemed us by a ransom paid to the Father. That ransom was not paid from corruptible things such as silver or gold. It was the precious blood of Christ that redeemed us (v.19).

"Corruptible" means liable to decay. Silver and gold can become oxidized and lose their value. Pure gold does not oxidize easily but much of the gold of the ancient world was not pure. Often this impure gold oxidized, ruining the beautiful metal by tarnishing. "Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days," (James 5:3).

Principle

Our redemption is eternal, not temporal.

Application

Gold is destructible but the blood of Christ indestructible. Gold and silver will one day lose their value but our salvation has eternal value.

Are you spending most of your energies on temporal things that will one day oxidize? Why not keep eternal values in view?

like silver or gold

"Silver or gold" were the most precious earthly metals at the time of writing of 1 Peter.

Gold was the most highly valued metal in the ancient world. Terms for gold are widespread throughout the world today even as the presence of gold or knowledge about gold is likewise almost universal. After gold, the next most highly valued metal in the ancient world was silver.

Valuable as these metals are, it is only the blood of Christ that can purchase our salvation.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood," (Acts 20: 28).

No human being other than Jesus Christ could purchase someone else out of the slave market of sin because every human being is in the slave market of sin. Under Roman law only a free person could purchase someone out of slavery.

Jesus is the only truly free man because He was the only man who was never a slave to sin. He was never in the slave market because He never sinned. He did not receive a sin nature because He did not have human father. Therefore, He was not a sinner by nature. Jesus is the only truly free person in God's economy. So Jesus was the only person eligible to purchase us from the slave market of sin.

If Jesus would not, or did not die for our sins, we would be forever lost! But He did die for our sins! If the commodity of salvation of the soul is so high that it cannot be purchased by money, religion or tradition, what is the purchasing power? Verse 19 answers that question: "but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Principle

Only Jesus is eligible to save us from sin.

Application

We cannot buy salvation with money. Silver or gold are often snares to salvation. No amount of money will redeem us.

If someone kidnaps a child, people will pay any amount of money to rescue their loved one from the abductors. However, in the case of salvation no amount of money will ever purchase heaven for anyone. The ransom price is too high for any human to pay. Only Jesus was eligible to pay for our sins. We owe it all to Him.

from your aimless conduct

God not only redeems us from eternal death but from purposelessness. God's redemption extends to our daily manner of life. If our conduct yields no result, our manner of life is vain.

Acts 14:15 uses the term "aimless" for idolatrous practices: "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and

preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them."

The gods of the nations are vain. Only the one true and living God, who is known as he makes himself known, can save us from futility. It is faith in God, however, which enables the Old Testament bluntly to extend the sphere of vanity to all values.

In 1 Corinthians 3:20 the thoughts of the wise are vain: "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

Even Christian faith itself is futile if it does not rest on the historic fact of the resurrection. Our faith is vain if Christ is not risen: "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished," (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Foolish questionings and strife are vain: "But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless," (Titus 3:9).

Religion with an unbridled tongue is vain: "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless," (James 1:26).

Principle

God gives purpose to our lives in time.

Application

Do you have a clear idea of God's purpose for your life? God's purpose for us is to glorify himself. We do not glorify God if we have a loose tongue or if we live in constant conflict. God's ultimate purpose for us is that His character and work will be reflected in our lives.

from your aimless conduct

There are two Greek words for "vain." The word that does not occur in our passage means the absence of quality. This is the hollowness of anything. It is the absence of what otherwise might be possessed (Mark 12:3; Luke 1:53; 20:10,11; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 2:8; James 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 15:14; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 2:2; Philippians 2:16; I Thessalonians 2:1; 3:5). This is void of result. It marks the aimlessness of something. The vain man in James 2:20 is one who

is empty of divinely imparted wisdom. This is a vainly of worthlessness.

The word "vain" in our passage means the absence of useful aim or effect. In James 1:26 vain religion is one that produces nothing profitable. This religion is worthless because it is ineffectual.

"Aimless" implies antithesis to the norm.

"Aimless" indicates that we do not measure up to God's standard. We unsuccessfully attempt to measure up (Romans 3:10,23).

Later Greek thought made little use of "aimless," perhaps because it raised unsettling questions and involved self-contradiction. The Old Testament, however, did not evade the question. Many Hebrew words pour their negative content into "aimless." Human help is vain: "Give us help from trouble, For the help of man is useless," (Psalm 60:11). Proverbs 31:30 characterizes beauty as vain: "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." Controversies and dissension are without purpose: "But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless," (Titus 3:9).

Principle

Christianity gives aim to life.

Application

One reason some people enter into controversy is they do not have a worthy aim for their lives. They live in a vacuum. They do not carry norms that give boundaries to their lives. Anything is fair game.

The Christian who lives to the glory of God falls heir to His boundaries. This gives definition to His life.

from your aimless conduct

"Conduct" means way of life, behavior. Paul uses this term of himself when he says, "you have heard of my conduct when I was still in Judaism," (Galatians 1:13).

God wants us to put off the lifestyle we lived before we received Christ: "Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others," (Ephesians 2:3). "That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man

which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," (Ephesians 4: 22) "and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked," (2 Peter 2: 7)

This is not to say that conduct is wrong in itself. The New Testament uses the word "conduct" in a positive sense many times: 1 Peter 1:15 uses this term in the good sense, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct." Phil. 1: 27 Says, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." 2 Corinthians 1: 12 Says, "For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you."

received by tradition from your fathers

"Tradition" means handed down from the fathers. "Tradition" teaches what has been handed down from ancestors.

Principle

Tradition has no value in our salvation.

Application

Is your Christianity a hand-me-down religion? Have you personally owned the dynamics of Christian living for yourself?

Many people accept what they have been taught without searching it out for themselves. The Bible wants us to find out for ourselves what is true (Acts 17:11).

1 Peter 1:19

"but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Verse 18 is the negative side and verse 19 brings us to the positive side of how Jesus purchased our salvation.

but with the precious blood of Christ

Verse 19 brings us to the culmination of the cost of redemption. The price tag for salvation is blood. How did God make possible our salvation? Not by works or religion but by the sacrifice of

the life of Christ. Blood represents death by sacrifice.

Blood is an idea of life, not death. Blood poured out is to shed the energy of human life. Shed blood is sacrificial blood,

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul," (Leviticus 17:11).

As "the life of the flesh is in the blood" and was forfeited by sin, life eternal can be imparted only by the redemption made in the giving up of life by the sinless Savior.

The New Testament uses "blood" as death as the result of violence or execution. It carries the idea of a violent death (Matthew 27:25). This adds the additional component of sacrifice to physical death (Hebrews 9:7). Blood betokens Jesus' death by the shedding of His blood in redeeming sacrifice.

Note that he says "blood," not "death." A death might occur many ways but not necessarily by the shedding of blood. The shedding of blood points to sacrifice, sacrifice for sins.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood," (Acts 20:28).

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him," (Romans 5:9).

"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission," (Hebrews 9:22).

Remember that Jesus did not bleed to death. Jesus voluntarily gave up His life. He "dismissed His spirit." His death was spiritual as well as physical. When He bore the sins of the world, He experienced separation from God. At that time God separated from Him because He bore the sins of the world.

Principle

God gives us life for death.

Application

The blood of Christ is the price of redemption. The price is sufficient to purchase eternal life. If there was any other purchasing power then Christ died for nothing,

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain," (Galatians 2:21).

At the moment of conversion, God gives us new life (regenerates us). We cannot grow into this life. Birth is an event. Therefore, no one can educate us into birth.

Spiritual birth means we pass from death into eternal life (John 5:24). At that moment we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life. Christians may not be able to pinpoint the exact moment when this happened to them. The main thing is to know that it happened.

The crisis of spiritual birth triggers the beginning of the spiritual life. That process extends from spiritual birth to our death or until Christ comes again. During this period God puts us into a sphere of development (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Peter 2:2). This development is as fast or slow as we apply ourselves to the Word of God. When we apply divine truth to experience, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and makes them real, plain, tangible and useful to us.

but with the precious blood of Christ

Note the word "precious." This word fits the idea of ransom because ransom prices are high. There was great personal cost to the Lord Jesus. He could have stayed in heaven. If so, we would have remained in the slave market forever and spent eternity without Christ. That did not happen. Jesus did die for us. He paid that awful price.

Sacrificial death for sin is ridiculed today. To the Christian, there is nothing more valuable, dear or precious. The word "precious" indicates value. We value His shed blood because it cost Him a great price. "Value" carries the idea of costliness. The value of the shed blood of Christ is incalculable.

Shedding blood was a costly act. It cost the humiliation of Christ in becoming a man; it cost the death of His humanity. As in no other Scripture, God reveals the price of redemption. The Old Testament lamb prepared the way. The

sacrificial lamb made it a necessity that blood be shed and that the lamb be without spot.

You may say, "Could not God have saved us some other way? Isn't there some other price that could have paid for our sin?" No! The nature of God demands that He is consistent with Himself.

If God is absolute, then He is absolutely holy. Anyone in His presence must be absolutely holy. For someone to go into God's presence (go to heaven), he or she must be as holy as God is. But you say, "I can't be that righteous!" That is true (Romans 3:10,23). In yourself you cannot. In fact, you already have positive demerit; you were born a sinner (Psalm 51:5). Because we were born sinners, then we were destined to become sinners in act. Sin is part of our nature. Therefore, there is no way for humans to save themselves. Salvation must come by another.

The only way for us to be as righteous as God is righteous (Romans 3:24-26) is through someone who never sinned Himself. Jesus was never a slave to sin. He did not receive Adam's sinful nature because He was virgin-born. He was not a sinner by nature nor by act. He was the only truly free man. "The wages of sin is death."

This is a principle God set up in Genesis three. Jesus never sinned so He did not have to die. He chose to die. As the only free man, He bought us out of the slave market of sin with the purchasing power of His blood. Jesus paid for our sins with his blood.

Principle

Jesus obtained our salvation at great personal cost.

Application

The cost of our redemption is high – the shed blood of Christ. The commodity of salvation of the soul is so high that neither money, nor religion nor tradition could purchase it. How can Christians squander their life, which cost the death of our Lord Jesus?

By his death on the cross, Jesus opened the door of the slave market of sin. We will stay in the slave market if we do not open the door.

How can you walk through the door? By faith, accept the work Christ did for you on the cross. Just walk through the door believing Christ opened it for you. Jesus paid for every sin you

have ever personally committed or ever will commit.

This is why we gather around the Lord's supper. We remember the Lord's death; we remember the purpose of His death – He died for our personal sins upon the cross. God instituted a system for nailing in our minds the preciousness of the sacrifice of Christ's death for our sins. He made possible the escape from judgment to come. This is the clear sound of the gospel.

Do you cherish the death of Christ for your sins? What value is His death to you?

as of a lamb

It is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:14). The paschal lamb represents a perfect sacrifice. The lamb symbolizes innocence. When priests sacrifice the lamb, it represents the sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty.

Jesus obviously was not a literal lamb. This is representative analogy. Old Testament sacrifices were representatives of the death of Christ. Blood represents what Jesus did on the cross. All of the sins of the world were poured upon the Lord Jesus on the cross and judged. When He completed His work on the cross, He cried, "It is finished," (John 19:30). Then He dismissed his spirit and entered into the presence of the Father.

The book of Revelation presents Jesus as the "Lamb" 29 times (5:6; 7:14; 13:8). Revelation is the book of the Lamb.

The word "lamb" in our verse occurs four times in the New Testament, always with reference to Jesus as the innocent lamb who suffers vicariously for others (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19).

Since Jesus was crucified at the Passover, he was seen as the paschal lamb – "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us," (1 Corinthians 5:7). At the Passover, priests slew lambs to atone for sins. Jesus is our Passover, a lamb sacrificed for our sin. The paschal lamb's blood blots out sins by expiation (John 19:36).

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the expected Messiah. Jesus is the embodiment of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1: 29). "Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36And

looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'" (John 1: 35).

Principle

Jesus took away our sins by sacrificing himself in our place.

Application

Jesus was innocent. He did not have to die. He chose to die because He wanted to forgive our sins. He took our hell that we might have His heaven.

Will you receive His heaven today? Will you accept by faith that Jesus did all of the suffering necessary for your sins. There is nothing that remains to be suffered. He did it all. He takes away the sins of the world. That includes your personal sins. Do you believe it?

without blemish

"Without blemish" means that which constitutes a defect or blemish either in the physical or moral sense. Numbers 6 uses it for the absence of defects in sacrificial animals (Numbers 6:14; 19:2). Jesus presented himself as an offering without blemish to God, (Hebrews 9:14).

In the Old Testament, when Israelites brought his lambs on the Yom Kippur (the greatest day in the Jewish calendar), they dare not bring a blemished lamb. They would never think of bringing a lamb that they could not sell at the market. They would never think of bringing a lamb that was blind or lame.

Just anything was not good enough for God. The lamb had to be "without blemish or without spot." God did not want any bruise found upon it. Leviticus 22 contains the qualifications for the lamb:

"Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the Lord. 23 Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. 24 You shall not offer to the Lord what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land. 25 Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because

their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf," (Leviticus 22:19-24).

Old Testament sacrifices always had to be physically perfect. They could have no scar or limp. God was very particular then and He was very particular later when Christ came as the Lamb of God. God was very particular about the Lamb to come. He demanded a Lamb without defect and without defilement. That is a qualification for payment of sin.

Principle

Jesus met all of our imperfections with His perfection.

Application

God's Lamb ended all altars and sacrifice. Calvary was the last altar. God's last sacrificial lamb was the Lord Jesus on the cross. We must come to God by that Lamb or we will not come to God at all. There is no other way (Acts 4:12).

Jesus did not die upon the cross as a martyr. He did not die upon the cross to show how brave He was. He died to pay for the sins of the world. He died to pay for your sins.

and without spot

"Without spot" means not to cause a spot or stain upon something -- spotless. "Without stain" pertains to being without that which might mar one's moral character -- "morally spotless, pure." In 1 Peter 1:19, this implies that Jesus is an unblemished offering because He is sinless.

Jesus was without blemish and without spot. Jesus was born without sin and committed no act of sin. There was no flaw in the character of the Son of God.

Jesus was the only one who could say, "For I always do those things that please Him." He was also the only person in the world who could say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:29, 46). He said that to a crowd he infuriated with raw, unadulterated truth. Had there been anything that they could have thrown in his face, these enraged religionists would have done it right there. Later in John 8 they tried to kill him.

Jesus was sinless, stainless, spotless. He was the only one truly qualified to be the Lamb of God. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of

God in Him," (2 Corinthians 5: 21). "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth," (1 Peter 2: 22). "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin," (1 John 3: 5). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," (2 Corinthians 5: 21). "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth," (1 Peter 2: 22). "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin," (1 John 3: 5).

Principle

We rest in Jesus' perfection before God.

Application: Judas: "I have betrayed innocent blood." Pilate: "I find no fault in this man." Pilate's wife: "Have nothing to do with this just person." Thief: "This man has done nothing amiss." Roman centurion: "Surely, this was a righteous person."

Jesus' perfection makes our imperfections stand out in hideous contrast. His infallibility sets in contrast to any other person who has ever lived. To use the word infallibility to any other person who has ever lived is unadulterated blasphemy.

Jesus is the only man who ever lived who never had to say, "I'm sorry" or "My mistake." He never made a mistake. Jesus stands in towering superiority above any other person. He was no mere religious leader. He was God made visible for 33 and one half years on earth.

1 Peter 1:20

"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."

Speaking of redemption, Peter goes on to discuss the Redeemer and the redeemed (vv. # 20,21).

He indeed was foreordained

Remember God is not subject to time. There is no "before" and "after" with Him. God does not operate in succession. We use terms like "fore" or "before" because finite creatures can think in no other terms.

The verb "foreordained" means "to know in advance," to know about something prior to some temporal reference point. God knows about events before they happen. Before creation, He already knew about His plan to send Jesus to

earth to redeem humanity. "Known to God from eternity are all His works," (Acts 15: 18).

It is possible to understand "foreordained" in the sense of "chosen beforehand." In this case God chooses or selects the Lord Jesus to come to earth in advance of some other event. The event in this case was creation. Before Genesis 1:1 (creation), God foreordained Jesus as Redeemer. That was before time or space ever existed. That was before Adam ever sinned.

Principle

God planned our salvation before the fall of humanity.

Application

God not only foresaw Calvary; He arranged it. Salvation was no afterthought. God did not say, "Oh my, sin entered this world I created. Now I'm going to have to find a plan to save the world."

Redemption was no emergency measure. God was not in a bind to put a plan in place when things went wrong. Redemption from God's standpoint is an eternally present fact. It did not take place in time. Calvary was no act of desperation on God's part. It is an act of God's eternal design.

before the foundation of the world

"Foundation" comes from two words: firstly, "cast" and secondly, "down." It means "laying down, a casting down." God threw the universe into space by simply speaking a word. God laid down creation as a foundation. It was God who founded the world, not some neutral process.

"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world," (John 17:24).

This is the pre-temporal love of the Father for the son. "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." God elected believers before the foundations of the world," (Ephesians 1:4).

The Bible also uses the phrase "the foundation of the world" in the sense of from creation onwards: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

"I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world," (Mathew 13:35).

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,'" (Matthew 25:34).

"that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation," (Luke 11:50).

"For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest," although the works were finished from the foundation of the world," (Hebrews 4:3).

"He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," (Hebrews 9:26).

"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," (Revelation 13:8).

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is," (Revelation 17:8).

Principle

God transcends His creation; He is bigger than time and space.

Application

Our pint-sized brains can neither comprehend God nor His work. If we knew everything we would be as smart as God.

We dare not reject something in the Bible simply because we do not understand it. That is also true in natural, human life. We do not understand electricity but we know it exists. We accept the

fact that space vehicles can go to Mars but we may not know the technical reasons for it. We accept it without attempting to understand it. It is the same in the realm of the spiritual. We accept it because God says it and that settles it.

before the foundation of the world

The word "foundation" here implies the creation of the world. The word "world" is our ordered system of existence.

Two verses show God doing things before the creation of the world: "

In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." God promised eternal life before time began, (Titus 1: 2).

"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began," (2 Timothy 1: 9).

God both saved and called us according to his purpose and grace before time began.

Another phrase that does not go back before the creation of the universe is found in Revelation 13: 8, "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear." That verse goes back to the foundation of the world but not before it.

God foreordained Jesus before the foundation of the world.

"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death," (Acts 2: 23).

We often think it was people who put Jesus to death. This verse says that it was God who predetermined Jesus death.

Jesus death was no random act. God the Father gave the humanity of Christ the right to decide when He would die.

"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father," (John 10: 18).

Theologians speak of the decree(s) of God. Decree means God determines all that will be. God determined the death of Christ before time and space. God more than foreknew that He was going to do this, He determined it.

Ransom in Christ was God's eternal plan (cf. Romans 16:25-26). God declared that the person and work of Christ have a place in the eternal counsel of God. This eternal counsel existed before the created order. Humanity's fall did not take God by surprise. Redemption was no afterthought of God.

Principle

Salvation is no afterthought by God.

Application

No one ever put God under any pressure to redeem humanity in eternity. Salvation was no emergency measure to correct humanity's situation after sin occurred. God's purpose of redemption goes back before creation. God's compassion is as old as His creation. God's compassion antedates creation. His love is as old as His power.

God planned all eternity at one point. I Peter 1:20 is a key verse to establish divine decree. Events of the world are no surprise to God. Sin was no surprise to God. Sin is clearly in the outworking of God's purpose (Isaiah 14:24,26,27).

A universe without a plan (decree) would be as irrational as a jet without a pilot. Without an eternal plan, humanity would plunge into an abyss of meaningless trial.

Why did God decree at all? Why did He decree that man should come into existence? Why did he not just restrict his fellowship to the Trinity? We do not know the answer to those questions. Only an infinite God can answer those questions completely. However, there are some things he has revealed that point to the answer.

We know that the decree did not originate in necessity. God did not have to create anything. There was nothing apart from God to influence Him to create. He was the only being in the universe. What He decreed, He decreed freely, voluntarily.

but was manifest in these last times for you

"Manifest" means to make clear. God made Jesus very clear to the people of the New Testament. He

made the Lord Jesus visible to people of Peter's generation.

Ransom through Christ was part of God's eternal plan of salvation

Romans 16:25-27

"Manifest" is not the opposite of invisible but the opposite of indistinct, therefore, this implies the preexistence of Christ before his incarnation. What God purposed in eternity, He made distinct in time.

"Times" means succession of events. These are the successive periods of human history until Christ came (Galatians 4:4). The "last times" are the times of the New Testament writing. "He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," (Hebrews 9: 26).

"For you" – Peter focuses the whole decree of redemption upon the readers of his generation. He sets them in the cutting edge of the drama of redemption. This would encourage them in their duress.

As with everything in the physical realm, so in the spiritual realm. Before people realize their need, God meets them with provisions for that need.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen" (Romans 16:25).

Principle

We can take courage that God has a plan for the universe and for us individually.

Application

God does not act from emotional impulse; He acts from eternity. He always acts rationally. He never exercises arbitrary will. God's bases His decree on His most wise and holy counsel. He based His plan on His omniscience.

Since He is perfectly holy and incapable of partiality or unfairness, He made His plans according to that which is absolutely right. God

saves sinners only if in doing so, He can remain absolutely just (Romans 3:25-26).

Even finite people, who are but creatures, put forward a plan before they act. A person who acts without design or purpose is foolish. Before an architect draws blueprints, he makes his drawings and forms his plans even to minute details. In his brain, the building stands complete in all its parts before anyone puts a spade into the ground.

A general must have a plan or thousands of his men will be killed. Napoleon began the invasion of Russia only after devising a detailed, extensive plan. He showed the lines of march and the timing of their arrival. He planned the equipment and supplies in detail. If he were omniscient, Napoleon would have planned where he wanted to situate every soldier.

If this is true of mere humans, how much more it is true of God! If this is true of God, do you take this into account when trouble comes your way?

1 Peter 1:21

“who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

who through Him

The word "through" is crucial in this phrase because it describes the means of our salvation. Note some of the many times the Bible describes Jesus as the means of salvation:

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture," (John 10:9).

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me,'" (John 14:6).

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Romans 3:24).

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," (Romans 5:1).

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him," (Romans 5:9).

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them," (Hebrews 7:25).

Principle

Jesus is God's means of salvation.

Application

We cannot come to God except through Jesus. We cannot pray except through Christ. All good things come through Jesus Christ. He is the way God has arranged our relationship to Himself. We cannot relate to Him except through Jesus. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5).

What is your personal relationship to Jesus Christ? Have you come to trust him as God's way of salvation for you?

believe in God

Jesus' redemptive work is the ground of our faith (3:18). His work has caused us to place our faith in God. It is faith that makes us faithful. "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me," (John 14:1). "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men," (Titus 3:8).

Almost everyone believes in some kind of god. Some worship a tree stump. Others bow before a statue. Some simply believe in themselves. The Bible flatly states the only people who go to heaven are those who go through Jesus. "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (James 2:19).

"In God" expresses internal trust, a cleaving to Him. This is not mere faith. It is faith in God through Christ. The issue here is not faith so much as the object of our faith.

Principle

It is not belief but the object of our belief that makes us a Christian.

Application

Faith enables us to take hold of God's provision for our salvation. God places the decision of our faith in our hands. It is our eternal death or our eternal life to decide. However, it is not ours to decide what to believe. That is God's prerogative.

It makes no difference how moral or how immoral we are. Our honesty or dishonesty is not the issue. These are issues that follow becoming a Christian. If we are not birthed into the family of God by faith, we do not have the capacity to live for God.

Ninety-nine times the gospel of John mentions the word "believe" as man's charge to become a Christian.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," (John 3:16).

John even states this as the explicit purpose of his book,

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name," (John 20:31).

Do you mutually exclusively believe, and believe alone, that Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient for your salvation?

who raised Him from the dead

God vindicates His power to save our soul by the resurrection: "

And you killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses," (Acts 3:15).

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole," (Acts 4:10).

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also

is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him," (Acts 5:30).

"Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins," (Acts 10:40).

"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come," (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

The resurrection authenticates the payment of our sins by Jesus on the cross. His resurrection trumps the victory over sin. "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption [resurrection], and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:

'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

We can confidently stand before God assured that our sins are forgiven because of the resurrection.

The word "from" means out from. Jesus rose out from the state of spiritual death.

Principle

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead assures our salvation.

Application

Many people today believe Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead. They preach that His ideals continue today but He Himself is dead and buried, a physical person of the past. These people are not faithful to the teaching of the passage from 1 Peter.

Where we have the death of Christ, we have the resurrection of Christ. Christ dying for our sins is inadequate, if, at the end of it all, it simply plops us into the grave. The death of Christ without the resurrection of Christ is a half gospel.

and gave Him glory

"Gave Him glory" means the Father raised and ascended Jesus to heaven (John 17:5; Hebrews 1:3). "Glory" is the essential characteristic of the risen Jesus (Acts 3:13; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Romans 6:4). "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob [the God of the resurrection], the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go," (Acts 13:13).

"Glory" here is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus (Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:18-23). God the Father seats the humanity of Christ at His right hand.

so that your faith and hope are in God

"Faith" and "hope" closely braid together so we can orient ourselves to God. "Faith" is resting on God's promises. Christians who know God's essence (what He is like) rest in His plan (decree). "Hope" is the exercise of appropriating the things of eternity into time.

"Faith" has to do with coping with life in time; "hope" deals with bringing the blessings of eternity into our experience. God manages every aspect of our lives. He demonstrates His faithfulness in time by bringing His glorious plan of redemption to us. He shows His faithfulness by providing resources for the Christian life.

"Faith" allows us to appropriate the promises to our experience. As we claim God's promises to us, He empowers us to meet whatever may challenge our faith.

"Hope" is a synonym for faith. However, there is a difference. "Hope" carries the idea of confidence in God's promises. Our English word does not nearly convey the idea of the Greek language, which brings the idea of confidence attending with something in the future. God gives us confidence in the future.

God has made good His promise to us by sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins. God is utterly faithful to those promises. He proves this through the resurrection of Christ. God's faithfulness strengthens our faith that He is totally trustworthy.

"In God" -- God is the supreme object of our faith. The Bible does not value faith in faith. The object of faith gives quality to faith. Therefore, God does not value the process as much as the objective of one's faith.

Principle

God gives resources for coping with trials.

Application

Many Christians today shipwreck their faith. They throw in the towel. They become disillusioned with God due to some crisis in their lives. Then they fall to the philosophies of the present age.

These Christians float through life like so much flotsam and jetsam. The philosophies of this age toss them back and forth by different waves of conjecture. They watch the floating debris of the shipwreck of other lives but it makes no impact upon them.

As we watch all this flotsam we may become discouraged to take the risk of sailing anymore. We lose heart.

The sea is not a safe place. Trials can discourage us or make us stronger. God's faithfulness keeps us sailing through the storms until the day when we see him on the distant shore.

1 Peter 1:22

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.”

We are in a section of 1 Peter that challenges the Christian to live as obedient children. This verse is yet another responsibility to live out the excellence of the Christian life.

Since you have purified your souls

Peter takes for granted ("since") that salvation purifies the soul. There is no question in his mind.

"Purified" refers to cleansing from defilement (the heart, James 4:8; the soul, 1 Peter 1:22; oneself, 1 John 3:3). It means to wash off, to wash away, to cause a state of moral purity.

To purify is to remove all foreign elements. Plutarch uses this word when he describes the marriage vows of the ancient world. The bride must touch both "fire" and "water" then she becomes purified. The Old Testament uses this word for the rites of the atonement.

The Greek tense in "have purified" means God purified our souls at one point in the past with the results continuing into the future. God has cleansed us positionally at the point of salvation,

and the results of a changed life flow from that cleansing. This is a past purifying, our regeneration. "...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works," (Titus 2:14).

Our souls stand purified permanently because we have come to trust in the finished work of Christ for our salvation, just as the Asia Minor Christians were purified as Peter wrote to them. They stood before God in a regenerate state.

Christians who trust in Christ today have purified souls. God has purged our sins and purified our soul when we come to the cross. "...who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:3).

Principle

At salvation, God regenerates the soul of the person who believes in the finished work of Christ to forgive sins.

Application

A lost soul (Mark 8:36) is an impure soul, a dirty soul. Saved people have pure souls. We cannot go to heaven without one. We have a pure soul positionally (or legally) before God forever when we trust the work of Christ on the cross to forgive our sins.

in obeying the truth

How does Christian become purified? By obeying the truth of the gospel. God wants absolute subjection to the truth of the gospel.

This follows the principle of absolute subjection to the truth of the Bible. By obeying the Bible lasting effects will impact our daily lives. The seed of all practical obedience lies in vital faith. The faith that we to come to Christ by, we live by (Colossians 2:6). This is the origin of true Christian living.

Faith is obedience and faith produces obedience. If my faith does not produce obedience, it is not true faith. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," (James 2:26).

People often turn this around--they try to become righteous from without. "If I practice

righteousness, then I'll be righteous within." That is totally reverse of what the Bible pleads--we must first, accept Christ, then we will live the life of Christ. We do not live the life of Christ, and then see our nature change a more godly life.

Conduct comes from character. And character comes from Christ! If we accept Christ as our Savior, we accept truth (John 14:6). Truth which doesn't transform and mold conduct is a king dethroned. Truth is a separating power.

Instead of believing that truth produces change, people believe they can become righteous from without. "If I practice righteousness, I will be righteous from within," some say. This is the reverse of the teaching of Scripture. This is a castle of cards. In our day we care less about truth. We value experience instead.

Many are not purified by the truth because they do not obey the truth (John 8:31, 32). Truth emancipates people from the habits of sin, the seductive spell of sin, the power of sin. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to do this (John 17:17). This is the cleansing truth of God's Word.

We do truth when we appropriate it to experience (John 8:31, 32; 17:17; 20:31; Acts 6:7,17; Galatians 3:1; 5:7; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-13; James 1:22). The truth of God's Word is effective when we do something about what we know (John 13:17; Acts 6:7; Romans 6:17; Galatians 3:1, 5:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; James 1:22).

"Obey" here is the obedience that is brought about by truth. The absolute subjection to the truth of the Word of God causes it to work in our hearts.

We also met the word "obedience" in verse 2. This is an amplification of that passage. This word occurs again in 1 Peter 4:17 which says, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

Principle

Truth is a separating power.

Application

There are two errors when it comes to attitudes about the Word of God: 1. We care less about doctrine, only experience. True faith produces obedience (James 2:26). 2. We have done all that the truth asks of us when we intellectually

endorse truth. The purpose of truth is to change lives. God does not tell us simply that we might know (James 1:22; John 17:17; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-13; opposite—2 Thessalonians 2:10-13).

Truth that does not mold and transform character and conduct is a king dethroned. Truth is a separating power. The reason there is so little love is that there is so little obedience to the truth.

through the Spirit (not in some manuscripts)

The Holy Spirit is the agent who purifies our soul, motivates us and makes us effective in living the Christian life. True Christian living and love is produced by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:5; 22; Romans 5:5; Hebrews 9:14).

Both divine and human factors are important in the Christian life. The Christian milk can has two handles. God provides power to live the Christian life, giving us confidence by the Spirit. We produce action, living out of God's power. Man's part is to co-operate with God's power.

Principle

The agent of purification is the Holy Spirit.

Application

New life in Christ is not of ourselves but through the Holy Spirit. The word "Spirit" means breath or wind. Unless we set our sails, the wind will pass the boat and leave it motionless. Unless believers allow themselves to be filled with the Spirit, we will be powerless to live the Christian life.

The agent of purification is the Holy Spirit. The moment people receive Jesus Christ as their Savior the Holy Spirit comes into their lives. We can quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) or grieve Him (Ephesians 4:30) by sin.

The supernatural life in Christ has supernatural effects. If a person is truly born again, there will be fruit of supernatural nature especially the kind of fruit produced in this verse.

The Christian has the heart to love others because of their regeneration. God has supplied the equipment to love – the Holy Spirit.

Verse 22 gives the properties of love: sincere love; a pure heart; and a passionate or fervent love. Christian love is not hypocritical,

impure and inactive. It is a new kind of love that requires a new kind of life. This new kind of life came to us when we believed

in sincere

Experiential cleansing results in un hypocritical love for the brethren. Purity precedes un hypocritical love. No one can love without the enabling of God's Spirit. Love based on a supernatural life is not hypocritical.

Ancient Greek used the word "hypocrite" to describe the actor on the stage. He was the one who played the part of another. The word literally means to judge from under a mask. Some in Peter's day had put on a mask of hypocritical love over their usual appearances.

In the Greco-Roman world, a hypocrite was an actor who wore a mask. He had two masks, a smiling face and a frowning face. If he wore the frowning face, he depicted a tragedy. If he wore the smiling face, everything was happy. Whether he played the part of tragedy or happiness, he never showed his true feelings but the feelings of another. He was a hypocrite, a pretender.

God wants us to love others without pretense. God does not want us to be an actor when it comes to love. Love must come from genuine care about others. "Sincere" indicates real love or genuine love. True love lacks pretense (2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 12:9; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:5; James 3:17).

Principle

True love does not wear a mask and cannot be counterfeited.

Application

Do you pretend to love others? We often profess more than we feel. There is a synthetic love abroad in the church. It is a counterfeit, imitation love. This love is nothing more than a sham.

This kind of love only works on nice people. It is easy to like nice people. When we run into people who are not nice, then we run out of love. Man-made love will work only on people who reciprocate. The love of God enables the child of God to love without response, without reciprocation. This is a love that only the Holy Spirit gives. "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us," (Romans 5:5).

Someone might say, "Well, I show concern for fellow Christians. I shake their hand every Sunday morning and say 'It is sure good to see you my friend.' I invite them to all the socials. I smile at them." These things are fine but they are not necessarily love. If we do this simply because the church needs more people, it's not true love. People will sense a phony.

God wants more than an actor who plays a role of what others might think of them. He wants us to express genuine love for others. People will know this. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another," (Romans 12: 9).

God doesn't want us to wear a mask representing ourselves as something other than what we are. He doesn't want us to pretend we are something that we are not. Genuine love does not wear a mask.

love of the brethren

The words "love of the brethren" are derived from one Greek word, which is our word, Philadelphia. This is friendship brotherly love. This love is free from bitterness, hatred, vindictiveness, implacability, fear, worry, anxiety. This love eliminates attitude sins especially the sins which have an object. The Christian who loves relationally is free from attitude sins.

Philadelphia love is the love of reciprocity. We love because someone else loves us. It is a love that likes. We like someone else because they like us. This affection or fondness results in human attachment toward someone else.

This is human love, human affection, the love of liking. The other person we love reflects our thinking. We are fond of them and thus are attracted to them. This is human attraction.

God does not want us to love men as though they were your brothers but love them because they are your brothers. This is not "brotherly love" but "brother- love."

Philadelphia love occurs only seven times in the New Testament (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 3:8; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

Principle

Love of the brethren is a horizontal relationship.

Application

Some appear to love but do not genuinely love others. This love is a love which produces pleasure from knowing them. Being with these people give us pleasure.

The result of purifying of the soul is horizontal love for Christian brothers and sisters. This has nothing to do with loving those without Christ. That is a different issue.

love one another

Why exhort Christians to love others whom they already love? The answer is found in two different words for love. In the previous phrase, love was reciprocal. Love in this phrase, however, is a different word for love.

Human fondness and affection ("love of the brethren") can degenerate into selfishness so the Holy Spirit introduces a second word for love that confronts selfishness.

The first word for love is human love. When Jesus asked Peter three times (John 21) if he loved Him Peter answered with "I like you" or "I am fond of you." The first two times Jesus used a word for sacrificial love. The third time Jesus used Peter's word for fondness, "Do you like me, Peter? Are you really fond of me?" That struck Peter to the heart. Peter said, "You know everything. You know I like you. I am fond of you. I am for you."

That is the idea of the first word for love in this verse. God wants us to like fellow Christians as well as love them. The verb for the like-kind of love is found 25 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it is translated "kiss." Judas Iscariot kissed the Savior when he betrayed him just before Jesus' capture.

This word is used of the Father in relation to the Son, "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does," (John 5:20). The Father is fond of the Son.

The telegram that Mary and Martha sent to the Savior in John 11:3 contains this word, "Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.'" Jesus, the one you are fond of is sick. Jesus uses this word of Christians in Revelation 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." God calls upon us to genuinely like fellow Christians. This involves kindness.

The second word for love (agape) in this verse is divine love. This love is the fruit of the Spirit

(Galatians 5:22). It's unilateral. It is a one-way love that can love others even if they do not return love. This love does not depend on reciprocity. It is a love that calls out of one's heart supernaturally.

This word for love occurs 137 times in the New Testament. The most famous verse that contains this word is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It was not that God was fond of the world that He gave His Son. It was not even that God liked the world that He gave His Son to die on the cross. God loved the world unilaterally to such an extent that he sacrificed His Son to die on the cross. God loves on the basis of His own character.

This word is used in John 13:34-35 as the badge of true Christianity: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Each of the four times Jesus uses love in these two verses is the word for sacrificial love. If we love each other fervently and sacrificially, it will convince the world that we are truly His disciples.

If we blend the two kinds of love then we have the balance of true biblical love.

Principle

God wants us to love unilaterally even if no one reciprocates their love to us.

Application

The thought in these two words for love is that we are to like fellow Christians, be fond of each other, and we are to see to it that we love each other sacrificially and unilaterally

God wants us to love with more than a fond love. He wants us to love sacrificially. This is a big order. I have never met a Christian who said, "I believe that I love other Christians too much." Romans 13:8 says, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." How can we love those without Christ if we do not love the saints?

God also wants us to love unilaterally. He wants us to love out of character rather than whether someone else expresses love to us. He wants us to love independently of any relationship, any problem or any situation. The person who loves

this way has great capacity of soul. This is a person of great character.

sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently

This is the first mention of love in 1 Peter. The second chapter challenges us to "Love the brotherhood" (v.17). In chapter 3, verse 8 Peter dares us to "love as brothers." Chapter 4, verse 8 says, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.'" The phrase "above all things" means the most important thing in the Christian community is love. Peter challenges us to cover the sins of others, not our own sins. This is true biblical love.

Principle

True love protects the reputation of fellow Christians.

Application

Do you cover for your fellow Christian's failures? When was the last time you covered up for your brother or sister in Christ? When did you hide his or her sin from the public?

We get the idea that God calls upon us to expose the sins of others. We often do this in a pseudo-spiritual way: "We ought to pray for so-and-so because you wouldn't believe what he did..."

Christians have sly ways of gossiping. We sow suspicion. It may simply be a raised eyebrow. We do not have to say anything. We say, "I wonder what happened? Maybe he ran away with someone's wife. Maybe he went back to drinking." A little question mark, a little insinuation, an innuendo, a tone in the voice can cast deep suspicion on people.

A new kind of love demands a new kind of life.

fervently

"Fervently" is the same word used of prayer in Acts 12:5. The believers prayed unceasingly for Peter. Just as they prayed unceasingly for Peter we are to love unceasingly. Love that is constant is fervent love. Fervent love is love that strains with intensity to love fellow Christians.

God wants us to express this love not shallowly but "deeply" -- "at full stretch" or "in an all-out manner, with an intense strain." Earnestly comes from two words: 1) out and 2) to stretch. We get our English word "tension" from the Greek word

for stretch. This word denotes stretching out or straining toward an end.

The idea expressed is not a relaxing effort. It means to constantly be eager to persevere in some state or activity. It pertains to an unceasing activity, normally involving a degree of intensity and perseverance without ceasing, continuously, constantly. God wants us to persevere in love for fellow Christians.

Secular Greek used "fervently" for the rack in torture. The rack was an instrument of torture in the ancient world. They would place a body on a rack that could stretch the body until the bones would break and muscles tear. This is the kind of love God wants. He wants us to love until our spiritual muscles tear and bones break. This love is long-suffering and sacrificial.

The word "fervently" is a disturbing word. We meet it again in 4:8, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.'" God wants us to love in an active, aggressive way. He does not want a passive, indifferent love. He wants a love that is bold.

"One another" is another of the same kind. God wants us to direct fervent love toward fellow Christians.

Principle

True love takes effort and constancy.

Application

The Asian Christians already had brotherly love for one another. They had affection for one another but they were not sacrificing themselves for each other. They were not on the rack. Their love did not stretch until it tore. This love is far more than fondness. Fondness can degenerate into attachment for another that can be selfish.

Do you go out of your way for fellow Christians? Will you sacrifice yourself or time for Christians? Most Christians do not love each other with boiling love. We fail to defend each other. If someone throws false accusations against a brother, will you stick up for him or passively let him take it?

Children in the same family may fight with each other. However, if one of them is under attack they will form a bond and stick up for each other. When there is a show down with the neighborhood kids, they will be there for each

other. That is what God expects of fellow Christians.

True love for fellow Christian is no emotional surge. It is no part-time emotion. Unlock the floodgates of love. If we can relax in God's love we can relax in love toward others. Do you resent someone? Can you love with no string's attached?

God wants us to love to the extent that we sacrifice ourselves for others. How far should a person go in attempting to win someone else to Christ? A Christian may claim that "I have my self respect. I have tried to share Christ with this person and all they do is scorn my message."

The second word for love (sacrificial love) answers this question. God wants us to love to the extent of sacrificing self. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another," (1 John 4: 10-11).

with a pure heart

The word "pure" means genuine, not hypocritical, (Romans 12:9).

The word "heart" is an important biblical term, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength," (Deuteronomy 6:4).

God wants us to love with all our might. This is the biblical standard for love.

If we are not consistent in love for the brethren, our behavior will betray our profession. Neglecting to love the brethren shows we are still spiritually dead, (1 John 3:14) and that we have not come into a true relationship with God, (1 John 4:8).

"With a pure heart" can be translated "out of a pure heart." We love others because of our regeneration. We have natural love for the people of God because we have been purified (forgiven) from our sin. Pure love comes from a pure heart.

Purify means to remove foreign elements, (Acts 21:23-27). Lay aside evil, put off lust, hatred, envy and hypocrisy, (James 4:8; 1 John 3:2-3).

Principle

Personal purity produces pure love. A "pure heart" is a heart in fellowship with God.

Application

A wife wants the whole heart of her husband. God wants us to love from the heart.

1 Peter 1:23

“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”

having been born again

The idea of being born again refers to regeneration. By breaking down the word, we have "Generation" means born and "re" means again. "Born again" means to cause to give birth. These words carry the idea of experiencing radical change which impact the total person. This implies a complete change of one's way of life, an entering into a new state.

Being "born again" is the gracious act of God of conferring upon those who believe the nature and disposition of God's children. God imparts to them spiritual life (John 3:3, 5, 7; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

This is the second time Peter uses the phrase "born again" in this chapter (1:3). Regeneration is God's act and is effected by the resurrection of Christ and the word of God.

Principle

Regeneration is an act of God whereby he gives eternal life.

Application

Unless we come to the place where we are undone, unfit, unjustified, an unbeliever, we will never recognize our need for a spiritual birth. If you let the record speak for itself you will know immediately that you do not measure up to the holiness of God. We cannot count our sins there are so many.

God declares flatly that all of us sin (Romans 3:23). That is why there is one casket per person (Romans 5:12). There is no remedy except spiritual rebirth. Otherwise you will carry your sins into eternity and then God will disqualify us from spending eternity with Himself.

Someone might say, "I am willing to renounce my behavior." All of this is to no avail unless you are born again. Learning religious language does not

change lives. We cannot live the Christian life without a Christian heart.

Reformation cannot change a corruptible heart. It would simply a white wash a tomb full of rottenness within though we may brighten the outside. Someone may cast away vices and conquer evil habits but no one can make himself born into God's family. It is only God that gives life through the Word of God.

If water in the well is dirty, we do not paint the pump. We purify the water. Moral renewal will not cleanse the sins we already committed. We need a new birth (regeneration) to cleanse our souls.

having been born again

Jesus Himself gave a long explanation of this subject in John 3. His theme was "You must be born again," (John 3:7). Why must this be? There is a great gulf between people and God. Jesus challenged a theological professor by the name of Nicodemus that even he stood in need of a spiritual birth.

Notice that this passage says we "have been" born again. We are not trying to be born again. This is a past experience for those born twice. This event must take place in our lives before we die or we will not go to heaven (John 1:12,13; 3:3-7).

Principle

Man is the product of what he is – a sinner.

Application

Man cannot ignore the fact of sin. Man is the product of what he is – a sinner. The cause of the sin problem must be changed, not the effect. The effect is that man sins. Man may reform himself and eliminate a few sins but this will not satisfy the holy demands of God. Other sins will crop up in his life.

The cause of the problem is man's nature, therefore, man himself must be changed. We cannot change our disposition without changing our nature. For our nature to be changed we must be born again. Man cannot change what he is. He may switch behavior patterns but his nature remains the same. Only God can make him a new man.

If you have never been born twice, you cannot go to heaven. Even with your good record or religion, God will bar you from the gates of

heaven. Heaven is a place for those born twice, once physically and the second time spiritually.

A person is born again when he believes, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him," (1 John 5:1)

This is not social, religious, moral or intellectual change. This is spiritual rebirth, a radical new beginning of the soul, mind and character. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)

Generation is one birth, regeneration is two births. This is more than reformation. The old illustration of a clean pig returning to the mud at the first opportunity applies here. Many may clean up their lives but their basic nature will determine the tenure of their lives.

The fish and the bird have two spheres of nature. The pig and the lamb are opposites in nature. The person who is born again has a different nature than he who is not. The person who is born again has an exalted nature, God's nature (2 Peter 1:4). The person who never accepts Christ as his Savior only occupies transient life. That life is only comprised of time or as this passage says, "corruptible." If we try to experience the love of verse 22 without spiritual birth of verse 23 we will strain ourselves.

Some say the only difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that one attends church and the other does not. The Bible says the difference is whether one is born spiritually or not. We do not perceive spiritual birth by religious talk. Being born again is not more religion. The change is much deeper than superficial religion, it is a change of nature.

not of corruptible seed

Peter first sets forth the negative of how a person is born again, then he presents the positive, "not...but." The negative can be seen in such passages as: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," (John 1:12).

It is nice to be positive but the negative at times is necessary. If the battery in your car only had a

positive pole but not a negative, it would not start. Both negative and positive are necessary to obtain the total truth. The positive message of heaven and the negative message of hell are both realities in God's Word. Heaven and hell are mighty contrasts. The contrast here is "corruptible" and "incorruptible."

"Seed" is the instrumental means of birth. It is the means of becoming a parent. "Seed" is the word from which we get the English word "sperm." This is the kind of seed that produces birth. Physical conception comes from the union of the male sperm with the female egg. Nine months later birth occurs.

The spiritual realm operates the same way. Spiritually, the sperm is the Word of God. When the Word of God implants into the egg of positive volition, a person becomes a child of God.

"Corruptible" signifies to bring into an inferior or worse condition, into destruction. "Corruptible" pertains to that which will to disintegrate and die -- "perishable, mortal," (Romans 1:23).

Principle

Law of the universe: life does not reproduce without a seed.

Application

Without spiritual birth man will perish. Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Do you believe in Jesus? He is your hope for an incorruptible, imperishable life, eternal life.

but incorruptible

This is the third time we have come to something "incorruptible" in this chapter. Our eternal inheritance is incorruptible (1:3,4). God redeemed us by the incorruptible blood of Christ (1:18,19).

"Incorruptible" means not liable to corruption or decay. Incorruptibleness is deathlessness. It is that which is free from death. God is not mortal (Romans 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:17) and neither is the Word of God.

In the New Testament, however, "incorruptible" expresses more than deathlessness, it suggests quality of the life enjoyed as is clear from 2 Corinthians 5:4, "For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be

unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life."

For the person who believes, this mortal life is "swallowed up of (eternal) life."

through the word of God

The sperm that launches life in the spiritual realm is the Bible. Spiritual conception does not take place without the Word of God (James 1:18, 21; 2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures," (James 1:18).

which lives and abides forever

The Bible is a living book (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is no magical book but it is a miracle book. There is no other book on Earth like the Bible. It is the most loved and the most hated book on Earth. Many attempts to destroy the Bible have failed but the Bible will live forever. The Bible "abides forever." Even in eternity the Bible will still stand. There will always be a Bible (Matthew 24:35).

The Bible lives. It lives because it gives life (Isaiah 40:10,11). The reading of the Bible transforms lives.

Principle

The Bible is an eternal book and conveys eternal truth.

Application

People neglect the Bible to their own detriment. The Christian without the Bible will impoverish his soul. There is no excuse for a Christian not to study what God has to say to him. If we do not read the Word, what message does that send to our children? If it is not important to us, it will not be important to them.

Without the Bible, there are simply multiplied years of frustration and confusion. Nothing makes sense, nothing adds up, nothing is worthwhile. Until we are born spiritually, life is meaningless. There is no rhyme or reason about anything on Earth until we come into harmony with heaven.

When we accept the work of Christ on the cross to forgive us, then all falls into place. This does not mean that we will understand everything but we will understand how God operates in the world.

We will understand why heaven is hushed and the sky silent.

Today God does not stop wars or reap havoc on murderers and rapists. God does not intervene directly into the affairs of men today. God has chosen not to speak directly about the mysteries of life in this age. This is the day of the silent sky.

God has said everything He wants to say to our generation in the Bible. God's plan for the present is to reach individuals with the gospel, so they become heaven-born and heaven-bound. God's program for this age is worldwide evangelism.

Pity the poor people in North America. They do not hear the message because they are too busy. Their religious culture has sold them a bill of goods so they assume that they go to heaven because they are Americans or Canadians. This is hallucination! All people must come to grips with God for themselves before they come to the end of life's short day.

"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day," (John 12: 48).

1 Peter 1:24

"Because all flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away"

because

Peter argues the eternity of the Word of God (v.23) with a quote from Isaiah 40:6-8. Isaiah 40 deals with Israel under apostasy. The nation was dead, the temple ravaged, and the people had adulterated their commitment to God. In the face of all this the Bible remains true.

All flesh is as grass

"All flesh" is everyone in their natural state. Man is finite and temporal and transient - he is "as grass." "Grass" is temporal and fragile. There is nothing permanent in grass.

Israel did not love God with all of her heart. She lurches after idols and perpetrates apostasy. Man is a fickle being without stability.

And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass

"The glory of man" is man's accomplishments. All the achievements of man, his records, writings are as fragile as grass. Man's great structures, his developments in science all will wane like the fragile flower. Man's toys are temporal. Man from a global picture withers and fades. Job 14 compares man to a fragile flower,

Job 14: 1-2 "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue."

The grass withers

The word "withers" means to dry up as in a drought. The person without God is in a drought. His life is corruptible.

Even man in all his glory withers and fades away. A pro football player eventually loses his strength and is cut from the team. He was striking for a while, but after a short period of time he becomes a "has been." A celebrity dies like everyone else.

And its flower falls away

Man's fame fades away, 1 John. 2:17 says, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." We soon forget man's achievements. Our generation has forgotten the achievements of our parents generation. The glories of the past fade away. Man's beauty, strength, wealth, honor, art, education, learning, virtue, achievement and greatness blow away like so much withered grass.

All earthly things perish in time. Things of life can be beautiful in their time. Grass is beautiful while it is here but the winter comes and turns ugly and eventually disappears.

The glory of man shines for a while then like grass it disappears.

Principle

The greatness of man is transitory.

Application

Human life is temporary. Man struts around planet earth like a peacock. He puts a satellite into orbit and thinks that the world revolves around him. He swaggers as if he were God. Pompous

little man thinks he can solve the mysteries of the universe.

We occupy ourselves with our accomplishments and have no time for God. We try to eliminate God from our thinking. All of this is like grass that grows for a time and then quickly turns brown and disappears. We will eventually die. Our face first shows signs of wear, then all of our pride in face, place and grace disappear.

We buy a new car. Someone parks next to us and bangs their car door against our pride and joy. The glory of the new car fades. We need to keep eternal values in view for the glories of this life will fade.

1 Peter 1:25

But the word of the Lord endures forever."

But the word of the Lord

The word "word" means the spoken word. The spoken word of God endures forever. There is a slogan that says, "There will always be an England." That is not true because God says that there is going to be a new heaven and earth.

There will always be a Bible, however. Ecclesiastes 12:12 says, "And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh." Think of all the books that have been down through the corridors of time. Think again of all the books that have disappeared from history.

If our lives are going to have stability, we have to link them to something permanent, something eternal. One book towers above all other books and will outlast them, the infallible, indestructible Word of God. No book on Earth has ever been under attack like the Bible, yet it still stands.

Principle

The values of the Word of God are eternal.

Application

The only way we can enter into the benefits of the Word of God is to mediate upon it. If we do not diligently study the Word, the Word will not become a part of us.

Chapter 2

1 Peter 2:1

"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking."

Peter is about to discuss Christian growth (2:2). Before a person grows into a healthy Christian he may be susceptible to certain childhood diseases. The Holy Spirit lists these diseases in verse one.

Therefore

"Therefore" draws an inference from our new birth (1:23). A new life in God demands a new kind of person.

The discussion continues the idea of holiness. Peter lists sins in this verse that destroy fellowship and retard our ability to hear God speaking to us through the Word. All five sins are relationship sins. These sins destroy relationships. They prowl in all of us.

"Laying aside" is negative. The positive is in verse 2, "desire the pure milk of the Word." Babies thrive on milk. The implication is that we will not thrive on the Word of God if we have these five spiritual childhood diseases in our lives. We will not have an appetite for the unadulterated Word of God if we handicap ourselves with these five sins of attitude.

Before we partake of the nutritious food of the Word of God we must put aside poisonous foods of the soul. A person poisoned by toxic foods should empty his stomach. Before a Christian can absorb protein, minerals and vitamins, he should vomit out the poisons of malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil speakings from his life.

We cannot have a right relation to God if we do not have a right relationship with man, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Jesus bids his hearers to step into right relationship with man before they try to get into a right relationship with God (Matthew 5:23f).

Principle

The vices that God wants us to lay away are those that concern our relationship with people.

Application

When we commit sin against people we commit sin against God. Sin committed against people is evidence that our relationship with God is convoluted.

The five relationship sins of this verse will cripple our Christian life. We need spiritual intelligence to identify and confess them. If we are dull spiritually and if we call these sins something other than sins, we will wonder why God by passes us and uses someone less educated or not as intelligent as we are.

These five viruses will put us out of spiritual commission. We are still on God's squad but we are not on God's playing field. It is nice to make the squad and be issued a uniform, but who wants to play right end on the bench! Your aim is to be in the game. We are Christians; now we need to get into the game. We are now born again (1:23) so we are now to live the Christian life and serve our Lord. Most Christians sit on the bench while 11 or so others play the entire game.

laying aside

Peter singles out five sins that deal with right relation to man. We cannot have right relation to God if we do not have right relation to men.

The word means to put off from oneself, to lay aside. This is a call for change in attitude in five areas. God wants us to put away the following five sins like a useless garment. God wants us to lay aside anything that serves to hinder or prevent us from doing his will.

The New Testament uses "laying aside" for the idea of divesting clothes. It means to put off from oneself. "Laying aside" means here to renounce attitudinal sin from the ultimate source of yourself. Take the five following sins from the inner resources of your life. Your inner resource should be the Word of God (2:2).

Acts 7:58 uses the words "laying aside" for taking off one's robes. The context is the stoning of Stephen. The people refused to hear his message so they stoned him, "and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul." They took off their outer garments and laid them down. God wants us to take off sin like a garment.

Romans 13:12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the

works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

Ephesians 4:22, "That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

Ephesians 4:25, "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."

Colossians 3:8, "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth."

Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

God wants us to lay aside not only sins but weights or handicaps that get in the way of our Christian life. A thing may not be dirty or coarse. It may not be vulgar but it is a handicap to living the Christian life. It is a spiritual defect. Some Christians handicap themselves all their Christian experience because they never outgrow their defects.

James 1:21, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

"Lay aside" means to make a clean-cut break with sin. God wants us to make a clean-cut break with not only the more gross immoral sins such as stealing and murder but he wants us to make a clean-cut break with the more sophisticated sins of our verse.

Without a decisive break with the past, it would be useless for Peter to urge his readers to nourish themselves with the Word.

Principle

God wants us to make a decisive break with sin so we can take in the Word of God with effectiveness.

Application

It is useless to nourish ourselves with the Word of God (v.2) if we have not dealt with relationship sins in our lives. God wants us to strip sin off like a suit of clothes. He wants us to clear all clothes of relational sin out of our closet. This is self-judgment.

all

Note this comprehensive word. "All" is a disconcerting thought. "God, how about 75 percent of these attitudinal sins?" "No, 'all.'" "Will you accept 95 percent, God?" "No, 'all.'" "

In 1 Peter 2:1 there are three categories of sin. The word "all" distinguishes each category.

Note that of the five ugly things mentioned in verse one only three of them are prefaced by the word "all" (note Ephesians 4:31). There are some things that God hates more than others in his people. We find this in our children. Some things bother us more than others. They may be stubborn. You remember when you were stubborn as a child, only worse. Their rebellion reminds you of yourself as a child. Now you see the same thing coming out of the heart of your children.

"All" is a word we love to discount by rationalization. We read "almost all" into "all."

Principle

God does not want us to reserve any sins for ourselves.

Application

Do we attempt to have fellowship with God while reserving certain sins for ourselves? If we do, we delude ourselves. God will not bless dishonesty even if it is dishonesty toward self. God wants us to deal with "all" attitudinal sins.

malice

We come to spiritual virus number one and the first category of sin - "malice."

"Malice" is an evil disposition, a malignant spirit, a desire to injure another. This person desires to injure, to hurt. He gets a certain pleasure from the misfortune of others. In the Roadrunner cartoon, when the coyote takes a beating. We, as viewers, derive a certain amount of pleasure at the his misfortune. This is an example of feeling ill-will toward someone.

"Malice" represents whatever is evil in character. This is in distinction from another Greek word which means evil in influence and effect, malignant. The word in our verse has a wider meaning which encompasses the meaning of the other word.

This word stands for anger resting in the bosom of a resentful person. It is overgrown anger that has settled in the soul. A person with malice retains anger till it inflames him to design mischief against someone else and do them harm. Malice delights in any hurt that befalls someone we do not like. Malice further propels our relationships into deeper trouble.

Malice is the opposite to that which is fair, advisable, kind, gracious or good in character. It is that which is destructive or injurious. Malice is the outworking of the principle of evil mostly in an ethical sphere. Malice destroys fellowship.

In Acts 8, Simon saw the apostles giving the gift of the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands. He offered Peter money so that he would possess this gift. Peter rebuked him in 8:22 - "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you." Simon loved fame. He wanted to be a celebrity in the kingdom. He thought he could buy this celebrityship.

Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice."

Colossians 3:8, "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth."

Titus 3:3, "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

Malice is ill-will. Malice and maliciousness are the same thing. It is the desire to harm someone else, to someone you do not care about. You might not harm them yourself but you rejoice when someone else does us. This is a malicious spirit.

James 1:21 "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

God calls upon us to lay aside malice in any form.

Principle

Malice is the desire to hurt someone you do not like.

Application

Malice is a sin of the character that hurts and injures other people. This sin is full of malignity which is the opposite of excellence.

Do you recognize ill-will in your soul? Do you wish to do someone else harm? Do you have a malicious spirit? Do you rejoice when someone you do not like fails? Or, do you desire excellence in your soul?

We do not have to like the way someone fixes their hair, wear their clothes or gestures with their hands but we need to be sure that we do not allow malice in our hearts.

all deceit

The second category of sins has three sins: deceit, hypocrisy, envy.

"Deceit" means bait, snare; hence, craft, deceit, guile. It is used of deceptive actions: deceit, cunning, treachery. It means to deceive by using trickery and falsehood -- to deceive, to trick into, treachery, any cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching.

The Greek uses this word for a bait for fish. This individual will lure others into a trap. He damages others with maliciousness. He is two-faced and conscious of his deception to achieve his own goals. He adulterates his motives, which are rarely pure. He misleads others to his own advantage. He does not tell the whole truth. He is like a spiritual Trojan horse.

Genesis uses this word for Jacob's deceit. Jacob engaged in trickery to get his brother's birthright, "But he said, 'Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing,'" (Genesis 27:35). This drove a wedge between Jacob and his brother for 20 years.

The new reality of life in Christ means that we be guileless as to what is evil (Romans 16:19). In love we may now overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21) for love neither thinks evil (1 Corinthians 13:5) nor does evil (Romans 13:10). If evil is a force that disrupts fellowship, the love that

derives from Christ makes true fellowship possible again.

Guile has to do with what you say as well as what you do. This person uses deceit in words so he uses flattery, falsehood, and delusion. He craftily preys upon the ignorance or weakness of other people to their damage. He intends to deceive and mislead others to their hurt and to his own advantage. The speech of Christians should be guileless. See Matthew 26:4; Mark 7:22; 14:1.

John 1:47 uses "guile" negatively of Nathaniel. This means that Nathaniel was not two-faced. What you saw was what you got. He was honest.

This is not the dishonesty of stealing something from work. This is honesty in our estimation of ourselves and others. We do not acknowledge that we just do not like someone. Why do we not face this problem? Why do we pretend? If we get right with that person, we will get right with God and then personal revival will come. We love to use guile. We use it on ourselves. We use it on others. There are times when we even try using it on God!

I Thessalonians 2:3 uses this word negatively of the teaching of Paul and his fellow-missionaries, "For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit."

It is significant that this word is used in this chapter in reference to the guileless speech of Christ, "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth," (2:22). Jesus Christ would have no part of guile.

Deceit is the opposite of sincerity.

Principle

God wants us to be true blue.

Application

A person who operates in deceit is like the used car salesman who plays up many features of the car. He tries to give the impression that the car has everything a person needs. He points that the car has a radio, power-locks, power-brakes and power-seats. However, he does not mention the car does not have a heater. He steers the customer away from what might jeopardize the sale.

Are you two-faced? Do you consciously try to deceive to attain your own ends? Do you adulterate your motives in your relationship with others?

hypocrisy

We come to the third ugly word - "hypocrisy." The word "hypocrisy" comes from two words: "to answer" and "under." The Greek and Roman world used this word for answering from under a mask. This is a person who makes judgment from behind a cover. He hides his true identity. This word came to mean the acting of a stage-actor; hence the meaning dissembling or pretence. This person acts behind a mask.

It was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice; hence the word became used metaphorically of a dissembler, a hypocrite. A hypocrite is one who plays a part on the stage. He is a player, actor, pretender, dissembler, hypocrite, one who pretends to be other than he really is. He plays a part of someone he is not.

"Hypocrisy" is translated "dissimulation" in Galatians 2:13. The author of this book played the hypocrite himself. Peter played the part of a legalist. He did not have the courage to put the principle of grace in practice. He betrayed the principle of freedom so Paul called him a hypocrite.

Hypocrites pretend piety. They are two-faced carrying a sweet front. This is an outward show, a phony front, a facade. This person is more interested in the public practices of a church than the heart of Christianity. His interest is to present a front to everyone else in the congregation. This person simply complies with overt standards and totally disregards character. He is more interested in taboos set up by an organization, a system of morality or a series of mores.

"Hypocrisies" is plural and comprehends all sorts of hypocrisies. In matters of religion, hypocrisy is counterfeit piety. In regular conversation, hypocrisy can counterfeit true friendship. Often those who are free with compliments that they do not mean fit this category. They pretend friendship when a scheme lies in their hearts.

The hypocrite is afraid of himself. He does not dare show himself as he is. His fear of criticism compels him to wear a mask. He is the opposite of a courageous person. He is afraid to reveal who he is. He is a double person, natural and artificial. The Lord Jesus was the opposite. He was open and above-board. God wants us to be ourselves

and not hide behind the mask of another personality.

One of the outstanding examples of hypocrisy in the Bible is the story of Ananias and Sapphria in Acts 5. They pretended to be generous but they were putting on an act; their last one! They held out on God. They pretended generosity. This was not real and God killed them for it. They sinned unto physical death (1 John 5:16). Some of us are good actors. We can put on a mask and no one knows who is behind the mask. "Did he really mean that?" "Are they for real?"

Principle

God wants us to be an open book.

Application

Do you pretend to have a devotion you do not possess? Hypocrisy will put a crimp in your work for the Lord.

Sooner or later our pretence will be exposed. God will unmask the hypocrite and what a sight it will be!

Are you genuine? Are you confident enough to show yourself for who you are? Christianity requires that we are open and aboveboard with others. God wants us to be ourselves and not hide behind a mask of another personality.

Are you an open book? Are you open and above board? Are you for real?

Envy

The fourth virus afflicting spiritual health is envy. Envy means to be resentful or discontent. Jealousy simply seeks what others have. Envy goes beyond that. This person seeks to deprive others of what they have.

There is therefore a distinction between jealousy and envy in the Bible. Jealousy simply desires to have the same sort of thing for itself. Envy desires to deprive another of what he has. He carries a state of ill will toward someone because of some real or presumed advantage experienced by such a person.

So these two words are not synonymous. Jealousy makes us fear to lose what we possess; envy creates sorrow that others have what we have not. An evil sense always attaches to envy but not jealousy.

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will" (Philippians 1:15).

Envy is also in the plural dealing with many types of envy. There are envies directed toward people, toward status symbols, about material things, etc.

Envy is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10; Romans 1:29; Galatians 5:21; Philippians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:3; 1 Peter 2:1; James 4:5).

Envy grieves over the good welfare of another, at their abilities, prosperity, fame or successful labors. An envious person has feelings of ill-will at hearing of the good fortune of others.

There are always those who, after a man has made his mark on the world, come with erasers. Envy is the enemy of happiness. Time spent in worry about the superior status or accomplishments of others is time wasted and encourages dissatisfaction. But you may say, "He gets all the breaks. Why do I not have what he has?" The Bible proclaims that God is faithful. If he is, why worry about what others have?

Principle

A mature Christian can rejoice at the success of others.

Application

We think we need to elbow our way past our peers to get ahead. Do you turn green when someone else is praised? Does it give you a sick feeling in your stomach? It does not seem right to you that they should be praised. "Why were they elected and not me?" "Why should they receive that honor and not me?" "Why should people make such a fuss over them?"

Song of Solomon 8:6 says, "Jealousy as cruel as the grave." We all know how cruel the grave can be. It does not care whether you are a baby or a mother. Envy grows to a point where cruelty is the name of the game.

Lawyers rarely envy doctors. Doctors rarely envy politicians. A preacher rarely envies an engineer. We envy those within our brotherhood or fraternity. Businessmen envy businessmen. Doctors envy doctors. Preachers envy preachers.

It is difficult to admit that we envy others. A dimension of spirituality is the ability to identify subjective sins that are more difficult to recognize.

We need to say to the Lord, "I confess this envy. It is wrong. I have violated you, Lord. I have no right to feel like this. I confess it violates your person." We will hardly find a day without these sins attempting to stick their ugly heads into our lives. We need to recognize and root them out quickly.

and all evil speaking

The third and last category of sin is "evil speaking." The fifth and final sin of this verse is "all evil speaking." "Evil speaking" comes from two words: "to speak" and "against." This means to speak against and often involves slander. It is evil speech, slander, defamation, detraction in lists of vices of a backbiter.

"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge" (James 4:11).

This is slander, gossip, an undisciplined tongue. This is a person who hurts the reputation of others by words. This is a person who loves to run down other people. He defames someone else. He runs them down to other people. This person is resentful and discontent.

The evil speaker detracts from others. This involves speaking against another, or defaming him. It is rendered backbiting in 2 Corinthians 12:20 and Romans 1:30.

This word is in the plural again. There are many different kinds of slander and gossip. Evil speaking may take the form of blasphemy, profanity, slander or gossip.

Principle

God does not want us to defame other people.

Application

Speaking against others may also consist in passing on something that is untrue or would be better left unsaid. Are you able to keep to yourself something miserable you heard about another Christian? Can you cover for another Christian (1 Peter 4:8).

God calls upon us to make a clean-cut break with these sins of disposition. Just because your parents were malicious or evil-speaking, does not mean it is proper for you to be the same way.

When we bring this over into the Christian life we dislocate ourselves from the will of God. Prejudice and bigotry should drop like a shirt on the floor from the Christian.

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes

"As" brings up an analogy between physical and spiritual growth. Since physical growth begins with physical birth, spiritual growth should begin with spiritual birth. This does not necessarily follow in the spiritual realm. It depends on our attitude toward the Word of God.

"Newborn" means born recently. Peter refers to new spiritual babies who have just begun to live. New babies are totally helpless. This is the condition of a new Christian. He is totally helpless to live the Christian life.

Peter reminds the Asia Minor Christians of the newness of their spiritual life. These are Christians at the most basic level of the Christian life. They are spiritually on mother's breast.

In chapter one, verse 23, Peter writes that Christians are "born again." From conception to birth there are nine months. The great concern of the parents is that the baby will be born healthy. Their hope is that the child will be normal and without defects, physical or mental.

This verse takes for granted this new birth. The main activity after the baby is born is growth. The spiritual babe has come into existence. Now the order of business is spiritual development. God builds spiritual growth upon the same lines as physical growth. From conception to birth are but nine months, but from birth to maturity are approximately twenty-one years. Once God soundly saves someone, the main concern is spiritual development.

Principle

New Christians need nourishment from God's Word in order to develop spiritually.

Application

Mothers know their babies need feeding eight times a day! New Christians need to feed regularly on God's Word to gain stability in the Christian life.

Are you passing from spiritual infancy with a minimum of spiritual illness? Every new

Christian is in danger of exposure to infant diseases. Spiritual babies need exposure to the milk of God's Word for protection from the scars of these diseases. There are many dangers that lurk along the way of spiritual growth.

A baby is naive about the dangers that hide along the way. A person who does not recognize danger has no fear. A tot may wonder why her parents are so concerned about her crossing the street by herself. She wonders why her parents are so worked up about her playing with matches. A tot has not experienced life like her parents have. The parent knows the dangers of drinking poison. The same is true in the spiritual realm. New converts are not aware of the spiritual dangers that lurk on every side. Many things can happen to ruin their Christian lives.

desire the pure milk of the word

Spiritual life requires food suitable to that life. The milk of the Word suits the new spiritual life. Physical babies desire milk often and intensely. Spiritual babies should have an avid sense of hunger for the Word.

The word "pure" is in contrast to "deceit" of verse one. God's Word does not deceive. It is unadulterated and guileless. The Word is unmixed, without dishonest intent, without fraud. The Word is genuine, the real thing.

"Pure" means entirely free from dust or corrupt matter. There is no contamination by alien matter. There is no mixture with anything useless or harmful. The pure milk of the Word will not do harm to new Christians. It will never impose legalism or distortions. Unless a new believer has the basic truth of the milk of the Bible he will never grow up.

Many Christians are weak and emaciated because they are deficient in vitamin B – the Bible. They neglect the Word because the toxic impurities of malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy and evil-speaking steal their appetite for the Word.

The word "word" means spiritual, rational. Romans 12:1 renders this word "spiritual service." It implies genuineness, or being true to the real and essential nature of something. God wants true worship. He wants an intelligent, rational service (or worship). The nourishment here is of a spiritually rational nature. When this nature acts through the regenerate mind, spiritual growth results.

In our verse, "word" means rudimentary spiritual teaching (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-13). God did not give his Word so that it is impossible to understand it, or that it requires a special class of men to interpret it. Its character is such that the Holy Spirit who gave it can unfold its truths even to the young convert. Cp. 1 John 2:27.

Principle

God wants us to absorb the unadulterated Bible, not some substitute.

Application

We need to read the unadulterated Bible itself. We live in a day where Christians substitute many things for the unadulterated Word of God. We read commentaries, devotional books, magazines, etc. How much time do we spend in the Bible itself?

If we do not start with milk we will never eat steak. Babies are born without teeth because they do not need to eat steak. They need milk.

Food is the life-giving material that builds our bodies. Food gives us energy. The Word of God gives us energy for daily living. It is the fuel of spiritual living.

If the Christian does not cultivate his new life in Christ, he will never grow. If we turn to New Age philosophy or positive thinking, we will find these things are not "pure." Unlike these, the Word of God carries no impurity. The Bible is pure and unadulterated.

desire the pure milk of the word

The word "desire" means to desire earnestly, to fix the desire upon. This word stresses the inward impulse rather than the object desired. It comes from two words: "upon" (used intensively) and "passion." The New Testament uses "desire" for things good or bad. Desire carries two ideas: to long for, to lust after (Acts 20:33; Romans 7:7; 13:9).

Longing for the Word is a sure manifestation of spiritual life. The Word strengthens the believer so that he can improve and grow strong in the Christian life. The condition for growth is desire. This is an intense and recurring desire (Psalm 42:1; Psalm 119:174).

It is not enough to desire the Word. We need to desire the unadulterated Word of God. God does not want us to desire just anything about the Word. He wants us to desire the unadulterated

Word of God. Make sure it is the pure Word of God, not some convoluted distortion by a wild-eyed Christian.

Desire is to long, yearn. This is a strong word for intense yearning. God wants us to intensely long for God's Word. The Christian's thirst for life in God should be as strong and instinctive and health-giving as a baby's appetite for mother's milk. This is a sure sign you have fallen in love with the Lord. Loss of appetite for the Word is a sign of spiritual sickness.

Principle

The condition for growth is desire.

Application

Having a hunger for the Word of God is evidence that a person has been born again. We live in a day when people put little priority on the Word of God. They do not long for it; they do not hunger for it. A little knowledge of the Word goes a long way for many. One of the characteristics of a child of God is that he has not only fallen in love with the Son of God but with the Word of God as well. Has the Word become your soul food?

A new Christian must begin on the milk of the Word because he cannot digest the solid food of the Word. All he can understand at the beginning of his Christian life are the simple things of the Bible. As he grows, he understand things that will move him into maturity.

that you may grow thereby

"Grow" means to increase in size, enlarge, foster, strengthen, to cause something to increase. This is a growth of that which lives, naturally or spiritually (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:6,10; 2 Peter 3:18). "Grow" here means to be nourished. God wants us to grow up. Spiritual growth occurs only in proportion to our growth in the Word.

God wants us to grow in our knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10). We may render this phrase as "you will know God more and more."

The Greek has a prepositional phrase at the end of this phrase translated by one word here -- "thereby." The Greek of the word "thereby" means "on account of salvation." That is, because God saved our soul we should have a hunger for God's Word.

Once we pass into spiritual life, we need to grow. Many Christians do not know what they are

missing in the Christian life. Only Christians can grow because only Christians have eternal, spiritual life.

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12).

Principle

The Word of God causes a Christian to mature in his Christian life.

Application

Many Christians never develop in the Christian life. They suffer from malnutrition. Their new life in Christ becomes a drag because of lack of nourishment. It is the Word of God that nourishes the Christian life.

When a person first becomes a Christian everything looks rosy. A little knowledge makes us dangerous. New Christians are vulnerable to all sorts of distortions within the Christian community. If they get into some of these mutilations they will deform their new life in Christ. They will become a spiritual pygmy for the rest of their spiritual lives. There are many spiritual dwarfs in evangelicalism.

The Bible exposes us to our sin. It reveals our motives. It keeps us aware of the presence of God.

1 Peter 2:3

if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

Peter alludes to Psalm 34:8 in this verse. When David wrote Psalm 34 he was lonely and without friends. Saul hunted him down like a deer in the forest. He ran to the territory of the Philistines.

There he faked madness to avoid punishment by the king. Alone in the cave of Addulam he wrote "O, taste and see that the Lord is good."

if indeed

This phrase "if indeed" continues the analogy of the milk of the Word in verse two. His argument assumes that Christians have come to experience God's grace in salvation at some point in life. The "if" does not express doubt. We can translate "if" as "since." This is an argument based on our actual personal experience.

Since we have actually come into personal experience with God's goodness, we should lay aside the five sins of verse one.

you have tasted

The word "tasted" means to cause to taste. God is the cause of our personal experience with the Lord. We did not seek him. He sought us.

The word "taste" continues the analogy of milk and indicates personal experience of salvation. Christians have personally experienced the new birth. We can taste the goodness of Christ's salvation. We can taste the flavor of God's grace.

We experience God by the Word. This is where we find God's goodness and grace. Those who feed on this pure milk will experience God's provision.

Principle

Personal experience of God's grace motivates us to be free from the soul-kinks of verse one.

Application

We must personally experience God to know his goodness. Once we come into that experience, living in the flesh will not satisfy us (verse one). The relationship sins of verse one spoil our appetite for the Word and for fellowship with God.

We discover grace best by personal experience. When we experience God's goodness, provision and providence in our daily encounter with him, we worship Him. We cannot fellowship with the Lord afar off. We must know Him personally to know Him truly.

that the Lord is gracious

"Gracious" primarily signifies "fit for use, able to be used." Therefore, graciousness is good, virtuous, mild, pleasant (in contrast to what is

hard, harsh, sharp, bitter). "Graciousness" is suitable and pleasant to us (Matthew 11:30). It is something easy to bear.

God's character is kind, gracious, serviceable, pleasant, good (Luke 6:35; Romans 2:4).

Principle

We cannot cultivate divine love for others until we first recognize God's love for us.

Application

Our Lord Jesus Christ is gracious to us. He is in himself infinitely good to us even though we violate him with our sin. He is the fullness of grace.

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16).

1 Peter 2:4

"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious."

Peter now turns to how the Christian should respond to his new life in Christ. He begins with the believer's privileges in Christ. We

are in a new status quo with God. We can draw on what we already have. We do not have to earn or deserve privilege from God.

Those who have new birth are a new building (vv. 4-8) and a new people (vv. 9-10).

Coming to Him as to a living stone

This coming is not our initial coming to Christ in salvation. It is the close, intimate fellowship with the Lord. There are none of us so close to the Lord that we could not be nearer. We want to close the gap between us and the Lord more every day.

"Coming" conveys the idea of coming forward toward or going near to a reference point. In some places it means to move forward toward someone and they responding reciprocally. In some places "coming" signifies a consent, implying a coming to agreement (Acts 7:31; 1 Timothy 6:3; Hebrews 4:16; 7:25; 10:22). Sometimes it conveys the idea of taking the initiative in association with someone (Acts 10:28). The focus of "coming" is upon the initiative.

Note the word "coming" in the following passages:

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The words "to whom" and "coming" have the same word that means face to face. This is intimate fellowship with the Lord. Therefore, "coming to Him" is not coming to him in salvation. This is coming to him in worship.

The grammar indicates that as we come to Christ, we come personally and habitually. This is intimate communion between us and the Lord. We have access to him as a perennial privilege.

Christians can fellowship with the living Stone. In chapter one, verse three, Peter talks about a "living hope" and in verse 23, he refers to the living Word. We do not normally think of a stone as living. We think of a stone as dead. We have a phrase "stone dead." This makes the paradox of the living Stone all the greater. Jesus the Stone lives because He rose from the dead. Isaiah calls the Messiah a stone (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16).

The living Stone is a contrast to the pagan temples with their ornate stones. However ornate these stones might be, they were still dead. We can have fellowship with Jesus the living Stone because He is a person and we can enter into vital fellowship with Him.

Not only does the stone live but it also gives life. We can share His resurrection life in time. A stone depicts strength and solidity.

Principle

There are none of us so close to the Lord that we could not be closer.

Application

Jesus has eternal life in Himself. He is the living Stone. Those who accept Him as their personal

Savior begin eternal life at that time. We begin eternal life at the moment we trust in Christ.

To this Stone, God asks us to come. This is not a physical coming into His presence but a coming into fellowship with Him. We come to Him by faith.

Are you daily in fellowship with the Lord by faith?

rejected indeed by men

The Greek term for "rejected" is a combination of two words. The first word means "respected on the basis of proven worth." That is, to scrutinize or put a person to the test to decide whether or not to approve of or accept that person. The second word means "from." That is, the person failed the test. "Rejected," therefore, means to reject as the result of disapproval.

This test is carried to the point where there is no need for further testing. As a result, one comes to a settled conclusion that the person tested does not meet the requirements of the test. Therefore, one disapproves of and repudiates the person. People reject Jesus after they give him a trial run based on their own standards.

Men reject Christ after a thorough examination. They disapprove of his credentials. They declare Him useless after careful scrutiny. He does not qualify as worthy in their estimation. He is unfit for their lives. They judge Him as not worthy or genuine and thus reject Him.

Most men reject Christ. They oppose fellowship with Him (Isaiah 53:3). In their judgment Jesus does not meet their test. Now the Stone remains in this condition (perfect tense), that is, in a state of being tested and rejected.

Principle

Man uses himself as the test or standard to determine the validity of Jesus Christ.

Application

Man sets up his little tests to prove whether Jesus meets his requirements. However, the issue should be: is the test right or not? It is deadly to use the wrong test. Israel did this. She thought that the Messiah would be born in a noble family, that he would have wealth and become world-famous. That was her test but she used the wrong method for finding truth.

Are you using your opinion to determine how a person should get to heaven? "Well, I have my opinion how about a person should become a Christian." Why should you use your opinion rather than the Word of God?

The right test for determining how a person goes to heaven is the Word of God.

but chosen by God

The 'but' throws a contrast between man's opinion and God's opinion about Christ. In God's eyes Jesus is both tested and approved as genuine.

"Chosen" means chosen out and selected (Matthew 22:14; Luke 23:35; Romans 16:13; Revelation 17:14; 1 Peter 2:9). God picked Him out from among everyone else (Luke 23:35). Even though men reject Him, God views Him as select. God elected Jesus to go to the cross. As a result of His work on the cross we can share His election and destiny (Isaiah 42:1). Jesus ranks with God. God put Him in a place of administrative priority. In the final analysis it is God's approval that is necessary, not man's.

and precious

"Precious" means to hold in honor, hold as very valuable or worthy. 1 Corinthians 3:12 talks about "precious stones."

God holds Jesus in high status and that demands that we both honor and respect Him. The word "precious" means honorable. He is worthy in the esteem of God. He is also worthy in the judgment of all who believe on Him.

Principle

God holds Jesus in high estimation.

Application

If God holds Jesus in such honor, we should highly prize Him as well.

1 Peter 2:5

“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

This verse begins a section dealing with the believer's status before God.

you also, as living stones

The phrase "as living stones" identifies us with Christ. He is the "living Stone" and we are "living stones." We live because we share His resurrection life. Christ is the life (John 1:4; 5:25; 11:25; 14:6); we share in His life. The Christian life is not religion but a vital relationship with God. God does not build His church out of dead materials. He builds it on our position before Him in Christ.

Jesus is the Stone. Peter was a little stone (a chip) off the great rock Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18).

are being built up a spiritual house

"Built up" is literally to build a house. Peter uses this term in the metaphorical sense of edification. God is in the act of building up believers in their spiritual growth (Romans 14:19; 15:2; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 5, 12, 26).

"Being" indicates that it is God that does the building (Jude 20; Ephesians 2:21-22). Nothing can hinder this building. God is in the process of laying each stone Himself.

"Spiritual house" refers to the church. God did not make this building out of literal stones. He builds this building by adding Christians to the church. Every time a person receives Christ as his Savior, God places a new stone in the building. One day this building will be finished then He will come again.

The purpose of a house is for someone to live in it. God dwells in this house. God made his residency in the temple in the Old Testament. In the New Testament he lives in Christians. He dwells in the lives of his people (I Corinthians 6:19). He is a guest in our lives.

Principle

Spiritual growth comes with the application of positional truth to experience.

Application

God constructs the church on the basis of positional truth. Our status before God is positional truth. Positional truth is true for both the spiritual and the carnal believer (I Corinthians 1:2,30). Positional truth protects the believer from ultimate judgment (Romans 8:1). Positional truth guarantees eternal life to those who possess it (Romans 8:28-29).

God bases spiritual growth on positional truth. Have you edified your soul by God's provision of positional truth? Have you applied your positional truth to experience? Do you realize that you have status in God's eyes?

a holy priesthood

What is the point of the "spiritual house?" The Greek reads "for a holy priesthood." The reason we have a spiritual house is so that we can function as priests. The reason we are spiritual buildings is so that we might exercise the right of our priesthood privileges.

Our translation does not translate a word found in the Greek, the word "unto" - "unto a holy priesthood." It is God's purpose that each Christian becomes a priest. A priest acts on behalf of another. Since every Christian is a priest, every Christian can act on the behalf of every other Christian or even non-Christians.

The characteristics of a priest:

1. he has access to God 2. his task is to bring others to God [a prophet brings God to the people; a priest brings the people to God] 3. he brings offerings to God

The functions of the New Testament priest is to confess, 1 John 1:9 pray, Hebrews 4:16 sacrifice: the body, Romans 12:1 praise, Hebrews 13:15 money, Hebrews 13:16 obedience to leadership, Hebrews 13:17

Principle

God expects us to exercise our privileges as a priest.

Application

We often question our purpose for existence on planet earth. This verse says that one purpose for our existence is to function as priests.

Do you intercede for others? Do you pray for the lost? Do you represent Jesus Christ to those who do not know him? These are functions of your priesthood.

to offer up spiritual sacrifices

"Offer up" means to bring up. The Old Testament priest brought his sacrifice up to the altar. God wants us to bring up our offering directly to him. The offering here is ourselves. God wants us to bring our whole person to him.

Under the Old Testament economy the priest offered an offering upon a brazen altar. In the New Testament we offer ourselves to God with our spirituality.

The Christian brings "spiritual sacrifices" not animal sacrifices. Spiritual sacrifices are activities of the believer that the Holy Spirit animates. These are the things that we do in the power of the Spirit.

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16).

Principle

We are priests that offer spiritual sacrifices to God directly without mediation.

Application

The Christian makes his worship an offering to God. Worship should not be a burden but a joy and privilege. We cannot force worship. We must bring to God the offering of ourselves voluntarily.

Have you made yourself an offering to God? God wants us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). The characteristic sacrifice of the New Testament believer is a spiritual sacrifice.

We can offer ourselves to God at any time under any circumstance. Our sacrifice is not limited to time. Neither is it limited to content.

acceptable to God

"Acceptable" is a double compound word. "Acceptable" comes from three Greek words put into one word: 1) good or favorable 2) face to face [what one can accept to oneself] and 3) to receive. "Acceptable" then means what one can receive favorably to oneself, face to face. When we offer sacrifices to God He readily accepts them because of Jesus Christ. God receives our gifts to Himself with pleasure.

This term means that which is very favorably accepted. God is very pleased with offerings to Him (Romans 15:16). Offering of the whole person pleases God very much. God is pleased when He detects spirituality in the lives of those who love Him.

Principle

We please God by our spirituality.

Application

Do you want to put a smile on the face of God? We can put a smile on His face by offering spiritual sacrifices to Him. When we give everything that we are to Him, it honors Him.

through Jesus Christ

It is Jesus Christ who mediates our acceptance by God. We cannot mediate acceptance by God on the basis of who or what we are.

In the Old Testament access to God was the privilege of a few professional priests. Among them only the high priest could enter the holy of holies and that only once a year. In the New Testament the privilege of access to God belongs to every believer. The Christian is at once both the temple (I Corinthians 6:19-20) and the priest. It is also our task to build bridges to God for other people.

Through Jesus Christ, the new and living way, every Christian has the right of access to God personally.

We can go immediately into the presence of God without a mediator. If it were not for the work of Jesus Christ on the cross we could not go directly into the presence of God. Because of him God admits us into His presence.

"Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2).

Principle

Jesus Christ earned our right to have access into the presence of God.

Application

Often Christians do not pray because they feel that they do not have the right to pray. They feel that they are not good enough for God to listen to them. This is to miss the whole point. To feel "good enough" implies that God accepts our prayer on the basis of who we are and what we have done. This is not the basis of God receiving our prayers.

The basis of God accepting our prayer is the work of Christ on the cross. He earned the right of our access to God. That is why we come to God "in

Jesus' name." We come to God on the authority of what Jesus Christ did, not what we do.

If this is true, why not exercise your right to pray without guilt?

1 Peter 2:6

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

I Peter 2:4-8 presents the Lord Jesus as three stones: a "living stone," a "precious corner stone," and a "stone of stumbling." Jesus

is a living stone to the believer because he sits in the heavens. He is a priest forever. We are in him and we are therefore priests.

Now we come to Jesus as the "chief cornerstone."

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

Verses six to eight are a series of citations from the Old Testament. Peter now gives three citations from Scripture to prove his point. These citations deal with Jesus as the great stone.

This is an allusion to Isaiah 28:16. This is documentation of the fact that Christ is the living stone. In chapter 28 Isaiah pronounces a woe against Ephraim. Ephraim perverted herself with drink and became known for drunkenness (vv. 28:1). They distorted the beauty of the Lord (vv. 6,8). Because of this, Isaiah predicted the Assyrian invasion. In spite of Ephraim's rejection the Lord placed in Zion a "chief cornerstone." If anyone were to believe in him, God would deliver him from the Assyrian invasion. If anyone in Ephraim were not to believe on Him, they would stumble over Him.

"Contained" indicates that this is not an exact quotation but this reference strives for the essence of the idea. The truth of who Jesus is lies within the Word. The only way we will capture the preciousness of Jesus is to study the Word.

The appeal is to what is written ("Scripture"), not what is spoken. Scriptural proof for what we believe is crucial for documentation of what we believe. The Word is the norm and standard for what we believe.

Principle

We need to substantiate what we believe from Scripture.

Application

Much teaching to Christians today cannot be substantiated by the Word of God. Many Christians today are loosed from the moorings of Scripture. If the Lord Jesus and the apostles quoted Scripture as authoritative, should not the modern Christian as well?

Behold, I lay in Zion

"Behold" calls attention to the importance of the statement.

"Zion" is the temple site in Jerusalem. "Zion" became a title for believers in Israel.

Jesus himself quoted from this Scripture (Matthew 21:42). Peter referred to this passage in his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:11).

A chief cornerstone

A cornerstone is where the stones of a building meet and it unites the entire structure. A building rests on its cornerstone. The cornerstone is the most significant stone of the whole structure. The whole house is held together by this stone. It controls the whole structure. A believer rests on the Lord Jesus, our cornerstone. He supports the entire church.

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Principle

God's sovereign plan is built around the Son.

Application

God has a sovereign plan for the Son of God. His whole plan of salvation revolves around the Lord Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross is the foundation for our salvation. We are as safe as this foundation.

Elect

Jesus is essential to the Father's eternal plan. God chose Jesus because none other could save man; no one else could do it. God chose Him and He is dear to God. God's whole plan revolves around Him. Billions of years ago the Father knew every failure or problem that every man, woman and child would ever face. He put into place a plan that would meet every need. The starting point was to elect the Son and take Him to the cross.

"Elect" always takes us to eternity past. It always refers to God's divine design for creation. God's eternal plan always excludes human merit. God always provides in His grace. Under grace God gets the credit.

It is God's approval that is the important issue, not man's. What a contrast! Christ was not dear to Israel but He was dear to God.

Precious

Our response to the elect Lord Jesus is to hold him as precious. "Precious" means valuable. "Precious" is something that we hold in honor. Believers should hold him as highly valued or most valuable. Do we treasure Jesus in our lives?

Maudlin sentimental people ruin this word "precious" for us. "Precious" does not mean to slobber. All of us do a certain amount of this. This word means to hold in highest value.

Thirty years after the ascension Christ is more precious to Peter than ever.

Principle

God wants us to occupy our minds with the person of Christ through the Word of God.

Application

We are in a dangerous period of church history where Christians fail to recognize that knowledge of the value of Jesus Christ comes from the Word. Jesus does not want maudlin sentimentality; He wants true love.

And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.

"Believes on him" is more than to believe about Him. To simply believe about Him does not qualify us to be a Christian. We would be lost for eternity if that were the case. To believe "on" Him means we trust Him. Do you have confidence in

the plan of God for your salvation? Belief is the point where one enters the plan of God.

There are those who put their trust in someone only to find that they must shamefully retreat from them because of some indiscretion. This will never happen to a true Christian because of the integrity of Christ.

"By no means" is double negative in the Greek making this phrase very emphatic. The Lord Jesus assures the believer of ultimate victory.

"Put to shame" means dishonored or disgraced. This might refer to the Great White Throne judgment for unbelievers. Only unbelievers will stand at the Great White Throne judgment. This is where God will indict the unbeliever. God will indict them because they chose to stand there apart from the cross.

At the Great White Throne judgment, God will not mention sins to non-Christians. Why? Because of the principle of double jeopardy. The unbeliever attempts to stand on his own works. Those works are not sufficient to meet the righteousness of God. Man's righteousness cannot stand before the righteousness of God. Sins are not the issue at the Great White Throne because Jesus paid for our sins by his death on the cross.

What is the principle? At some point in your life you were probably ashamed of someone in your life. If we stand with our good works before God, God will be ashamed of us. The Christian will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God will not mention our sins to us because Jesus took the judgment for them. If we stand in our own righteousness, we will be embarrassed.

"Shame" -- the more we orient to the grace of God the less we will experience shame. All of us have done a lot of things that bring us shame but God will overrule that shame with His grace.

Principle

God does not want Christians to carry guilt complexes.

Application

The grace of God elevates us from shame. His cross meets all the demands of God. That is why we can forget the failures of our past (Philippians 3:13). We can move on without guilt. The grace of God is our platform for victory.

The principle of double jeopardy means that God will not judge the same sin twice. God judged our

sin on the cross. Therefore, he will not judge us for sin again. Jesus paid for all sin of all time. The issue before us is to accept God's elect plan for our salvation and to live a life rejoicing in the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the believer.

1 Peter 2:7

Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone"

Therefore, to you who believe

A believer is a person who trusts Jesus Christ for salvation. This transaction does not take place when you are confirmed or are baptized or join a church. This happens in a vital confrontation with the cross of Christ.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47).

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

"So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:31).

Principle

Belief in the cross to pay for our sin is the only basis for salvation.

Application

Either, we embrace Jesus as our Savior or we stay lost and go on our way to hell. However, the older we get the route to hell gets less merry. It can get grim when we lay at death's door and there is no hope. It becomes a fearsome, ugly thing. People who die without Christ have no hope, no future beyond the grave.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ as the only way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) have eternal life.

He is precious

Jesus is of inestimable value to Christians because He is in the plan of God from eternity. He is worthy of all value to Christians. Jesus holds dignity and glory in His nature both to God and to Christians. He is precious because He is elect to God.

It belittles true Christianity to be indifferent to Jesus. Jesus must be more precious than our wife, husband, son or daughter. He is precious to us because God identifies us with him in his own eyes. By his work on the cross, God identifies Jesus' worth with us. That's why He is precious to us.

Those who come to the Savior experience His "graciousness" (2:3). When we come to Christ we experience His grace. Then we find that He is not only gracious but He is precious. He becomes increasingly precious the longer we know Him. Jesus gets better the older we get, if all things are equal. Everything else dims, decays and degenerates. Jesus looms larger in value to us as time goes on.

Principle

Jesus is precious to those who truly know Him.

Application

The child of God close to death realizes the preciousness of the Lord Jesus. The best is yet ahead. The worst is yet ahead for those who do not know Jesus. They do not know what we mean when we talk about the preciousness of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus is precious in the same way our faith is precious (1:7,8). What would you put as the completion to this statement: "I love the Lord because..." Everything we have in time or eternity has been given by the Lord Jesus. He becomes increasingly precious the more we come to understand this (Galatians 6:14).

How precious is the Lord Jesus to you? Jesus is more precious to some believers than others. It is obvious from how they lead their lives. We cannot love the Lord Jesus without knowing Him. Once we know Him we love him. The more we love someone the more we want to do for them (Revelation 2:4). He is worthy of our honor (Revelation 4:11).

but to those who are disobedient

The "disobedient" are non-Christians. Their unbelief is the cause of their stumbling. This is more than refusal of intellectual assent. This word means more than simple unbelief. It is a revolt of the will against God's authority. The gospel presents its truth to the heart as well as the mind. Unbelievers disobey because they will not believe the gospel truth (John 5:1-16).

Unbelief is blind to the preciousness of Jesus Christ. Before we received Christ Jesus was nothing to us. After we believed, He was everything to us.

Peter uses the term obey in other places in his first book:

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied" (1 Peter 1:2).

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

The stone which the builders rejected

This is a quotation from Psalm 118:22.

"Rejected" means to discard after close examination. The builders tested Jesus to the point where no further testing was necessary for them. The people of His day saw His miracles but rejected Him in the face of the clear demonstration of His credentials. They repudiated Him after a close look at Him.

People set up their little tests to prove whether they want Jesus in their life or not. The real test from God's viewpoint is the Word of God. God says in the Word that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

Has become the chief cornerstone

Not only is Jesus the cornerstone, He is the chief cornerstone.

Principle

Unbelief is rejection of God's authority.

Application

Disobedience is rejection of God's authority upon one's life. Do you revolt against God's authority in your life?

God views Jesus Christ as central to his plan. He is the "chief corner stone." Have you adequately

considered His credentials? Why not place your trust in Him now?

1 Peter 2:8

“and ‘A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense. They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.”

and A stone of stumbling

The third quotation in this passage is from Isaiah 8:14, where Isaiah predicts the Assyrian invasion about to come upon the Northern kingdom of Israel. The northern kingdom had made a confederacy with Syria and Samaria. They terrified Judah, the southern kingdom. If the nation repents, God will become a sanctuary to them. If they refuse to repent, this rock would crush them. Peter says that Jesus was that stone; He is that sanctuary (v.12).

And a rock of offense

The "rock" in Palestine was often a loose stone on a path. The picture is a person traveling a path in the dark [ignorance of the Bible]. He stumbles over these loose stones in the path.

"Offense" means to cut against. The cross of Christ offends non-Christians. It cuts against their bent. The death of Christ as a substitute for sinners offends this bias.

Principle

Jesus is either the chief corner stone or a stone of stumbling.

Application

To Christians Jesus Christ is the foundation stone, the chief corner stone, the head stone. To those who rebel against God's Word, he is a stone of stumbling.

"But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Christ either saves or judges us. Have you tripped over the Savior? We can blame the church or the preacher but it is ultimately Jesus over whom we

stumble. It is offensive to hear that Jesus is the only Savior and that religion cannot save a sinner. And it is offensive to hear that we are poor sinners. We do not want to hear we are sinners. We do not want to hear that we need a sinner's Savior. Yet, this is God's message to us.

They stumble

"Stumble" means a trap set to trip someone on a path. Unbelief blinds the eyes and carries a disastrous nemesis within itself. Unbelievers bang themselves up before they complete their journey of life. They set their mind so that they will not be vulnerable to persuasion from God. They willfully reject Jesus as the answer.

being disobedient to the word

"Disobedient" means not persuaded, refuse belief, unwillingness or refusal to comply with the demands of some authority. They refuse compliance with God's Word to them.

"In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

"But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek" (Romans 2:8).

"And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?" (Hebrews 3:18).

"By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace" (Hebrews 11:31).

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

Principle

Negative volition is refusal to accept the authority of God's Word.

Application

God's Word is the way God communicates His will to us. If we reject the Bible as ultimate authority, we reject God's voice to us.

God describes non-Christians as the "children of disobedience." Those who believe are the children of obedience. They come to accept the Bible as the Word of God. Once a person accepts the authority of the Bible and the message of the Bible, they enter into God's family.

Is the real reason to reject Jesus as your Savior rebellion against the authority of God's Word?

to which they also were appointed

God is the one who makes our appointment with the Word. God ordains that each person responds to His Word.

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes?" (Matthew 21:42).

Peter ascribes Israel's stumbling to God (Romans 11:11). God makes an appointment for all people but many never keep the appointment because of their offense at the cross. God's appointment is not for wrath but salvation:

"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Principle

God makes an appointment with each person to face salvation through Christ.

Application

Every person has a divine appointment with the Word of God. He must accept it or reject it. When we bump into a rock, it hurts. When we stumble over the rock of Jesus Christ it will hurt. It will bruise us forever.

1 Peter 2:9

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises

of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Peter concludes this portion of I Peter with a moving exhortation to live out the Christian life based on our position before God.

Four titles express our position, setting forth our privileges before God. We cannot orient to God properly without knowing these privileges.

In these verses, Peter presents the believer's position. Then he presents the purpose for this position. The believer's position in the Christian life is fourfold.

But you

"But" is a right-about-face word. "But you" stand in emphatic contrast to non-Christian attitudes toward Christ (2:8). Billions of years before anyone existed, God knew that you would exist in time. He knew you by name. He knew you would make the greatest of all decisions to receive Christ as your Savior. Because you made that decision, God made provision for you billions of years ago in the form of positional privilege before Him. This is what makes the believer stand in such contrast to those without Christ.

Unbelievers cannot have eternal meaning and purpose. No matter how successful they may be in this life, they cannot have what the most humble Christian can have. On the contrary, believers, no matter what disaster overtakes them, no matter what failure occurs in their life, hold status before God.

All four privileges are positional. These are things accomplished by God. Therefore, the privilege of our status before God has been granted by God. No matter how we fail, we still hold these prerogatives before God because of Christ.

Principle

The Christian holds prerogative before God by Christ.

Application

Any person who is a Christian has been born into the family of God. It begins with the second birth, spiritual birth. We enter into life by physical birth. We enter into eternal life by spiritual birth. When we accept Christ we enter into union with Christ.

God changes our status forever on our second birth. In order to orient to the plan of God, we have to know who we are. If we have personally

accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior we are part of the elect race. Does this make us superior to others? No, it makes Christ superior to others. Christians are not superior in themselves, therefore, they should not act superior to others. We have no right to look down our nose at others.

are a chosen generation

Now Peter talks about the first of four privileges for the believer. These four privileges orient believers to God's prerogatives for them. Each description describes positional truth.

All four privileges relate to our status with Christ. Therefore, we are left without any illusions about ourselves. These four phrases have nothing to do with how we feel; they have to do with what God did for us. Therefore, Christianity is grace-oriented. Christianity is grace. Grace always depends on who and what God is. It never depends upon us.

"Chosen generation" is the first of a fourfold description of a believer. In contrast to those destined for destruction, Christians are a chosen race or generation. God uses the phrase "chosen people" for both Israel and the church. God told Moses at Sinai to tell Israel, "You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Here are some of the New Testament references to election.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16).

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of

our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

"Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

"Generation" is a class of people who have a common descent and life. Christians are a spiritual race. It is not simply those living in the first century. The church is a race based on spiritual birth (regeneration). We enter this generation by spiritual birth. We enter into union with Jesus Christ forever.

Christians carry a corporate title. All true Christians are part of a chosen group diverse from those without Christ.

"Are" is in italic, making it emphatic by the absence of a verb. "You ... a chosen generation."

Principle

At salvation we enter into the same position that Jesus has before God forever.

Application

Christianity is a relationship not a religion. Religion is an attempt to gain the approbation of God. Christianity means that God is satisfied with us, no matter what, because of Christ. Our prerogatives are completely accomplished by God through Christ apart from human work. It is fully the work of God. It is the grace of God.

a royal priesthood

This is the second title for the believer's position in Christ. Peter calls Christians "a royal priesthood" (cf. Revelation 1:6). Christians are royal priests. In Romans 12:1, Paul challenges Christians to offer themselves as a "living sacrifice." We are the sacrifice in the function of our priesthood.

"Royal" is the Greek word for king. The priests of the Old Testament were merely priests. They were not "royal." The believer of this dispensation is a king-priest. Royal means no man stands over us as priests. We have direct access to God. Our

priesthood could not be royal until our High Priest had done his work (Hebrews 4:14).

We are royal in relation to God. We are separate from sin via Christ. We offer to God our consecration and service made acceptable in Jesus Christ. We are a royal priesthood because of our relationship to Jesus Christ who is both king and priest. The church is a kingdom of priests. Priests lead people into the presence of God.

"And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen"
(Revelation 1:6).

"And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth"
(Revelation 5:10).

The Greek says "for a holy priesthood." The reason we are a spiritual building is that we might exercise our right of priesthood privilege. Every believer is a priest.

There are two great characteristics of a priest. Firstly, the priest is an individual who has access to God and whose task is to bring others to him. In the ancient world, access to God was the privilege of the few. However, through Jesus Christ, that access of God is the privilege of every Christian. It makes no difference how educated or humble a believer may be. The priest is also a person who builds a bridge for others to come to God. The Christian has the privilege and duty to bring others to the Savior.

Secondly, the priest is one who brings an offering to God. In the Old Testament believers brought animal sacrifices, but the sacrifices in the New Testament are spiritual sacrifices. Everything a priest does is done for God. The smallest task displays God's glory. The Christian himself is an offering (Romans 12:1). He is a living sacrifice.

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). The words "to offer up" was used for that act where the priest offered the animal sacrifice on the four-and-a-half-foot altar. Similarly, believers are then in the place where they should offer their heart to God. New Testament priests are not limited as to what they should offer God. Their whole life is a consecration to God. They have an unlimited priesthood.

We have the right to go immediately into the presence of God. How do we get this privilege? By spiritual birth.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1). Romans 5:2 says "through whom." Through Jesus Christ we have access into the presence of God. This is the only reason God permits us into his presence. Because of the person of Christ, we not only have access to God's presence, but our fruit is acceptable to Him because of Christ. God admits us into His presence because of Christ.

Principle

Christians are king-priests.

Application

We need to think of ourselves as king-priests. Our character and conduct should fit our calling. We have the right to approach God directly through Christ. We have the privilege of constant, direct, immediate access to the presence of God.

Christians possess the right of aristocratic priesthood. We have a special relationship to King Jesus by spiritual birth. We are not aristocratic priests because of who we are; we are aristocratic priests because of Christ. Christ is going to rule over the world forever. He is sovereign. We are in union with Him, therefore, we will rule with Him.

Christians have the right of confessing their sin directly to God. Every sin in the history of the world has been judged by Christ's death. Therefore, we have the right to confess our sin and know that we are forgiven.

Our right of prayer is not based on who and what we are, but on who and what Jesus is. Christians have the right to approach God in prayer directly through Christ. Christians have the right to approach God directly. They need no in-between person to intercede for them. We can come to God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus was a royal priest (Hebrews 4:12); His children are also royal priests.

a holy nation

Peter lifts the third title for our position in Christ from Exodus 19:6. Christians are one nation with one King. God governs us by the laws of His

Kingdom. This is a prerogative not natural to us. This prerogative comes to us by spiritual birth.

The church is a nation in the midst of nations. This nationhood is based on our union with Christ, not on geography. A nation is a multiple of people of the same nature. Believers come together as a national entity to function as a kingdom of people.

The word "holy" means set apart. The church is a people set apart unto God. We are a people for God's possession. We are God's special property. We are at His complete disposal and for His personal use. Christians have different standards, different ideals, different motives. They are different from other people. That difference lies in the fact that they dedicate to God's will and service.

Principle

The church is not only made up of individuals but of a collection of people.

Application

The church is a collection of people. We are a new spiritual race. We come together as a collection of people for special purposes. Our national, kingdom privilege is an issue of status. We become in our experience what we are in our status, if we appropriate our privileges.

We obtain holiness by imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. God puts holiness in us by the blood of Christ.

His own special people

The fourth title for our position before God is that we are His "special people." The words "own special" mean to preserve. God's people are special because God preserves them for Himself. "Special" is literally protected. We are a protected people. We are a people of God's own possession. God's act of possessing His own guarantees our security.

"Own special" comes from two words: around and to make. It means to surround something with a circle indicating ownership. Christians are the unique, private, personal ownership of God. We are his unique possession. We are his special possession.

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special

people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Principle

Christians are people for God's own possession.

Application

A boy who collects things such as stones and knives views these things as special treasures laid away. The value of those "special treasures" lies in the fact that he owes them. These everyday things attain new value.

Christians may be ordinary but they attain special value because of the One who bought them. We belong to God. Our value lies in the fact that we belong to God. We are people prized by God.

God has put a circle around us and He did all of the work. The circle is God's grace.

The purpose of our position before God is to praise God. If God does the doing, then God gets the glory.

that you may proclaim

"That" indicates a purpose clause.

"Proclaim" means to announce with focus upon the extent to which the announcement or proclamation extends. It comes from two words: out and proclaim. It is an intense verb meaning to proclaim throughout, to announce, to speak out about, to tell out, proclaim abroad, to publish completely, advertise. God expects a complete proclamation from us. God wants a full telling out of His praises. This is a reference to a spoken message.

God wants us to send a message to the world.

the praises of Him

God wants believer-priests to live out their family characteristics so that it is evident to all that their lives are different.

God's praises are a manifestation of power characterized by excellence. Praises are God's eminent qualities, His excellencies. God wants us

to proclaim God's glorious attributes and noble acts. The word "praises" only occurs four times in the New Testament: Philippians 4:8; 2 Peter 1:3,5; and here. "Praises" are the noble acts of God-virtues.

Principle

The purpose of the believer on earth is to tell forth the praises of God.

Application

The more we know the Lord Jesus the more we can proclaim him.

People read the Christian far more than they read the Bible. They see us, but they only hear about the Lord Jesus. We are either Bibles or liables.

who called you out of darkness

God calls us out of the darkness of a life without Christ. Darkness is the sphere of those who reject Christ as their Savior. God calls us out of the condition of being an unbeliever.

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13).

into His marvelous light

"Into his marvelous light" is the event of becoming a Christian.

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:19-21).

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an

inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18).

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8).

Principle

Becoming a Christian is a transition from darkness to light.

Application

Have you passed from a state of darkness to a state of light? Have you come to trust Christ as your Savior?

1 Peter 2:10

"Who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

Who once were not a people but are now the people of God

There was a point when the Christian was not a part of God's family. It is important occasionally to look back at what we were. There was a time when we were not naturalized or, shall we say, "super-naturalized" into the people of God.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

The previous verse says that we are God's special people, the people of his possession. After we became a Christian, we became someone who belongs to God. The onus is upon him to protect, care and provide for us. He will meet all of our needs and solve all of our problems.

Principle

God wants us to compare our lost estate with our saved estate to appreciate what we have in Christ.

Application

At one point God did not claim us as His own. We were devoid of God's presence in our lives.

Before we received Christ, we were not a people in God's eyes – we did not belong to God. We were simply creatures, created by God. All our thoughts were horizontal. We said prayers but we

did not talk to God. We were religious but we had no relationship with God. We went through form and ceremony. We tried to be good but we could not even meet our own expectations. Then one day we met the Lord Jesus. We had a confrontation with the Son of God. Someone told us about the Savior. There is a difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus.

Now that we are Christians the onus is upon God to make provision for our daily needs.

The dividing line for this verse is the cross. This verse describes the Christian before he entered the plan of God and after he entered the plan of God.

who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy

There was a time when we had not received mercy from God. The phrase "had not obtained mercy" indicates we existed without mercy for a long time.

Mercy is not grace. Grace emphasizes God's provision for us in salvation. Mercy emphasizes God's decision to spare punishment for our sins. He forbears punishment in the light of His grace. Because of Christ, God is free to exercise mercy toward us. "Mercy" means to receive grace. Before we became a Christian, we did not experience grace.

What is God's attitude toward the non-Christian? Since he is spiritually dead, God must deal with him on the basis of justice. The unbeliever has not received the God's justice through the cross, therefore, he must take the punishment for sin himself. God is not free to exercise mercy on one who does not accept the provision for mercy.

God cannot tolerate any sin. God's character must remain the same whether a person is a Christian or not. If a person does not accept God's solution for sin, he must pay for sin himself. Since the Christian has accepted God's solution for sin, God is free to extend mercy to him. God must always act consistently with Himself, or else He would not be God.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (1 Timothy 1:15-16).

Principle

God is free to exercise mercy to us because of the cross.

Application

Do you know that God wants to extend mercy to you? He is free to do it because Christ has taken all the punishment for our sin. He paid for it all on the cross. God is now free to exercise His mercy to you, if you will receive it.

You may not feel you deserve mercy. That is not the issue with God. We can understand God's mercy but we cannot give mercy to ourselves. We violate God by injecting our own thinking about forgiveness into God's plan for salvation. God will extend His mercy to any and all who accept His son's payment for sin on the cross.

This is also the case with the Christian. Many Christians cannot forgive themselves for what they have done. God has forgiven them and does not hold it against them anymore. God is faithful to give mercy:

Lamentations 3:22-23 "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

1 Peter 2:11

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

With this verse we come to an entirely new section of 1 Peter. Up to this point Peter has set forth the believer's privileges in view of his sufferings. The believer has status; he has position.

He now asks his readers to respond to their prerogatives. Because Christians have a new identity in Christ, they should live out that identity.

Chapter 2:11-12 is an introduction to this new section.

Beloved

Christians are "beloved." They have respect from God and Peter. Exhortation to live the Christian life is based on love. Peter exhorts those loved by God to live as aliens and strangers in this world. Their true home is heaven.

"Beloved" is a pet term for Christians. Christians are well loved. This term identifies a Christian. The Bible makes a clear-cut distinction between Christians and non-Christians, sheep and goats, saved and the lost.

People are not Christians because they have admirable feelings toward respectable things. That has nothing to do with becoming a Christian. Until a person comes to the cross of Christ, he is an alien from heaven. If you reject the cross, there is no place in heaven for you.

"Beloved" is also distinctive of God's love. This term occurs 62 times in the New Testament. God draws us close to His heart with a love that calls for a corresponding love. This is a term of endearment. The Asia Minor Christians will not accept the challenge unless they are sure that the one challenging them loves them.

"Beloved" is a special term for the Christian, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Principle

God loves us with the same infinite love he has for his Son.

Application

There is nothing we can do to change God's love for us. God accepts us in the beloved One. God loves the Son with an infinite amount of love. We entered into union with Christ at our salvation. Therefore, God loves us with the same infinite love with which he loves Jesus Christ.

No matter how unlovely we may be, God loves us with unconditional love. We are objects of God's love. We can do nothing to change that love. His love toward us does not depend on who we are

or what we do. God's love depends entirely upon His character. It depends entirely on who He is. We cannot get away from God's love. We can never say "no one loves me."

Because of God's love, you do not care whether you lose profit in stock. Because of God's love you do not worry about a business failure. It makes no difference whether your boyfriend leaves you. You stand independent in God's love. We cannot change the love of God because of our failures or because some catastrophe comes our way. God provided from billions of years ago, everything we might need. We need to relax in that love.

I beg you

"Beg" means to exhort or urge. This is a plea to pilgrims to live the Christian life based on prerogatives of vv. 9-10. Peter is pleading (present tense) to the Asia Minor Christians and also to us.

Christians are citizens of heaven, therefore, they are sojourners and pilgrims (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:13). Their standards are different from this world.

"Urge" is the language of grace. "You shall..." is the language of law.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

"Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me" (Romans 15:30).

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

"Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - who in presence am lowly among

you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1).

The language of grace is "I beseech, urge, plead." You do not have to do this. You can go to heaven without this. The pity is that Christians do go to heaven without doing this.

Principle

God's appeal is for us to live the Christian life on the basis of His provision.

Application

If we try to live the Christian life by operation bootstraps, we will fail. All of God's appeals are made on his provisions. How well do you know God's provisions for you?

If we never live the Christian life to its fullest, we may never draw on God's provisions of grace for our lives.

as sojourners and pilgrims

Peter challenges Christians of Asia Minor to live the Christian life. He makes his appeal on how we view ourselves in this world. He wants us to view ourselves as "sojourners and pilgrims." This world is not our home. We are just passing through. Our home is heaven.

"Sojourners" - those who settle alongside non-Christians. This word comes from two words: alongside and house. It means to have one's home alongside of. This is a person who lives in a foreign country where he has no citizenship rights. His home is somewhere else. He is an alien.

The word "pilgrims" comes from three words: alongside, upon and pagan. This is someone who lives alongside pagans. He stays temporarily in a place that is not home. He is different from a pagan. Christians hold different values than those around them. Christians live on earth temporarily.

Christians are not citizens of earth. We are citizens of heaven. We simply sojourn on earth. We are pilgrims passing through a foreign country.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

Because we are citizens of heaven, we should live like citizens of heaven. God wants us to act in this world like we would act while visiting a foreign country. Whenever I travel in foreign countries, I carry my passport. My passport gives basic information about me: "Name: Grant C. Richison. Birthplace: Detroit Michigan. Birth date: ??!" I go to foreign countries on a mission - to advance the cause of Christ. God has placed you where you are to represent your home - heaven.

Before we became Christians we were strangers to Christ (Ephesians 2:19). We were strangers to God and to heaven. We had little inclination toward God. We didn't care about God. Now that we have become Christians we are strangers down here (Psalms 119:19). We have friends and relatives over there. Each year we have more friends over there. Some of us have more friends over there than we have here.

Note the order - strangers and pilgrims. Invariably we quote these words backwards - pilgrims and strangers. However, we cannot be a pilgrim until we take our place as a stranger down here. Every day we are one day closer to home.

Principle

Christian fit into a different scheme and hold different values than the world.

Application

We will not be here forever. We are not earth-bound. Why hold to this life so tightly? One day we must go. We can't take it with us. We should hold things of this life loosely. Success and money will not make a big impression in heaven.

Are you homesick for heaven? Christians do not fit into the scheme of things down here. The world tries to force us into its mold. They do not like to be reminded that there are higher standards. We reject their values. We reject their philosophy of life. We march to a different drum beat than the non-Christian. We are going in a different direction. This is not our permanent

residence. We are just passing through. We are heaven-born and heaven-bound.

God leaves us on earth to be light and salt. We are here to influence others for Christ. We do not want to go to heaven alone. We want to take others with us: father, mother, brother, sister, friends. The Lord might just as well take us to heaven now if we are not going to take others with us.

abstain from fleshly lusts

"Abstain" means to hold yourself back from. The phrase "abstain from fleshly lusts" means to hold the self back constantly from fleshly lusts. Anything that is incompatible with our fellowship with God is a fleshly lust: lust for power, lust for personal approbation, materialism lust or lascivious lust.

A lust is simply a craving. Some desires are legitimate. We have a God-given desire for food, drink and sex. "Fleshly lusts" are carnal appetites. This is the human nature apart from God. It is our fallen nature. This is not only gross lust but lust of any kind.

These lusts attack the soul (Galatians 5:19-21). This involves more than sexual sins but also attitude sins such as jealousy, envy, hatred, resentment. God wants us to avoid fleshly lusts (Acts 15:20,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:22; 1 Timothy 4:3).

Lusts originate from the Devil. They are the desires of the Devil.

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14).

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Ephesians 2:1).

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men , 12teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:1).

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

Principle

God wants us to hold ourselves back from fleshly lusts.

Application

The Savior wants to manage our affairs. Yet we insist on doing it. We attempt to run our own life. "I know how to run my family. I don't need any help from God."

Fleshly lusts will consume us. We will become a slave to them because they will wage war against us.

God does not want us ruled by our lust patterns. The lust pattern is seeking to neutralize our lives. God's Word gives us an appreciation for God.

which war

The word "which" connotes quality - of the kind which; which are of such a nature as to. These lusts carry the quality of aggression. They war against the soul. They take offence in the war of our soul. Lusts are not latent but dynamically active.

Principle

Lusts are aggressive and take the initiative against our soul.

Application

If lust wars against our soul, our soul should war against it. Sin weakens and debilitates the soul by assaulting its faculties. Sin wages war against the Christian's true values.

Those serving in the army of the Lord Jesus must take note that the Devil places fleshly lusts in our lives to defeat us on the battlefield of daily Christian living. These lusts are part of the strategy of the military campaign of the Devil to destroy the believer. They perform the office of a soldier. They have the discipline to destroy us.

If it means a subtle withdrawal to ultimately defeat us, the Devil will strategically withdraw lust to come back at a more vulnerable time. He will withdraw lusts and we think the battle is over. "We sure got the victory there," we say. This leaves us vulnerable to greater assault and greater defeat.

We are up against a mighty strategist. The lusts of Satan are at his command. His tactics are beyond human resources to combat. We must leave the strategy to General Jesus. We are not on familiar territory. We're on the Devil's territory. The Devil knows the mountains, valleys and plains of the territory on which we are fighting. He has the advantage, only if we meet him on his own terms.

which war

The word "war" means to do military service, serve in the army, to serve in war, to undertake a military campaign. The word "war" carries the idea of active military service.

The New Testament uses image of war for the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Corinthians 10:2ff; Philippians 2:25; Philemon 2). Paul does not merely walk the Christian life but he engages in spiritual war.

The Christian life is a good war controlled by faith.

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of

whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:18-20).

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

James 4:1 also has the destructive aspect of war in view. This time in relation to inner disagreement that leads to wars and fights. Inner tension produces outer conflict.

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:1-2).

Principle

Christians are in a spiritual war.

Application

This world is not a friend of grace to help us on to God. Most of us are totally unprepared and unequipped to operate as strong Christians in a hostile environment.

The Christian has an external, internal and an infernal foe. The external foe is the world. The internal foe is the flesh. The infernal foe is the Devil. These foes are not visible as we find in military campaigns today.

This is a battle to which there is no armistice. The only way to fight the Devil is to first submit to God and then resist him. James 4:7 says, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

against the soul

Fleshly lusts will try to capture our soul; they war "against the soul." This leads to the problem of kinks in our soul. When lust patterns control our life, we have a soul-kink. We do not build up these kinks overnight. This soul-kink produces self-pity and pride, envy, jealousy, hatred, implacability, vindictiveness, hostility, fear, worry and anxiety. Spiritual hoopla will not overcome them.

We must come to the place of Paul, when he said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). It is not through mental discipline or any other human technique. It is the power of God that overcomes soul-kinks. We can win no spiritual battle with human ability. As Paul goes on to say, "So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin." We must accept God's technique and his provisions to overcome soul-kinks.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:12-20).

Principle

War against the soul is a hot war, an all out frontal attack.

Application

We have the idea that we can do anything we please. We are our own boss and we run our lives. If we have this attitude, we are headed for defeat in spiritual war.

God wants to equip us with armor to fight the spiritual war but we must first submit to his right to be the General in our army. That means He has

the right to give me direction. He will dictate the terms under which I fight for Him in a hostile world. That means unconditional surrender to General Jesus. That means we take all our orders from Him.

We must check in with the General before we take a single maneuver. The wonderful thing about General Jesus is that he is omniscient. He can see over hills and around corners. He knows all the problems we might face. We can trust him with our future.

We see this principle in Plutarch's *Moralia*. Question 39 asks why are the soldiers simply sitting in the camp without fighting the enemy. Plutarch records the answer: "It is more important to obey a military command than it is to slay an individual soldier...he who asks leave to perform the offices of a soldier [our word for 'war'] renders himself accountable to the regulations of his general." It is more important that we follow the commands of General Jesus to execute our own strategy.

1 Peter 2:12

"Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Christians abstain from sinful lusts for two reasons:

1. for their own spiritual well-being
2. for an effective testimony before non-Christians.

Now we come to the second reason for abstaining from sinful lusts.

Having your conduct

"Conduct" focuses on our daily behavior. It means to behave or live as a manner of life (Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 1:18; 3:16). Literally, it comes from two words: back and to turn. Therefore it conveys the idea of to turn back, return, to move about in a place. It means to move back to a point or area from which one has previously departed. God views our Christian life as a daily sojourn of behavior. We can translate it as "behave."

Of the 13 times the New Testament uses this word, 1 Peter uses it six times (cf. 1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1, 16).

Principle

Evangelism requires the life as well as the lip.

Application

This word conduct means manner of life. God is concerned about our conduct as much as our talk.

We have often heard the phrase "What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." Another saying is "I'd rather see a sermon any day than hear one." These truths are specially crucial in our conduct in the home. If we live with non-Christians, it is not profitable to preach to them day in and out. We must preach to them with our life, not our mouth.

We will not have to say much about the gospel in the family until the time comes when they are open to the gospel. They will watch and observe us, sometimes for 25 years. However long it takes, Christians must watch their conduct.

The farther removed we are from people the more we have to use the lip. The closer we are to people, the more we employ, life-style evangelism.

honorable among the Gentiles

The word "honorable" means lovely, good to look upon. Christians must make their lives so beautiful to look upon that the slanderers of their enemies may be undeniably demonstrated as false.

"Gentiles" is a synonym for non-Christians. It is the word for heathen, nations, pagans (1 Thessalonians 2:16; 4:5).

Principle

The best argument for Christianity is genuine Christian living.

Application

Whether we like it or not, every Christian is an advertisement for Christianity. By our lives we either commend Christ to others or we make people censure Him or think less of Him.

Since the word "honorable" means "beautiful," we adorn our testimony by our behavior. It is the outer life that strikes the eye. Is your Christian life winsome? Is your life attractive? God wants us to

live a life appropriate to our profession. Our life should match the gospel.

We often hear the phrase, "What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." Another phrase is, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear a sermon any day." This is especially true in the home. Preaching to relatives day in and out will not win them. Living the life before them will make a much greater impact. They watch and study us.

The closer we live to people the less we need to say. There are certain things we avoid even though they may not be sinful. They may be course, off-color, shady, and beneath the dignity of the child of God.

The Christian is an ad for God. God not only wants us to live a life of integrity but He wants us to appear to live that life as well. We can repel others from Christ by indiscretion. One bad testimony can do more damage that a dozen positive ones.

that when they speak against you as evildoers

"That" - in what thing. The very thing in which the world speaks evil of the Christian.

"As evildoers" - they seek to discredit the testimony of Christians. When God comes to scrutinize our conduct will give rise to the glory of God. He will make known the real truth about our lives.

"Evildoers" means to speak down. They love to run down the reputation of Christians. They are in the business of adversely criticizing Christians. The testimony of Christians makes them feel guilty. This happened in Christ's life as well.

This is unjust slander. Christians of the first century were accused of disloyalty to the government because of their loyalty to King Jesus. The Roman government viewed their testimonies with great suspicion.

Principle

Non-Christians are inveterate enemies of Christians with a positive testimony.

Application

Slander is an occupational hazard of the child of God. If our lives are different because we have come to Christ, we will stand out as a speckled bird.

Non-Christians love to downgrade Christians. They don't want anyone to put confidence in you. They don't want someone with a testimony to get ahead and hold credibility before others. They will say anything to slur or belittle you. They love to degrade you in the opinion of others who make take notice of your life. This is especially true in the media.

Slander will try your soul. The natural reaction is to fight back and vindicate yourself. You want to stick up for your rights. You will lose your testimony and blow your platform to speak to others if you do. Your testimony is more important than justifying yourselves. You do not have to get your own way all of the time. This may cost you something, buy your testimony is worth it.

they may, by your good works which they observe

A godly life will ultimately stop their slander and even cause them to glorify God.

The word "good" occurs twice in this verse. The first time it is translated by the word "honorable" and this time by the word "good." A good life produces good deeds.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men" (Titus 3:8).

"Observe" means to view carefully as a personal witness. Non-Christians will carefully watch your testimony.

Principle

What the Christian does proclaims the reality of what he believes.

Application

God does not want us to become religious recluses, or hermits. God's view is that we insulate ourselves from sin not isolate ourselves from those who sin. God does not want us to become monks and retreat into monasteries shut off from the world.

Christians should expect to be viewed as speckled birds or queer ducks by those who do not know Christ. Because we do not participate in their wild parties or enter into their life-styles, they view us as odd.

Christians should attend their testimonies with godly lives. This verse is an appeal to match our witness with our lives. We cannot evangelize others if our behavior is not consistent with our professions. God wants us to witness with our lives to win the lost.

We cannot have influence on the world by joining their values. We influence them as a pilgrim. We cannot root ourselves in their values if we are going to win them to another viewpoint. Assimilation into the world not only hurts the Christian but it minimizes our impact on the world.

On the other hand, we must not isolate ourselves from the world. Our highest calling is to win those who do not know Christ to Himself.

glorify God in the day of visitation

"Visitation" is a demonstration of God's power (Genesis 50:24f; Exodus 3:16; Job 10:12; 29:4). This is the coming of divine power either to benefit or for judgment.

"Visitation" is the day of inspection, a day of reckoning for non-Christians. This is not the visit of judgment but the visit of the person of God in salvation.

Non-Christians will sit-up and take notice of your life if it is consistent. And our concern is about the inner life, it will manifest itself in our outer life.

Principle

God visits the life of every non-Christian to bring them to Christ.

Application

The "day of visitation" may simply be the pay off by God. It is the day that comes in the life of every person. It may be a tragedy, a frightful accident. It may be surgery, a bitter disappointment, a terrible financial loss.

God uses these experiences to bring people to Christ. Your testimony will come back to them. They will remember what the reality of your life is like. It all comes back to them on the day of visitation of God's sovereign act upon their lives.

Experiences in life can bring us up short. That is the time when our heart is tender. That is when we can see the love of God more clearly. Those who were lost may now turn to Christ. They will then see the reality of your life. Their mouths are shut in silence. All they can do is glorify God because of your testimony.

1 Peter 2:13

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme."

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man

The "ordinance of man" is human government. God wants us to obey the national entity over which He placed us (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; I Timothy 2:2; Titus 3:1-2). These are not ordinances of God but of men. This may refer to any social institution of man.

The word "submit" means to arrange yourself under. God wants us to arrange ourselves under civil government and not be the cause of civil unrest. A citizen who submits to the government does not diminish personhood; it enhances good government.

The word "submit" is a command. It is also a military word and means to arrange yourself under higher ranking authority. The soldier is to fall in rank. God wants us to fall in rank with our government. You say, "Even if the government is godless?" Yes, Nero was the king at this time. Slavery was at its peak in Roman history.

The word "submit" does not imply that Christians are to live without backbones. God does not want Christians to operate with fragile passivity. That will undermine our spiritual foundations.

The Christian's testimony will cause him enough suffering, why should the Christian add to his suffering by disobeying the government? It is interesting that Peter uses this argument in a book that argues the reasons for Christian suffering. And cause of Christian suffering is persecution from the government.

Principle

God placed human government as an authority in our lives.

Application

Is anarchy ever justified? Were the Colonial forebears in the United States justified in casting off the authority of England? Was it right for the Christian to be involved in the Boston Tea Party? Does a Christian have the right not to pay taxes?

The one exception to obedience to government is when the government violates the higher authority of God (Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29). Then we should not obey the government but God. Even then we still submit to a higher law, a higher authority. It is a matter of priority of principle. Do we live under God's authority or ours? It is a matter of choice.

The phrase "for the Lord's sake" means because of the Lord's sake. The motivation to obey the government is our love for the Lord. We submit ourselves to the social and political institutions to honor the Lord.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matthew 5:11).

"For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

"I write to you, little children Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

"Because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles" (3 John 7).

"For my name's sake, for Christ's sake, His name's sake." That is reason the Christian does what He does.

Principle

The controlling incentive for obedience to government is to honor the Lord.

Application

We may not agree with the present government or even the laws of our nation at a given time. But

we obey the laws of the government for the Lord Jesus.

whether to the king as supreme

The king was supreme in Peter's day. If he wanted to put someone to death, he could do it without recourse. He had the power over life and death. No one questioned him. No one took a vote on it.

Nero was the king at this time. He governed viciously and was autocratic. His government placed hundreds of thousands of people in slavery. It was a government of corruption, drunkenness, immorality and violence. There was no democracy, no voting.

The Bible does not espouse any special form of government. In fact, the king was the highest authority in the Roman Empire. It wasn't a democracy.

Principle

God wants us to recognize the importance of the social order, that is, the divine institution of government.

Application

God does not want us to submit to a person but to a principle the principle of the national entity (Romans 13:1-7).

Every Christian has a responsibility to his nation. It is easy for North Americans to live under their government. If your reading this in China or North Korea, it's a different story. Being a Christian in those countries costs you more.

However, bad government is better than no government. If we go without government, we have anarchy. We take the law into our own hands. God does not want lynch mobs running around. A child of God should have nothing to do with inciting riots.

Yet the Bible says that we are to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21).

The believer's relationship to government is to be the best citizen possible.

1 Peter 2:14

Or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good."

Or to governors

The Roman governor was subordinate to the Emperor. Caesar appointed the provincial governors who's job was to curb those who were unprincipled and lawless. The Caesar appointed the governors for the good of the province. They maintained law.

In Palestine, the governor was Pontius Pilate. He was sent from Rome to have jurisdiction over occupied Palestine. Pontius Pilate gave permission for Jesus' execution.

as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers

If the government does not punish evil doers, they will become more and more brazen. God has never revoked capital punishment since it was instituted in

Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man."

A man who deliberately murders someone else in the first degree (premeditated) comes under God's principle of capital punishment. God also invoked capital punishment for adultery, sex perversion and parental attack in the Old Testament. Under Israel's law it was a tooth for tooth, an eye for eye. This approach seems harsh in today's society. We live in a generation without adequate standards.

When government ceases to punish evildoers, the government becomes part of the problem. Poor government will result. Then, the government shirks its responsibility to punish those who break the law.

and for the praise of those who do good

Another role for government is to affirm those who do good. One who does "good" is one who benefits others.

Principle

A country without adequate law will become a country of anarchy.

Application

Any kind of government is better than anarchy. Even corrupt police forces will attempt to apprehend criminals.

1 Peter 2:15

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men --“

For this is the will of God

Non-Christians slandered Christians for their lack of allegiance to the Roman government. Peter now states God's will for handling these false accusations.

The will of God is the most compelling reason for doing anything. Obedience to the government is part of the will of God for the child of God.

that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men --

Critics seek to impugn the motives of Christians. However, outstanding behaviour shuts the mouth of the critics.

"Put to silence" means muzzle. Integrity muzzles the mouths of the critics. They love to bite with criticism but integrity will silence them every time.

"Foolish men" here are non-Christians. Their "ignorance" was verbal abuse for their faith, not torture or death. Christians still enjoyed the protection of the judicial system of Rome at this time.

Principle

A good testimony shuts the mouths of our critics.

Application

Some critics of Christians say that we are of no earthly good. They know what we are against but they do not know the things we affirm.

God wants us to live out Christian principles despite what foolish people may think. It is amazing how many Christians are intimidated by what people say about them. They are in slavery to criticism.

We cannot accept the privileges of the state without accepting the responsibilities of living in the state. Citizenship is the bond that holds people to the political order. The best answer to our accusers is an upright life as a citizen.

1 Peter 2:16

“As free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.”

As free

Submission to civil law does not cancel our Christian liberty (John 8:32,36; Galatians 5:1,18). The Christian should obey civil law from their freedom, not from fear.

yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice

Some Christians use their Christian liberty for license. The word "cloak" means a covering, a means of hiding. Sometimes we make people think that what we are presenting is something other than what it really is. We do not then know the true nature of the idea. This is a means of hiding or covering up the true nature. In this case, liberty is a pretext or cloak for sin. God does not want us to use our liberty as a cover for sin.

We can twist any doctrine into some excuse for evil. There is no doctrine easier to distort than the doctrine of Christian liberty (Galatians 5:13; 2 Peter 2:19; Jude 4).

but as bondservants of God

The word "bondservant" means slave. Note the contrast to the first statement -- "As free." True freedom, ironically, in Christianity comes when Christians live as slaves of God! The context is referring to political freedom. The Christian citizen is free because he is the slave of God. Submission to civil government is an act of a free person who understands the purpose of civil government.

Note pagan thinkers about this issue:

Seneca: "No one is free who is a slave to his body."

Cicero: "We are the servants of the law that we may be able to be free."

Plutarch: "Every bad man is a slave."

Obedience to God's principles liberates us from slavery to self. God's Word conditions Christian freedom by Christian responsibility. We are free because we are the slave of God. True Christian freedom is not a freedom to do anything we want, rather what we ought. As Christians, we are not free to pursue our base passions.

Principle

Slavery to God is the most complete human freedom.

Application

Freedom without obligation is anarchy. Freedom is the right to choose between alternatives. The reason we dread liberty is because it means responsibility. The greatest liberty for the Christian is fellowship with God and living under His standards. He designed His standards for the welfare of the believer.

God liberates the Christian from sin and Satan (John 8:36). This does not liberate us from civil duty or obedience to the Word of God. It is easy to rationalize our liberty in Christ and say it frees us from responsibility to the state. Christian liberty, however is not license.

1 Peter 2:17

“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

Peter concludes this section on the Christian and government with a four-fold summary. Here is the biblical scale of values for the

Christian's relation to government. Now that we are Christians, our thinking changes not only about the person but the whole, human race.

Honor all people.

First, Christians are to value all people (Romans 12:10; 13:7). God created each person in His own image. Even the most evil person has some good qualities such as wit or courage.

There were over 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire at this time. The Romans viewed them as things, chattel. They were not people with rights. Yet these slaves were created in God's image and have certain rights in His eyes.

Principle

God's standard is that we value all people regardless of who they are.

Application

God wants us to honor the entire circle of any relationship we may have. He wants us to respect and give dignity of every person.

Before we became Christians, we had our own do-it-yourself-kit about what is valuable. We had our standards and they were very low. Once we became Christians our standards changed. Our attitude is different. Our outlook is different. We

are a new creation and we no longer think as we once thought (Romans 12:1,2).

What value do you put on people? A child of God should see every person as a soul for whom Christ died. They may be red, yellow, black or white. They may be dirty or clean. Yet Christ died for every person everywhere in the world.

We read reports of so many people killed in the Oklahoma bombing. Those numbers roll off us like water. Our estimation of human life has been cheapened. Each person killed had a family. Each one had a funeral and a casket. We become hardened to these reports and hearing them means little to us. We have become so callused that the loss of life becomes common place. When those statistics become our spouse or child, then they mean something to us.

Have you every noticed that everyone who undergoes surgery has the “best” surgeon in the hospital? Who told them that? The nurse. Do you think that she would say “He is not much of a surgeon but I am sure he will do his best!!”? You would say, “Practice on someone else.” When he comes to practice on your spouse you want him to be perfect. Human life becomes valuable if we love the person. God, however, wants us to honor all men.

God loved the world (John 3:16). Christ died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14,15; Hebrews 2:9). If God puts this value on all human beings, should not the Christian also put the proper value on every human being on earth? Do you have the right estimation of the value of the worth of a human being? Do you pay your taxes? Is your tax report accurate? If not, it is a "cloak for vice." The word "vice" in the Greek is evil.

Love the brotherhood.

The second command of this verse challenges Christians to love the family of God. Christians belong to a fraternity of the redeemed. Christians are a corporate community sharing a common life in Christ together.

This is not the brotherhood of union members or the brotherhood of airline pilots. This is the brotherhood of the born again, male and female, black, white, yellow and brown. Whatever their dialect or the color of their skin, they are family. They have been washed in the blood of Christ. They share a special love for their fellow Christians (Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 13:1).

The biblical word for love here does not mean to gush over people. It is a love free from attitude sins. It means you harbor no bitterness toward others. You are free from vindictiveness or implacability. You are not jealous of others. You can relax around them. Still while you may dislike their personality or dress and you may have no rapport with them, you have a love that can love without reciprocation. This love loves from the capacity of soul.

This is how we can love "all" believers. Our love comes from the filling of the Spirit.

Principle

Outsiders we respect; insiders we love.

Application

To love your mother or father, wife, husband or children does not take much effort. To love all of God's people including the ornery ones who do not cooperate, the ones who are not lovable and the ones who rub you the wrong way is a different story. Everyone in the brotherhood is not lovable. Some of them do not want to be loved. Whether they respond to our love is their business.

As far as we are concerned, we cannot permit anything to enter our lives that will sour our love for them. We must love them even though they are not lovable. God calls upon them to love us also. It is just as hard for them to love us as it is for us to love them. God calls upon us to exercise genuine, God-donated love (Romans 5:5).

Often, however, we care solely about our little crowd. We couldn't care less about the brotherhood in general. We are not interested in the brotherhood. Some people say that they love the Lord but they do not love the church. They do not love the saints. They feel no need to fellowship with the saints (Hebrews 10:25). They feel they can get along without the encouragement of other saints. They can get along without the church. If all Christians were like that what would happen to the church?

We must respect all people but we must love fellow Christians. "Blood is thicker than water." Relatives are closer than friends. God links Christians together by something thicker than human blood -- the blood of Christ.

Because I love my fellow believers, there are certain restraints that I put upon myself (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:11,12; Ephesians 2:12).

Fear God.

The third command of this verse is that Christians are to allow the fear of God to come upon them. The Greek indicates that we cannot make God's fear come upon us, we allow God to impact us.

"Fear" here is not the fear of terror but the fear of awe.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). "Beginning" means the principal part -- it is the very foundation of wisdom. When we give God the principal place in our lives, all other things will take their proper place.

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, And the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the Lord And who meditate on His name" (Malachi 3:16).

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). That is God.

To fear God is to walk in such a way as to have His smile upon you, to have Him look down on you and be proud of you.

"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Principle

Living under the awe of God will produce holiness.

Application

To fear God means to live in such a way that you would be afraid to insult God with your life. To fear God is to demonstrate by your life an awesome respect for the integrity and the holiness of God. A person who fears God has too much respect for Him to live a shabby life. That is the way the bridegroom feels about his bride. He loves her so much and has so much respect for

her that he would not do anything that would offend her or hurt her or make her cry.

The child of God does not want to grieve the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we insult Him by the things that we do. Our misconduct is an affront to God who cannot tolerate sin to the slightest degree.

Honor the king

The fourth and last summary of the believer's relationship to government is to honor the king.

"Honor" is the same word as at the beginning of the verse. God wants us to respect those who represent government to us.

Nero was king at the writing of 1 Peter. He became emperor in AD 54. He slaughtered more Christians than any other Caesar. On a human level they could not honor him. He was a beast, a murderer. It is not the person but the office of the king that we are to honor (Romans 13:7).

Principle

If anyone has a reason to be a good citizen, it is the Christian.

Application

What can people say against us if we honor these four injunctions? If anyone should be a patriot and a good citizen, it should be the Christian. We have more reason.

Wherever we live on the face of the Earth this verse reads the same way. It does not matter what form of government we live under; it reads the same way. This verse reads very hard if you live in Red China. We must honor the head of state no matter what he may do on occasion. The issue is his office, not his person.

How would you like to live in a country with no laws, or police force or fire department? God's people should be sold on government. We need government to function properly as a society.

1 Peter 2:18

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh."

Servants

"Servants" here is not the normal word for "slaves." This word means a house slave. This person serves in a menial sense, as a house

servant. These servants were domestic servants who lived with their masters and served in the house itself. Even though they were domestic servants, many of them were doctors, teachers, musicians, actors and stewards over great estates.

This role was relevant to a large number of Peter's readers. Both servants and slaves made up a significant number of the early church members. During the writing of 1 Peter there were about 60 million slaves. Romans looked upon a slave as a "thing," not a person. However, the lot of these slaves was not always wretched. Many of them were loved and treated as members of the family. Still, they remained "things" with nothing in the world to call their own, including themselves. The Romans thought that because they were the master of the world, they shouldn't have to work; work was for slaves.

Into this situation Christianity came with its message that every person is precious in the sight of God. This was indeed good news. Within the church the social barrier was broken between slaves and citizens of the Roman Empire. Callistus, one of the earliest bishops of Rome, was a slave. In the church, it was quite possible for a slave to be the chairman of the board and his master a member of the congregation. This was a revolutionary idea.

This gave rise to the danger that the slave might take advantage of his master. He might shirk his work and do as he liked.

Principle

God expects us to do our job not primarily for our employer but for God himself.

Application

The problem of people taking advantage of their employers because they are Christians is still present with us. There are still people who trade on the goodwill of their bosses. Some think that because their bosses are Christians, they have the right to loaf on the job.

God expects Christians to be the best workers they can possibly be. Our Christianity should make us more conscientious than others. God wants us to recognize the authority of our employer. After all, no one forced us to take the job. We took it of our own free will.

be submissive to your masters

The word "submissive" means to be obedient to constituted authority. Industry has authority like any other facet of life.

Some of these servants no doubt thought that their conversion would free them from subjugation. They might have thought that they should be free from their cruel masters.

"Submissive" means to do their job honestly and devotedly. Peter asks them to submit to austerity and inconvenience. with all fear

The phrase "with all fear" does not mean in dread of punishment from our employers. God's desire is that these servants submit with a sense of "all respect" for their masters. God wants us to have respect for the system of authority we call employer/employee relations.

Principle

God wants us to respect the constituted authority of our employment.

Application

All of us have had disagreeable bosses. No doubt all of us wanted to buck the tiger at times. There are many ways of doing this. We can sit around and do a sloppy job. We can go to the human resource department and complain. The Word of God advocates none of these.

As a born again believer, our job is full-time Christian service. If we disagree with management, God wants us to do it "with all fear." To respect authority does not mean that we must respect the person. It does mean that we respect the authority that they represent.

Like everything else in life, business runs on authority. Without authority, business would collapse. This is true of the military. This is true of family life. When there are two people or more, there must be some organization. Who has respect for institutions and leaders in institutions today? We are on a toboggan slide toward anarchy. Every person does what his right in his own eyes.

not only to the good and gentle

Many of the masters of the first century were "good and gentle."

The word "gentle" means seemly and, fitting; hence, equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law. There were masters who were equitable and fair. Some were

considerate of their servants. They were gracious and forbearing.

"Gentle" here does not mean gentle in our 20th century sense of the word. If a manager or supervisor were gentle today the herd would trample him to death. The idea in this verse is closer to "fair" or "reasonable."

All born again bosses should be both good and fair. Anyone who is in charge of any number of people always finds employees he likes and some he dislikes. However, personal feelings should have nothing to do with how we treat others. Often the nice people do the worst job and the sorriest do the best job. The responsibility of the employer is to treat employees fairly regardless of how we feel about them. God wants us to treat all people the same.

but also to the harsh

The word "harsh" means bent, curved, not straight. We get our medical term "scoliosis" (curvature of the spine) from this word. Ancient Greek used this word for rivers and roads that wound and twisted through the terrain. Eventually it came to mean perverse as well.

The harsh masters referred to in this verse were unscrupulous and dishonest. They were unfair in their treatment of those under them. No doubt they were crooked. Yet, Peter asks servants to submit themselves to their perverse masters! He challenges the house servants to a new plane of commitment.

All of us face authority all the time. Regardless of what kind of boss we might have, we ought to do our job as unto the Lord. It makes no difference if our boss is unkind or grumpy, we are to do our work as unto the Lord. What kind of personality he has is not the issue. The issue is we are in full-time Christian service.

Having an unfair boss does not give us the right to loaf on the job. It does not give us an excuse for going behind his back and complaining. We represent the Lord Jesus at our job. We might lead that grumpy, surly boss to Christ one day. We will not do it by complaining but by doing our job as unto the Lord.

The fact that an employer sins does not justify the employee sinning. It is normal to "get back at" an unfair employer by whatever means possible -- careless work, loafing, pilfering. This attitude is so widespread today that even when the employer is a good employer, employees tend to get away

with everything they can, or by doing as little as possible, or by resorting to petty thievery.

The boss may not always be right but he is always the boss. He may try to give the impression that he is omniscient but he does not know it! His wife knows it. Everyone else knows it but he does not know it. The Christian nevertheless gives him an honest day's work for an honest day's wage.

Principle

Our place of employment is full-time Christian service.

Application

God expects us to do our job not primarily for our employer but for God himself. What is your attitude toward your job? What is your state of mind toward your boss? Perhaps you say, "Well, my boss is about the most unreasonable, unrelenting, implacable and merciless man you have ever seen. He makes demands that are not just. It is impossible to please him. No matter how much I extend myself he still isn't pleased."

Still, the believer is to give his employer a full day's work. It matters not whether the boss is fair or whether he has a miserable personality.

1 Peter 2:19

"For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully."

For this is commendable

The word "commendable" is the Greek word for grace. God gives grace in suffering that He might bless us in the suffering. We could translate "commendable" as "favor."

Principle

We find favor with God when we endure suffering with God's grace.

Application

We find favor with God when we endure suffering graciously. This is life on a higher plane than those without Christ experience. Giving grace delights the heart of God.

if because of conscience toward God

"If" means this statement is assumed to be true. This is our lot in life. If we suffer for the Lord

Jesus, our love for him must endure grief. It is grace to suffer wrongfully for your convictions. The boss does not promote you simply because you are a Christian. "You are too religious. What will our customers say?"

We have two choices: to resent our suffering or to suffer for the glory of God.

"Because of conscience toward God" means we have God's norms and standards in our lives from the Word of God. If we recognize God's blessing, we will have inner stability in suffering. The more we know of the Word of God, the more norms we have for facing life. If we know a lot of biblical principles about a lot of subjects, we will be able to apply those principles to life.

The word "conscience" comes from two words know and with. Once we know something to be true from the Word of God it sets up a base of knowledge in our mind. We know that the Word works with our experience. This base of knowledge becomes our standard for living life. Our conscience makes us aware of information about something. "I am aware of nothing against myself" (1 Corinthians 4:4).

Unbelievers set up their norms of right and wrong strictly from the conscience. The conscience is their sole basis for evaluating values, and it usually develops from their background. That is, what they learn from their parents, childhood experiences and experiences as an adult. Some of it comes from training such as how to be a gentleman. We obtain some of our conscience from culture. We live out our responsibilities of life based on these norms.

We have all heard of the "guilt complex," the guilty conscience. Our conscience is a complex of many norms and standards. Since they are firmly inculcated into our conscience, when we violate one of its standards this sets up vibrations that go into the emotions. The guilt complex simply means that we have violated our own norms over a period of time. They may simply be the norms and standards of society but we have accepted them to our view of the world. Non-Christians have inner conflicts because they violate their norms and standards derived from culture.

We develop norms from our culture, too but we have a set of norms that go beyond culture. We are now regenerated, and have new life in Christ. This new life in Christ can now receive the Word of God. God now introduces a whole new set of

standards into our life. Now we have conflict with the old standards from culture.

Before we accepted Christ as our Savior we had certain ideas as to what was right or wrong. Usually this has to do with overt morality. The Bible goes far beyond morality as its way of life. It deals with negative attitudes of anger, jealousy, bitterness and gossip. The Bible changes our views of right and wrong. It changes our evaluation of people.

The Word of God goes beyond simple right and wrong. It moves into the promises, with God. So the Christian's conscience undergoes some very radical changes as we learn principles and apply them to our lives from the Bible. When we do this we come into conformity with God's thinking. This is necessary to become an ambassador for Christ. Since every Christian is in full-time Christian service as per the previous verse, we must have a conscience toward God.

Principle

God does not want us to suffer from simply a sense of duty but from a conviction about God's purpose for us.

Application

The employee who has norms set up by God will suffer because of those norms. Someone says, "Well everyone else is doing it." He replies, "Not me. I cannot honestly do that before God. Fire me. So penalize me. My conscience will not bend that far. I can't stretch my conscience like a rubber band like everyone else."

You may be passed over for a promotion but you take your stand. This is grace. You know that you were in line for that job but someone else got it. Someone else less qualified was promoted. You refused to lower your standards. You stood firm and were true to the Lord.

However, if we suffer because we are peculiar or eccentric that is a different matter. In that case we simply suffer because we are an oddball. That is our fault. If we suffer because we are disagreeable, don't blame that on the Lord.

one endures grief

"Endures" means to hang in there. Literally, it means to bear under. The principle is that we are able to get under a heavy load and carry it. This is a person who is strong. This means that we are able to handle disaster without breathing hard.

"Grief" means to cause pain, to distress, grieve. This is pain of the mind here. It is anything that causes sorrow. Grief is a state of unhappiness marked by regret – unhappiness, sadness (Luke 22:45; 2 Corinthians 9:7). It means to become so overcome with grief as to despair – grieve to the point of giving up (2 Corinthians 2:7).

Principle

God gives us the ability to carry grief over a long period of time by the norms He gives us.

Application

Where do we get the ability to carry grief? The standards (principles) of the Bible. The Bible sets up standards in our conscience so whenever heartache comes along we have norms to handle them. We know what God is like. We can appropriate His promises. Therefore, we do not fall apart and move into panic palace.

suffering wrongfully

"Suffering" denotes whatever one suffers in any way. It means to undergo difficult experiences.

"Wrongfully" indicates undeserved suffering.

Principle

God gives us the grace to suffer wrongfully.

Application

God designs most suffering for blessing. The one exception is suffering because of sin. When Christians confesses his sin (1 John 1:9) God removes that exception. God then turns the cursing into blessing, even though the suffering may continue (Hebrews 12:6) but its purpose changes. The unbeliever will suffer in eternity, but the believer will not (Revelation 21:4). There is no suffering too great for God to handle.

1 Peter 2:20

“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.”

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?

This verse gives us two ways we may suffer on our job. The first way is to suffer for our own faults.

The word "credit" means reputation, fame or good report. The issue here centers on our reputation. "Beaten" means to strike with the fist, to pummel. Masters often beat house-servants in the Roman Empire. Matthew 26:67 uses this term of Christ when the frenzied mob struck Him (Isaiah 52:14).

"Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, 'Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?'" (Matthew 26:67).

"Faults" is literally sinning. We sin on the job when we are lazy or do our job sloppily. We sin when we spend too much time talking to other employees or talking about the boss behind his back. There is no glory in suffering for such sins as these. If we blow it and the boss demotes us, there is no value to that kind of suffering. That is not suffering for the Lord Jesus, it's suffering for our own mistakes.

"Take it patiently" means to endure or stand it. Many slaves were physically abused. In our day this would not preclude an effort to change our job situation, working conditions or even the job itself. It does rule out sharp retort or getting even. Seething or sulking is not the biblical way of solving the problem.

The point is this: "What good is it if people pummel us for our sinning and take this patiently?" What credit is it to us if our employer disciplines us for doing wrong?

There is no credit to the house-slave if the master beats him for stealing. The credit comes only in undeserved suffering. Deserved suffering is divine discipline. Under grace no believer ever really gets what he deserves even when God disciplines us.

Principle

To be reprimanded for our mistakes or sins is no honor.

Application

If we blow it at work, we have no ground to complain about the consequences that may come. We should not cast blame on our employer. Why should we become surly or refuse to work? We had it coming to us. We asked for it. That is not grace. Our employer has every reason to demote or fire us.

Some Christians have a persecution complex. They look for reasons in their employer's attitude that are not there. Many people think that they are suffering for the Lord Jesus on the job when in reality they suffer because they blew it. If they had been a better worker they would not get into that mess. There is no glory in that kind of suffering.

But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently,

The word "but" is a strong conjunction of contrast between deserved and undeserved suffering. If we take our lumps because of our personal problems that is one thing. This should not disturb us. To take lumps for something that we do not deserve, that is another thing.

The second "if" clause shows us how God wants us to suffer - "when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently." God wants us to patiently endure suffering even when we do good. This is a completely different matter than suffering for our own problems. We can suffer for our own mistakes or we can suffer for doing "good." These are the two options of this verse.

In both "if" clauses the word "patiently" occurs. Patience means endurance. It comes from two words (to stay and under) and carries the idea of staying under the pressure. In this passage, it means to stay under pressure with grace, without squawking, crying or complaining. If we do right and someone wrongs us in the face of it, this is glory to God if we handle it with character. If we endure suffering in the context of the good that we do, this is grace from God.

There are immature Christians who wait around for the roof to fall in. If things are going well in their lives, they constantly look for trouble. This is morbidity. The Christian life is made up of both difficult and blessed times.

Principle

God wants us to develop tenacity of soul (character) at work.

Application

God wants us to make His life manifest in difficult circumstances at our place of employment. God designs all undeserved suffering for blessing. The only opportunity for God to demonstrate his love in suffering is in time. There will be no suffering in eternity.

(Revelation 21:4). Undeserved suffering is a manifestation of God's love and is an occasion to demonstrate His perfect mercy and grace. God has special blessing for those who demonstrate character at work.

A big problem with many Christians is that they cannot take pressure. To do well and to do an honest, reliable job, and receive a hassle, is in their mind totally intolerable. "After all, people can count on me, why should they attack me?" To "take it patiently" means to take it without griping or complaining. However, God expects the Christian to address the issue in a mature way and not just lie down like a whipped dog.

How much abuse can you take? Some of us cannot take much. We have more opportunity to apply this kind of grace at home than anywhere else. If someone blames us for something that we did not do, anger surges quickly into our soul. The blood rushes to our face. Our first reaction is to vindicate ourselves. That is the natural reaction.

God expects us to live a supernatural life. God, the Holy Spirit, indwells in us. The Lord said that we are to love our enemies. It is not enough to love our friends or the people who love us (Matthew 5:43,44,46). Most of us have problems loving our friends, much less our enemies. To love those who do not love us in return is supernatural. A Christian who works for an employer who is considerate and pays well takes no grace. If your boss is disagreeable, unappreciative, that takes grace. That kind of life will impact non-Christians.

What is your boiling point? Does it take very little heat to make you boil over? Are you explosive? Do you get a full head of steam quickly? Do you blow your stack? If you do, you ruin your testimony.

There should be some evidence of spiritual growth the longer we have known the Lord. You do not blow up as quickly as you used to do. Is it now easier for people to get along with you?

this is commendable before God

The word "commendable" is the word grace -- "This is grace." The Christian who utilizes God's provision for both salvation and the Christian life operates under the grace principle.

"Before God" means grace that comes from the immediate presence of God. The Christian who operates under grace will bring delight and praise

from the heart of God. God knows all about us. He thinks about us. He designed us to live under His provisions when we face pressure at work.

Both "if" clauses of this verse modify the phrase "this is grace before God." When we are in fellowship with God, He allows undeserved suffering to come into our lives to show how He provides for us in grace.

If we stay under undeserved suffering with grace, we get "credit" for it in our employer's eyes. This is also grace from the immediate source of God. Only grace can convert cursing into blessing. The plan of God is greater than any suffering or pressure in this life. God will provide grace for any situation.

Principle

God will provide for whatever we face at our job or place of employment.

Application

God has goodwill toward undeserved suffering. It takes the grace of God to endure undeserved blame without complaining. If we receive severe rebuke for something that we did not do from our employer, how do we take it? Do we endure? Anyone can endure reproof when he knows he deserves it. [This does not imply that God does not want us to speak up for ourselves.]

It is something else to endure rebuke and reproof if you do not deserve it. It takes grace to receive undeserved blame without complaining. And it is hard to accept blame for what we did not do. This passage challenges us to take our blessed Lord for an example. People falsely accused and harassed Him for things He never did. He left these things in the Father's hands. [He also stood up for Himself in a mature way.]

God expects a new relationship between employee and employer when someone accepts Christ as their Savior. When we accept Christ, our standards change. God introduces a new attitude toward work under the grace principle.

1 Peter 2:21

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:"

When someone acts with cunning toward you, how do you react? How do you endure

harassment? This verse shows how Jesus suffered for well-doing.

For to this you were called

The antecedent of "this" is undeserved suffering. "To this" means that it is God's purpose that we suffer unjustly. Peter has just exhorted the believers to whom he is writing to be the kind of employees who suffer patiently even when the suffering is unjust. Now he turns to the example found in Christ.

"Called" (cf. 1:15; 2:9) -- in eternity past God called us to suffer unjustly. God did not call us to slavery but to patient suffering of unjust wrongs. God called us into the sphere of undeserved suffering. "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). God calls us into the same unjust suffering that Christ suffered.

Principle

Suffering is no mistake, it is in God's eternal plan.

Application

Do you expect trouble to come your way? God called you for this.

Why should we submit to unjust suffering? It is God's plan for us. When we determined to receive Christ, unjust suffering became our calling (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:3). God ordained us to affliction, though we often don't manifest the grace of God at work in unjust suffering.

because Christ also suffered for us

The preposition "for" means that Jesus suffered in our place or in our stead. Christ the sinless One suffered in the place of sinful ones. That is unjust suffering. The cross of Christ at first glance seems to be a tragedy but when we realize that He suffered in our place, the tragedy becomes a victory.

The phrase "for us" indicates the substitutionary death of Christ for our sins (Romans 5:8; 8:34; Hebrews 9:24). Jesus represents us personally in His death on the cross. Jesus suffered vicariously, that is, He paid the penalty for our personal sins. That is why we love Him.

The word "also" puts our suffering on a new plane. There is comfort in knowing that Christ went through unjust suffering as well.

Principle

Christ suffered in our place.

Application

Jesus suffered by His own volition. He did not suffer for Himself but for us.

If anyone suffered unjustly, it was the Lord Jesus. He never committed a sin (v.22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus knew no sin, yet He paid for the sins of the entire world. That is unjust suffering. Under God's economy, a person who never sins does not have to die. Sin is the cause of death. Jesus did not sin so He did not have to die. Yet He personally died for our sins.

Have you come to the place where you trust the death of Christ for your sins? This action of belief is necessary for your salvation.

leaving us an example

"Leaving" means to leave behind. Jesus left behind an example for us to follow.

This is the only occurrence of the Greek word "example" in the New Testament. Literally it means "underwriting." It is a writing or drawing that a student reproduces.

The word "example" means a model or pattern to be copied in writing or drawing. This word comes from a compound Greek word (under, to write) and means under-writing (to write under, to trace letters for copying by scholars). Therefore, it is a writing-copy. The writing-copy usually included all the letters of the alphabet. It was given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw. The sufferings of Christ left us a writing-copy.

The word "example" means a thing to be retained. An "example" was a model given for imitation, such as a header for a copy book. In patterning our life after Christ, God wants us to write our life under His. He is the pattern we are to copy our lives after. God wants us to copy our lives, just as a child in grade school copies an example of writing.

Principle

God wants us to use Christ as a pattern of suffering.

Application

We often go outside the guidelines of Jesus' example of suffering. Every day we write on the page of life. But we often shun suffering, especially unjust suffering. When we hold up our writing to the pattern set by Jesus' life, the comparison is minimal. Yet the more we practice the life of Christ, the more we become like Him, and find value in our sufferings.

Each of us will take our copy books to Jesus one day. Then he will give us our grade. How have you measured up to His suffering?

that you should follow His steps

God wants us to emulate the character and conduct of Christ.

"Follow" means to follow after, follow close upon. The implication is that we are to comply closely with the life of Christ. We should put our lives in conjunction with Christ. God wants us to go the same way as Jesus (Mark 8:34; 9:38; 10:21). We should make our lives happen along with His, and accompany Him along the journey. The implication is that we are to wholly follow Christ or to devote ourselves to Him. God wants us to give Jesus our whole heart. God wants us to take the same road as Jesus. He wants us to follow closely upon His path.

"Steps" means tracks. We are to follow the tracks of Christ. Our behavior should be the same as His. Let us imitate Him. We do not do as others do, we do as He does. The New Testament uses the word "steps" for Abraham's faith (Romans 4:12) and for carrying on the work of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 12:18). We are to take the same road as Christ and apply the truth of suffering to our experience.

Note that this passage does not say "follow in His steps." It says simply "follow His steps." God wants us to go in the same direction Jesus went (Hebrews 12:1-4). We get our signals from him. He sets the example for us to follow (Romans 15:3).

Principle

God wants us to copy Christ and reproduce His character in our lives.

Application

When Christians suffer insult with uncomplaining steadfastness, they show the life of Christ to others.

Christians sometimes meet spiritual pygmies. They then go back to back with them and say "I have outgrown them spiritually." Yes, but they are measuring themselves against a spiritual dwarf.

Instead of measuring yourself against a spiritual midget, why not measure yourself against a spiritual giant – Jesus Christ? Back up to the Lord Jesus and measure yourself against Him. Then you will realize how far you have to grow in grace. His spiritual reflexes were perfect. Anyone measured up against Him is mighty small. Sheep should follow the Shepherd, not other sheep.

If we do something wrong at work, how do we react? Is there any difference between the way we react and the way those who do not know Christ react? If our reaction is different from theirs, they will sit up and take notice. We have something that they do not have. This has great influence on non-Christians. However, this is exactly where we fail before our wives, husbands, children, parents and business associates.

1 Peter 2:22

"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"

Who committed no sin

Jesus never committed an act of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5). Jesus was perfectly sinless. The tense indicates that Jesus never committed a sin – not even one time.

Why then should He suffer? All the suffering that came to Christ was totally undeserved. Jesus said, "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?" (John 8:46). We could say this of no other person who ever lived. Jesus never confessed any sin because He never had sin to confess. It is remarkable when we think of the sin that He had to bear.

Nor was deceit found in His mouth

There was no deception ever found in his speech (Isaiah 5:39). Jesus never used cunning with his words. "Deceit" means a bait and comes to mean fraud, snare or guile (cf. 2:1; 3:10). It means to deceive by using trickery and falsehood as the

Trojan horse or the robe of Penelope. What you see is what you got with Jesus. The Bible characterizes him as the "truth" (John 14:6).

"Found" is failure to find something after careful scrutiny. Jesus' enemies were cunning in their approach but there was no trace of guile or trickery in Jesus. He confronted them with truth (Luke 23:41; John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15). He truly was a suitable sacrifice for our sin.

There is no doubletalk with the Lord Jesus. We will never find Him operating with duplicity. Even under extreme incitement, Jesus did not reply with rancor. He never led people astray with His words. He was always on the level. Everything He said was exact and accurate.

Principle

Sin usually shows itself first by sins of the tongue.

Application

Our speech reveals our heart. God's people are not sinless but they sin less having come to Christ as their Savior. Once a person comes to Christ there is a blessed lifelong process whereby the Christian grows to become more like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

It is possible for us to retard this process by stiffening ourselves against the will of God. In this situation we have a case of arrested spiritual development. We then are a heartache to our loving Father. We do not go on with the Lord. We are Christians but we do not advance our spiritual condition. We become a religious shadow-boxer.

One of the sad facts of life is that generally people in this condition are not aware of it. Their wife or husband may see it clearly. Their friends can see it, but they are oblivious to their situation. Sometimes it takes a financial disaster to get their attention. It may take an accident or some physical illness. God always does something to make our heart tender and sensitive to Him. In any case, it will be something to blast the rebellion out of our hearts.

God wants our spirit to be like it was when we first came to Christ – our first love. When this happens, we think of the wasted years and confess our sins. Then the joy bells will ring and peace returns to our hearts. Others will see the censoriousness go and the bitterness and criticism

leave our lives. This will fill our hearts with light and joy. We are back in fellowship.

It is a sad thing when people have to take what we say with a grain of salt. Do people believe what you say? If you promise something and do not deliver, can people trust you? Do you promise to show up somewhere and fail to show up without ample notification? People will get the impression that they cannot rely on you and that you are not dependable.

Are you trustworthy? God expects his people to be reliable and people of their word. God forbid that we develop a reputation for not being reliable or dependable.

1 Peter 2:23

Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."

Who, when He was reviled

"Who" is Jesus. This speaks of Jesus' undeserved suffering.

"Reviled" means to abuse, insult, slander (John 9:28; Acts 23:4; 1 Corinthians 4:12). People blasphemed Jesus. They mocked Him and called Him dirty names. Even when they put a crown of thorns on His head and mocked Him as a king, He did not retaliate. None of this could cause Him to compromise His character. Just because someone provokes us to sin does not justify the sin. We always have higher reasons to avoid sin.

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Hebrews 12:3).

His friends said that He was insane:

"But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind'" (Mark 3:21).

His enemies called him names:

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children" (Matthew 11:19).

Most of Jesus' enemies were religious leaders. This crowd was jealous and bitter toward Him. They expressed their hate for Him in criticism. They maligned His character and works.

did not revile in return

"Revile in return" in the Greek means to revile back or again. Jesus did not retaliate when people attacked Him with slander and insult. He did not return insult.

Jesus did not give tit for tat. He was not in the business of getting even. Some of us would even the score even if it kills us – and it may! By nature we are vindictive. Vindictiveness will eat our heart out. It will sour our spirit,

especially if we spend all our time defending ourselves, we will not be like the Savior. In doing that,

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Their evil accusations brought no reply from his lips. Jesus claimed the principle found in Romans 12:19 -- "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." This means that he operated from character not circumstance.

Principle

God wants us to be free from vengeance and leave retaliation in his hands.

Application

How unlike the Savior we are. As soon as someone starts a rumor about us, we get on our high horse. Our backs arch like a cat. We show our fangs. We are ready to do battle. If given a chance, we will hang their hide on the wall.

This is so unlike our Lord. We are still in kindergarten spiritually. We believe that we must defend ourselves and vindicate ourselves. When it came to this kind of thing, our Lord Jesus was not concerned about His reputation.

Are you willing to leave retaliation in God's hands? This is not to imply that we are to be passive in our relationships. Jesus often confronted those around him, but He was not vindictive.

when He suffered

Oh how He suffered (1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:12,13; 5:1). We know little about true suffering.

He did not threaten

When Jesus suffered, He did not threaten his oppressors with suffering. He would not make them suffer as well. He did not conjure up revenge. He did not look for opportunity to put revenge into action.

Jesus had the power to call vengeance down upon His enemies, but He chose not to do so. He did not defend himself against personal wrong. He was more concerned about the plan of God than about Himself.

Principle

God wants us to be more concerned about His plan of for our lives than about ourselves.

Application

Jesus did not threaten His accusers with harm. He did not say, "I'll get even. I'll get the Father after you." Christians are playing away from home. We forget that we are in a world hostile to Christ. We will not get a break from the umpire here.

As far as the people of this world are concerned, we are misfits. They do not approve of our way of doing things. We do not approve of their values. They put up with us as a mild form of amusement. They tolerate us if we do not expose their values for what they are.

Are you willing to take a stand on your values? Do you orient to the plan of God for your life? Do you live by that plan or do you respond to the immediate issue at hand?

but committed Himself

"Committed" means to give over, to hand over. It carries the idea of giving the control of oneself to someone else. Jesus gave Himself over to another. Jesus granted this right to the Father. Jesus granted to the Father the opportunity to do what he wanted with His life.

By faith, Jesus handed over this situation to the Father for management of His life. When we put something in the hands of someone who has perfect judgment, he or she will handle it perfectly. So when we commit our case to the Father, we know that he will have the perfect answer for it.

Jesus did not come to His own defense. He let the Father defend Him. Jesus refused to defend Himself against the kangaroo court of chief priests, who stacked the case against Him. He reserved His defense for the Father to handle. Jesus knew that the Father would vindicate Him. One day, we will stand before God. That will be our true judgment.

Jesus committed his cause, name and fame to the Father. "If I am to be vindicated, the Father will take care of that." This has not happened yet. One day, God will vindicate Jesus but that is in the future. Our Lord can wait because he put his case in the hands of the Father. His trial was not fair. They trumped up charges against him. He accepted the plan of God for His life.

to Him who judges righteously

Jesus submitted to the plan of God or the program of God for His life. He committed the whole thing to His Father and left it there.

God is righteous in the way He handles our lives. The nature of that righteousness must be understood by a comprehensive understanding of the whole plan of God.

Principle

God wants us to accept His righteous plan for our life by trusting Him with attacks on our person.

Application

We do not trust when we fret, fume and fuss. That is not committal. We need to trust a God who is interested in us (Genesis 18:25; Mark 7:37; 1 Kings 12:15, 24; 1 Samuel 3:18; Matthew 11:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28).

God knows each tear we shed and each hair that falls from our head. God is aware of everything that comes into our lives and He cares. We matter to Him.

Do we think that God loves us less now than when we came to Christ? He loves us more now than ever. We will understand more by and by. Will you commit everything in your life to God (Psalm 37:5; 1 Peter 4:19)?

1 Peter 2:24

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed."

Peter here alludes to Isaiah 53:6-7. Jesus' death on the cross is the greatest example of undeserved suffering.

Who Himself bore our sins

Why did Jesus die on the cross? The issue is the character of God. God cannot live with sin. The judgment of Jesus on the cross was a judgment upon our personal sins.

"Who Himself" is emphatic, stressing the personal connection of Jesus in death for our sins. Note the two phrases "who Himself...His own body." No one else could share this suffering. He was totally and uniquely capable to suffer for the sin of humanity. Jesus alone was able to save our souls from sin (Acts 4:12).

The value of His sacrifice is not in the extent of Jesus' anguish on the cross but in the person who suffered. Jesus bore our sin judicially. God never made Him sinful in His character.

"Bore" is a compound word made up of two words: to bring or bear up. It denotes to lead or carry up, to offer. Jesus brought our sins to the cross (cf. Hebrews 9:28; 2 Corinthians 5:21) and actually carried them in His own body (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). He stood indicted with our sins, and the sins of the entire world (Isaiah 53:6).

"Bore" means Jesus took the punishment for our sins (John 1:29). This satisfied God's justice. As the scapegoat carried away the sins of the Israelites so Jesus carries away our sin on the cross (Leviticus 16:21-22). Jesus brought our sins to the cross in His own body. The Septuagint uses "bore" for a priest carrying a sacrifice up to the brazen altar. The brazen altar was four and a half feet high and was approached by an incline (Leviticus 14:20). Jesus carried our sins to the cross instead of the altar. By this, Jesus broke the power of sin.

"Our sins" is emphatic. Jesus' death freed us from both the penalty and the power of sin. He paid the penalty for our sin so that we would not have to go to hell. His death made it possible for us to "live for righteousness."

Principle

Jesus' unique person paid personally for our sin.

Application

Rome crucified tens of thousands of people in its history but only one of them was unique. Jesus was the God-man. He was undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. This is His uniqueness. He is different from God in that He is man and He is different from man in that He is God.

Do you love the Lord Jesus for taking your personal sin to the cross? He is unique. There is no only else like Him.

in His own body on the tree

Jesus suffered both in his body and soul. His suffering in soul was not as apparent, but it was very intense (Matthew 26:38).

The Greek word for "tree" is an object fashioned out of wood. Esther 5:14 translates this word "gallows." Acts uses "tree" for the cross (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29). The last time the New Testament uses this word is Galatians 3:13 "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')."

Jesus did not suffer for my sins in Gethsemane. He bore my sins on the cross. Jesus was at once both priest and victim.

that we, having died to sins,

"That" introduces a purpose clause, and means "in order that."

"Died" is literally to be away from. It comes from two words: from and to become. "From" signifies separation. "Died" means to cease with a complete and abrupt change. This is a rare word. It means to cease to exist, to go out of being.

Some translate this word "to die" but this is inexact. Literally, it means "having become off with respect to sins." This means that Jesus disconnected us from our sins and speaks of the action of God in breaking the power of the sinful nature. We need not be slaves to sin. The classical Greek renders this word "depart." We have ceased from sins positionally (cf. Romans 6:1-23, esp. vv2, 10f). Christ died for all our sins. This is the action of God in breaking the sin capacity's power when we place faith in Christ. From now on we do not need to be a slave to sin (Romans 6:10).

Principle

Before we became Christians we were dead in sin, now we are dead to sins.

Application

God broke the power of the sin capacity at the point of faith in Christ's work on the cross. This means that sin does not have to control us. Since our sins have already been judged when Jesus hung on the cross, the Father is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There is the disconnection from sin. There we can live unto righteousness.

In God's sight He reckons us as being so identified with our Lord, so what He predicates of Him is also true of us. We died in His death. We were raised in his resurrection. We were seated with Him when He ascended in glory. God views us as perpetually dead to every appeal that comes from the flesh.

In God's reckoning, when Christ died, I died. This is a truth we cannot feel or smell. We hear it and believe it. We think God's thoughts after Him. God identifies us with Jesus as He hung on the cross. His life becomes our life. His righteousness becomes our righteousness. This is positional truth. His sonship becomes our sonship. God identifies us with Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross. We stopped sinning in God's eyes. We died to sin.

might live for righteousness—

"For" -- the death of Christ provides a motive for living.

"Righteousness" is rightness. God wants us to be right toward Himself and right toward people. This is not imparted but practical righteousness. This motive goes far beyond simply the negative of not doing evil (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Principle

The death of Christ is our motive for living for righteousness.

Application

God saves us to be different from those around us. Jesus endured the worst kind of injustice and yet He died for us and left us an example. After we believed that Jesus died for our sins on the cross, we began to live. Before that, we were spiritually dead. We were alive psychologically

and physically but we were dead spiritually. We were dead to God. Now we are alive to God.

God expects us to live in such a way as to be a credit to Christ. Jesus saves people free of charge. They render no merit, no work, no effort. After we become a Christian God expects us to live a life that reflects our life in Christ. It can no longer be business as usual. People who hear of our conversion have a right to expect a different quality of life from us. If they do not see change, why should they want what we have?

A danger in the study of the Bible is that we might get spiritual indigestion. We learn more than we live. We have more in our head than in our heart. This is spiritual gout. We know much and live little. Yet God makes us responsible for what we know. If we know a maximum and live a minimum, God will hold us accountable for that. The quality of our lives here will determine our reward hereafter.

Are you on the level with God?

by whose stripes you were healed

This phrase alludes to Isaiah 53:5. Jesus took our rap. He took the place of suffering for my sin.

The "stripes" here are the stripes left by a lash. We can translate "stripes" as "wounds," wounds from stripes. This has to do with the whipping by a lash put upon Jesus during His passion. Jesus underwent "stripes," wounds, and ultimately death. Romans scourged with pieces of brass or lead or small pointed bones. They stripped the victim to the waist and bound him in a stooped position with his hands tied behind his back to a pillar or post.

This probably refers to more than just the lashes that Jesus took by the Roman soldiers but also the stroke of the Father's justice administered vicariously to Him on the cross.

"Were healed" is past tense indicating a finished action. It means to cause something to change to an earlier, correct, or appropriate state - to renew, to heal. This deals with our spiritual healing. Healing can mean to restore from a state of condemnation. This does not deal with healing in the atonement or refer to physical healing of any kind. It means to be restored from a state of condemnation.

The New Testament uses "heal" of physical healing 22 times (Matthew 15:28; Acts 9:34). It is used of spiritual healing in Matthew 13:15; John

12:40; Acts 28:27; Hebrews 12:13; here and possibly, James 5:16.

Principle

Jesus healed us spiritually by His death on the cross.

Application

Jesus died for our sins, not our diseases. Physical disease is not in itself sin. It is the result of sin. The whole context of this passage talks of the substitutionary death of Christ. Jesus took away diseases by healing them.

Sickness is the judicial result of sin. Jesus did not take on the nature of Adam's sin. He took on the penalty of his sin.

If Christ can heal spiritually, He can heal physically (Matthew 8:17). This passage in Matthew has to do with alleviation of suffering rather than the atonement for sin. The purpose of such physical healing was to point to Christ as the Messiah.

1 Peter 2:25

"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

For you were like sheep going astray

Peter contrasts their present and former relationship to Christ. Before they became Christians they "were like sheep going astray."

"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Sheep wander astray. "Going astray" means to move about without definite destination, to cause to wander off the path. Before we became Christians we held wrong views of God and thus led a mistaken life. We were deceived and misled (Matthew 24:4; 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 John. 4:6). Our thoughts were twisted. What was false seemed true. We made lies appear true. We were mistaken.

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

but have now returned

"Returned" means to turn about, turn towards. This is conversion. "Returned" is in the passive voice showing that our return to God is an act of grace. The return is to Christ who cares for us as sheep.

"Returned" means to change one's belief with focus upon that to which one turns. We turn to truth. We accept the truth as it is in Jesus.

to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls

The "Shepherd and Overseer" stress the providential management of our souls by the Lord Jesus (cf. 5:4; John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20).

The shepherd was a familiar image to the people of the first century. Sheep could fall over jagged cliffs with deep precipices. Wandering in grasslands without walls, they could easily become lost. Wild animals roamed seeking them as prey. A shepherd feeds, protects and sustains his sheep. Jesus as the Shepherd seeks for lost sheep and tends sick ones. He vigilantly guards from wild beasts. He leads to good pasture.

The "Overseer" is one who cares for spiritual concerns. He is a guardian or keeper. An overseer mainly guides and directs. Jesus is the Guardian of our souls. The Overseer makes the Shepherd more emphatic. Jesus is the supervisor of our soul.

Principle

Jesus is concerned about supervising our soul, not just saving it.

Application

Jesus will nourish our soul all the way to glory. We are soul and our body transports our soul. Our soul will go on long after our body is dead and gone. Jesus shepherds and supervises our soul until we go to be with Him.

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

1 Peter 3:1

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives."

We have been studying the believer's responsibility to other people. The believer has a responsibility to his nation (2:13-17) and to business

(2:18-20). In this passage we come to the third category – domestic responsibility. Each of these three categories has one key word -

"submit." The issue in each situation is order.

The first seven verses of this chapter deal with husband-wife relationship. Peter explains the role of the wife (vv.1-6) then the role of the husband (v.7). Verse seven, which deals with the husband's role in marriage, is loaded with as much content as the previous six.

Many men do not understand their wives. They do not know their needs. Peter lands directly on the wife's central need to be loved properly by her husband.

There are three categories of Christians who will not respond to Peter's challenge:

1. Those who are older - they have already established their patterns and principles for marriage. They will not respond to this challenge because they are in a rut.
2. Those who have given up - they claim there is no way out of this mess. Forget it! I have tried everything to fix this thing. I do not want to go through the pain of trying to fix this marriage again."
3. Those who are naive - Some teenagers think that marriage is a panacea for all their problems. If they could just get married and out from under their parents roof all would be well. Marriage does not resolve life problems; it complicates them! Marriage is no gimmick for a lack or a problem in life.

Principle

Marriage as an institution requires roles to establish order.

Application

Some teenage girls believe that marriage will resolve their problems. No one asks them out so

they hop on the first bus that comes along. After riding it for a couple blocks (years) she says, "Oh, I got on the wrong bus. This bus is taking me in the wrong direction. I did not notice the location this bus was heading." She would have been much happier remaining single.

Her problem was a complete lack of understanding as to what makes up husbands and wives in marriage. The appeal in marriage is not physical beauty, although many men would argue with that. The issue is inner beauty. This is the point of the first six verses.

A woman who does not fill her mind with implacability, bitterness, resentment, hostility or anger is free from attitudinal sins. Peter addresses here the mental make-up of a godly woman.

For those of you who have not married yet, if you marry the wrong person you will live a life of misery. There is nothing worse than living with the wrong person. You might as well live with a rattlesnake.

Wives, likewise

"Likewise" - like what? Like business and government mentioned in the previous chapter. Wives are to operate like business and government. All the institutions of business, government and marriage require order.

Peter makes the same argument for wives as he did for other categories. The word "likewise" indicates a further category. The new category is the wife. He will deal with husbands in verse 7.

"Likewise" means in a similar manner. "Likewise" indicates that the wife is to submit to her husband just like people submit to their government and Jesus submitted (chapter 2). Jesus also submitted to the Father. By submitting to the Father, Jesus demonstrated the dignity of submission. A person who submits is not weak but strong. Our society knows nothing of this.

The word "submit" occurred in 2:13 "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme." The issue in this word is order instead of chaos in human institutions. Submission in this verse applies to human government. Each believer has the responsibility to submit to the national entity in which he or she resides.

Later in 2:18 Peter uses this term for slaves, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to

the harsh." Today would be analogous to employer/employee relationships. The employee's role is to arrange his working relationship under his boss. No business can operate without authority.

This submission is according to a divinely-willed order. This divinely willed order is submission to authorities in Romans 13:1ff., which acknowledges the legitimacy of government on the basis of their divine commission to reward good and punish evil. Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13-14 echo this teaching. Christians do not submit to the state merely because it provides conditions for their life. They and all people owe subjection because government is by divine ordination.

If authority is important in government and business, it is equally important for the husband/wife relationship. Egalitarianism is not a biblical value. Authority in role relationship is a biblical value. Egalitarianism assaults the role of authority in society. Authority gives stability to society. If I submit to the head of my government, I will live in orderly relationship to my fellow citizens. If I do not accept authority, chaos will result.

Role is crucial to government, business and family. Order for any institution requires organization. Someone has to have the authority to make the final decision. Someone takes the initiative and others respond to their leadership.

In any organization of more than one person, there must be authority. If I join the military, I fight under authority. If I drive down the street, I accept the authority of the traffic signal. Business has to operate on authority. Schools require the acceptance of the authority of the teacher in the classroom. Life under the philosophy of "kill or be killed" would be grim indeed. Life is made up of principles of authority. It is important for the wife to understand this.

Principle

Order is crucial to a stable society and stable marriage.

Application

What happens to society without clearly defined roles? Chaos, anarchy and dissolution. Countries without order do not have stability. Revolution upon revolution and coup upon coup occur. Putting this in a microscopic scale, this is what

happens in marriage - revolution upon revolution in the relationship.

The principles of the first six verses are vital for the wife's understanding of her husband's needs. Otherwise she will live in drudgery and agony. Some who read this are in total misery by martial conflict. Psychology and sociology have some answers but basically they suggest "Do your own thing," "Take a fling," or "Find a new environment."

The Bible takes an entirely different approach. This approach revolves around the wife meeting her husband's needs and the husband meeting his wife's needs. This is not self-centered but other-centered.

be submissive

What is submission? The word "submit" comes from two words: under and arrange. A wife is to arrange herself under her husband. This means she fits into her husband's essential need in his leadership in the home. She is to gear her life to the husband's role in marriage.

The idea of submission in the Bible deals with authority. Submission was used primarily as a military term with the idea to rank under. This term means to place or arrange under, to post under, to subject. This word comes from two words: 1) "to appoint," "to order," with such nuances as "to arrange," "to determine," "to set in place," "to establish," and middle "to fix for oneself." 2) the second word is under.

Principle

The wife's role in marriage brings order to the institution of marriage.

Application

Every divine institution has its own duty. If there are two people in an organization, one must have authority for there to be a resolve between them. In marriage God chose the husband to have that authority. The husband may or may not be able to handle this authority. In principle, he has the authority.

Why then does the wife submit herself unto her husband? Because it meets his essential need of respect for the leadership role God gave him. The basic need of the husband is to carry out leadership in the family God intends for him. The wife helps him achieve that goal. In order to do that, the wife must fit herself into his leadership

in the home. This is what makes the woman feminine and wonderful to the man.

Christian marriage does not mean that the woman is a slave or inferior. Men who treat women as inferiors lose out. When love does not exist, the wife's surrender becomes slavery to her. No matter what her husband gives her, it does not satisfy her. There is no rapport, no satisfactory relationship. If there is no rapport it is just two neurotics hanging onto each other. Obviously, their sex life will be less than the best.

A woman first submits her soul, then her body. One of the worst things in life is to have a woman's body but not her soul. She simply gives her body while thinking of something - or someone - else. She conjures up unrealistic romantic relationships that have no basis in reality. The husband has nothing if he does not have her soul as well as her body.

Submission has nothing to do with the wife's intelligence. Her intelligence may be 50 IQ points above his. Subjection does not demean the capacity of the wife. Her personality may be more vivacious and wonderful than his. Submission has nothing to do with capacity of the individual biblically. The issue is role. The issue is to fit marital relationship into its proper function.

This verse does not mean that the husband and wife are in a master/slave relationship, as is the interpretation of some. This is not God's design for marriage.

To the contrary, submission is not slavery, it is something that fulfils a woman -- it is an expression of rapport. She yields both her mind and body. She has something beyond description to give to her husband.

be submissive

Lest wives who have just become Christians feel they are exempt from submitting to their pagan husbands, Peter clearly defines her role in marriage. When the wife arranges her life to respect her husband's leadership in the home, she does her part to bring harmony to the home. We will study the husband's role later.

The Bible deals with the submission of the wife in other passages (cf. Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18). God has a divinely-willed order for the wife in marriage. The role of submission is an issue of position, not person.

The Greek indicates that the wife is to develop a mind-set (present tense) of arranging herself under her husband's leadership in the home. After promising in her marriage vows to orient herself to the leadership of her husband, a wife needs to develop a habit of this. This is a life-time principle.

The Greek also indicates that the woman benefits by fulfilling her role in marriage (middle voice). The woman who arranges her life under the leadership of her husband benefits personally. Instead of nagging him, she helps him excel. Instead of discouraging him through constant criticism, she helps him succeed in his leadership of the home. She benefits from this because she will have a happy husband and home.

The problem in marital conflict is that one or the other breaks out of their role. God designed the husband to meet his wife's need and the wife to meet her husband's need. If someone breaks out of this design the marriage relationship breaks down. The woman can derive her basic need from God and God's Word, but it is normal for the husband to meet her need as well.

The biblical view of submission is an expression of rapport. She has something to yield - her mind and body. She has something beyond description to give to her husband

In Christian marriage love is the basis for rapport. Rapport means there is appreciation for each other. That is why we should never marry out of pressure or because a guy says all the right things and impresses a gal. He appears as a knight in shining armor, when really he is a monster.

The principle in the New Testament exhortation to submit is that there should be mutual readiness to renounce one's own will for others.

Principle

Marriage roles are designed to mutually meet the needs of the husband and wife.

Application

What happens if the husband takes advantage of his wife's submission? It subverts the delicate balance of the relationship of each role. Some men feel that the biblical role of the wife gives them the right to abuse their wife. "OK, wife, I'm giving you 15 things to do today. Make sure you have them finished before I get home from work." This detracts from the dignity of his wife. Peter will

address this in 3:7. God expects the husband to honor his wife.

Women, if you want your basic need as a wife met, then meet your husband's need as well. Peter will explain how to do that in succeeding verses. We can summarize his advice in two words - "inner beauty." This is a relaxed attitude. Hostilities cease. She becomes so relaxed toward her husband that he sees a beautiful being inside her.

When there is little rapport between husband and wife, roles do not work well. Where there is no love in marriage, marriage becomes a master/slave relationship. When there is true rapport, roles work well. Marriage will survive physical changes as the couple grows older. As the compatibility becomes stronger, so will the marriage. Compatibility takes up the slack for everything that might happen to the marriage.

Every couple has problems adjusting to marriage. The real problem in adjusting is not sex, housekeeping or money. These are details. The real adjustment is whether the man meets the basic need of his wife. It does not matter whether she burns the biscuits. He still loves her. It makes no difference whether she cannot balance the checking account or forgets to change the oil in the car. He still loves her. These things may be fun to joke about but they should in no way destroy the rapport of the marriage.

When genuine love exists, then a wife will willingly surrender her volition to her husband and he will fulfill her soul. This is why in the selection of a husband, he cannot be a status symbol, an escape hatch or a meal ticket.

to your own husbands

"Own" is a special term. The word in the Greek is *idios* from which we get the word "idiot!" The word here does not mean wives are to think of their husbands as idiots! No, the word simply means privacy. The implication is that the wife is to submit to her husband, not to men in general. She is to accept the leadership of her husband.

The word "own" can carry the idea of intimacy. The wife is to arrange herself intimately with her husband. This is not only talking about physical intimacy but emotional intimacy. This is intimacy of the soul. Every woman wants that. So this is referring to intimacies of the personality, of the soul, of being.

Principle

The purpose of biblical marriage is intimacy.

Application

Every woman wants to share her life with her husband. She truly desires to be "in" her husband's life. "Will you open yourself to me? Let me inside."

Marital life is a cyclical relationship. Each role of the husband and wife contributes a different enhancement to the marriage. The wife contributes something different from the husband and vice versa.

Two of the greatest false assumptions of all time are that the husband has the same need as the wife and that the wife has the same need as the husband. That is a colossal mistake in marriage. Because each partner in marriage operates within their own premise, they do not understand the need of their partner. They understand their own needs thoroughly, though not the others.

The Bible presents the roles in marriage so that a woman looks at her husband's essential need and the husband looks at the wife's essential need.

The wife's need is security in her husband's love. The need of the husband is respect for his leadership in the home. Both the wife and the husband need both of these ultimate needs but they have different ultimate needs in marriage.

If a wife listens to her husband's hopes and plans and gives her approval, she operates at the essence of his needs. If she demeans his accomplishments, he will clam up. God's responsibility for the wife is to bring out the best in her husband. No wife gets a ready-made husband. Helping the husband toward maturity is a delicate process.

Some husbands feel the need to keep their wives off balance by criticism. They criticize her cooking. They disparage her dress. Their insecurity is the driving force behind this. They bolster their own insecurity by minimizing their wives. All of this makes it difficult for wives to follow the role God has designed for them. Wives can help their husbands become more mature by creating an atmosphere where they see what God can do. Husbands will judge by what they see in their wife's life.

A wife is fulfilled by her own husband, not with a man she meets at the party. The apparent gregarious, attractive, dynamic personality may

be deceptive. That is why "own" in this verse means to exclude other men from your consciousness. This does not mean that you do not talk to other men. However, romance is no substitute for rapport.

What holds a relationship? People married for 20 years can love more than the day they were married. Why? Because rapport love fulfills the soul. That love becomes more wonderful as the years go by.

You can easily spot a couple who have their own interests and don't love each other. He is retired and plays golf. She has a flower garden. They talk about grandchildren but they do not have rapport between themselves. They are totally bored with each other.

be submissive to your own husbands

God instituted divine institutions for order in society. The purpose of God's arrangement of marriage is to give order so that marriage will not end in chaos.

Subordination does not imply inferiority. We can see the distinction between position and person in the roles of the Trinity (1 Corinthians 11:1,2). The Son in position is under the Father and the Spirit in position is under the Son. In their persons, the members of the Trinity are co-equal in essence. As in the case of the Trinity, the wife is not less in her person but simply under her husband in role. Therefore, a woman should never be dependent for her personhood from her husband or any other person. Her submission is an issue of position, not person.

Principle

The role of submission is an issue of position, not person.

Application

If we hold a high view of the integrity of Scripture, it is not possible to hold a feminist view of the world. However, neither can we hold to distortions of the biblical viewpoint.

God put the man first, not in his person, not in his intellect, not in his total personality but simply as far as arrangement for the order of the family. God has a divinely willed order for the husband and wife in marriage. The Christian wife is free from her husband by virtue of grace but she is bound to her husband by virtue of love.

If the woman loves her husband, she will submit to his leadership in the home. If love does not exist, submission becomes servitude for the woman. Submission is more than sexual for it encompasses all responses to love, in all areas of life. This submission also is free from bitterness and anger. It is not slavery but a voluntary expression of inner beauty.

Many of us enter marriage thinking that it is going to be free from strife only to find that it is a storm. The person of our love may be the obstacle to love itself. God never intended for marriage to be a bastion from problems. It is not a place for lazy people, but a place of sacrifice. Marriage is a place where the worst can come out or where we can display the best -- two mature people who love each other. Marriage is a place where individuals can grow beyond their singleness.

that even if some do not obey the word

"Do not obey" means to be disobedient, to refuse to be persuaded, to refuse belief. This is a very strong term in the Greek. It means to set oneself against the Word, the Bible. It means not to be persuaded, to be obstinate.

In this verse the meaning is to refuse to believe the Christian message -- to refuse to be a believer, to reject the Christian message. This woman, unfortunately, is married to an unbeliever.

Even though the Word is designed to win people to Christ, some husbands are obstinate to the Word. The only way the wife will win her husband is through her life or behavior. She will win this unbeliever to Christ through submission to his leadership in the home.

Some men mix the gospel with their wife's manipulation. He refuses to believe because he is so busy fighting her manipulation. He thinks that this is a dictum from his wife. He confuses his wife's commands and the gospel. Therefore, he resents and rejects the gospel.

they, without a word

What should a wife do if she is not able to win her husband into the kingdom? Her first role is not to nag or bully her husband. Her first role is to live out the grace of God in her life.

In their zeal to win their husbands to the Lord, some women nag their husbands. When this happens, it destroys the concept of fulfillment in marriage. Instead of accepting her husband's

leadership she regurgitates criticism. She criticizes him for his bad habits.

The average woman thinks that if her husband would just straighten up, he would be a good candidate for becoming a Christian. "If he goes on the wagon, he will go to heaven." Many women drive their husband from the gospel with this approach. She calls this "witnessing."

The silent witness is the best witness when it comes to people who live close to each other as husbands and wives. Note the wife wins the husband without "a word." The wife does not have to talk her husband into receiving Christ. In close relationships the life is more important than the lip in witnessing. They will be won without talk.

I found this with my own father. When I first became a Christian, I was so enthusiastic about it that I wanted him to receive Christ immediately. He revolted against my witness because he took it as his son telling him what to do. Until I stopped talking and started showing him that I loved him, he was not open to the gospel. He received Christ 20 years later.

Some think that submission means that a wife is to be a doormat for her husband, and that she is not free to express her opinion. Submission does not remove her freedom. It allows for it. A train has its greatest freedom when it is on tracks.

may be won

"Be won" means winning souls into the Kingdom of God by the Gospel, (1 Corinthians 9:19, 20 (twice), 21, 22) or by godly conduct (1 Peter 3:1). A wife will win her husband to Christ if she follows the principles of this verse.

Principle

Wives win their husbands to the Lord, by respecting their leadership in the home.

Application

Many women have husbands who are obstinate to the Bible. One reason for that is that their wives have tried to ram the gospel down their throat. This is a mistake. They will never win their husbands by badgering them with the gospel. Some Christian wives ride their husbands about moral issues -- drinking and smoking. These things are inconsequential. If the husband refuses to receive Christ, the wife must grant his desire.

As soon as some women say "I do" they try to "redo" their husbands. Their husbands will fight for their personhood. Some women have the belief system that if they degrade their husbands, they will straighten them out. Others feel they need to invade every area of their husband's life. These husbands will hide their needs from their wives due to fear of criticism. If a wife is not sensitive to this, she will be met by self-induced deadness from her husband.

by the conduct of their wives

"Conduct" means turning back, manner of life, way of life. The emphasis is upon daily behavior. Wives win their husbands by their manner of life. It is how we live that makes the difference. God counsels wives to win their husbands this way.

Principle

A wife will win her husband if she operates on rapport with him.

Application

Non-verbal witness has greater impact than verbal. The husband will formulate his view of Christianity by what he sees in his wife. He judges Christianity by the way she interprets it for him.

If a woman talks her husband into submission she humbles him, takes away his manhood. He no longer makes decisions on the basis of what he is. He then makes decisions on the basis of who she is.

that even if some do not obey the word

It is not God's will that Christians marry non-Christians (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14-28). The end values conflict. A marriage works best when the couple shares end values such as how a person becomes a Christian or how to raise children.

Principle

Christians should not marry those who do not know Christ personally because this is a conflict of values.

Application

The biblical principles for selection of a mate: do not marry a non-Christian (1 Corinthians 7:39; 9:5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18) do not marry an immature person; avoid teenage marriages do not

marry on rebound do not marry because of social pressures such as an unhappy home life or my friends are getting married do not marry for sex; sex is not love but an expression of love women should not marry until they can follow the leadership of their husband do not marry until communication systems are established do not marry for status or a life-time meal ticket, for success or desire for travel do not marry the knight in shining armor; find out what the person is truly like do not stuff another person into your mold hoping that they will change into what you want them to be do not think of marriage as a panacea to resolve your problems do not marry because you love children; children do not hold a marriage together do not marry without a great sense of commitment to working through the problems do not marry a person who is there for you during a problem in your life do not marry with the attitude that if it doesn't work I can get out of it

1 Peter 3:2

When they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."

Verses 2-6 shows the wife the kind of behavior that wins her husband.

When they observe your chaste conduct

When non-Christian husbands witness the powerful testimony of their wife's pure life, it will thaw even an icy heart. The wife is to do this without being preachy (v.1).

"Observe" -- even the hard-hearted husband will pay attention to a pure life. Observe means to intensely investigate. The close husband-wife relationship will reveal the reality of Jesus Christ in the pressures of marriage. The husband cannot miss what his wife is truly about. He cannot overlook the impact salvation made on her life.

As soon as the husband sees for himself the reality of Christ in his wife's life, he will have the greatest opportunity to accept Christ. He may not listen to her verbal witness but he will observe her life. He looks, not listens. He waits to see if there is a change.

"Chaste" simply means pure. It may carry the idea of blameless in this verse. This is purity in the broadest sense, not just sexual purity. It should permeate everything the wife does. Her husband observes every decision she makes, every action she takes with her children.

Principle

Non-Christian husbands will judge Jesus by their wives.

Application

The husband largely configures his view of Christ by what he sees in his wife. He judges Christ by the way he sees his wife living. If his wife has a sharp tongue, a yen for gossip or an uncontrollable temper, that is his view the Christian life.

By putting church work before their husbands, some Christian wives cause their husbands to view the church as a rival lover. Love your husband out of joy and put him before church responsibilities.

Other wives unintentionally act superior to their husbands when they become Christians. This is deadly. The husband may feel he has little in common with his wife. He may infer he is no longer important to her or that she does not love him.

The picture here is of a mature woman who, in the face of adversity from her husband, stands independent. Even though he may treat her poorly she does not interfere with the Lord's work in his heart by complaining. The following verses show what wins a husband -- inner beauty.

The husband will respect his wife's testimony. He will watch to see if there is any change in her life. Is she just as short tempered as she always was? Is she still as critical as she was? Does she nag like she used to? If this is true, what kind of salvation is that? He does not want it.

Incompatibility of belief does not justify dissolution of marriage. God designs marriage as a symbiotic relationship. Marriage is a delicate relationship balance. Both husband and wife contribute to that balance even though they may not share the same faith.

This verse does not argue that the onus for the marriage relationship rests on the wife. She does not simply exist to meet the needs of her husband nor is she to subsume her mind, opinions or dreams so that she is nothing outside her husband. The Bible does not ask the wife to live vicariously through her husband, but to reach the potential God designed for her.

Many husbands, like bloodsuckers, drain their wives of everything. They render little in return.

Some husbands feel there is inherent superiority in their role. The Bible argues for authority of position, not person. Christianity argues for mutuality in marriage, not individuality. Individuality is the central thesis of much modern thinking about marriage.

accompanied by fear

"Fear" is respect for her husband. Respect carries the idea of distinction. This wife sets her husband aside as unique and special. Although he is belligerent to the gospel, she respects him as the leader of her home, as a man and as a husband and father. If he sees his wife respect even his right to reject Christ, this will lower the barrier between them, and between him and the gospel.

"Fear" does not carry the idea of dread of the husband. Ephesians 5:33 -- "Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." The Christian wife treats her husband with deference, respect, honor.

Principle

It is difficult for the non-Christian husband to remain an island to his Christian wife if she steps into his essential need.

Application

If the wife treats her husband as somebody, if she believes in him, he is more likely to become a Christian and the husband he should be. A wife who downgrades her husband by always disagreeing with him, making him appear foolish or being sarcastic toward him in public will never gain her husband.

A wife who is indifferent toward her husband's accomplishments or who ignores his achievements disrespects him. This will drive him into a shell. He will shut his wife out of his life.

If the wife honors her husband by bringing out the best in him, this will glorify God. No woman gets a ready-made, fully-mature husband. She has a responsibility before God to help him become what he can become.

Women who live a positive testimony before their husbands will earn their respect even if they do not agree with her beliefs. These women become more thoughtful, more reasonable than ever before. This will have great impact upon non-Christian husbands.

1 Peter 3:3

“Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel--“

Do not let your adornment be merely outward--

Peter does not argue against wearing jewelry. He is talking about what truly wins an obstinate husband. Inner beauty is more important than extrinsic beauty. Outward beauty and inward beauty are two different values.

The word "adornment" comes from the Greek word kosmos. Kosmos means order. Sometimes the New Testament translates this word as "world." Kosmos is a system where order prevails. We get our English word cosmetics from kosmos. Cosmetics can help to bring order to a face.

Peter's point here is that a woman does not win her husband by outward order. Outward cosmetics do not win her husband. Inward cosmetics wins the husband. This is inner beauty, a wonderful, feminine woman. The idea is that a woman's symmetry does not come from outer beauty. If a woman orders herself on the inside, she will not fall apart during a crisis.

arranging the hair,

Now Peter turns to a list of items that will not make a happy husband. The first is the hairdo.

The word "arranging" means braiding. Braiding is elaborate gathering of the hair woven into many tiers of knots. Women of the Roman Empire were addicted to ridiculous extravagance with their hair. They were afraid to touch their hair because it took so long to do. Many had wigs, often blond. Archaeologists found some of these wigs in the catacombs. They made their hairstyles of ivory and gold studded with gems.

Women in the Roman world would spend many hours braiding their hair. Sometime they would pile their hair three feet high. Hair that high is hard to carry around all day! They had to constantly keep themselves in balance. At night they had to prop themselves up so as not to disturb their hair. They could not put their head on a pillow. They put fantastic emphasis on outer beauty.

However, Peter is not arguing for disheveled hair. He is not saying that the shabbier you look, the more spiritual you are. Vance Havner said, "To be

all out for God you don't have to look all in." Obviously women should make themselves as attractive as possible.

Principle

God wants godly women to develop inner cosmetics of the soul.

Application

A woman who is ugly on the inside will never win her husband. A biblically beautiful woman is beautiful on the inside. She orders herself on the inside.

wearing gold,

The second category of female beauty is jewelry. Women generally love jewelry.

"Wearing" means putting around. This woman wears ornaments. She wraps gold ornaments around her wrists, around her neck, ankles and ears. This is no condemnation of wearing jewelry. The point is a matter of emphasis. Do not place the emphasis on outer beauty but on inner beauty. Jewelry is nothing compared to inner beauty.

Obviously this is not an absolute condemnation of jewelry for look at the next category...

or putting on fine apparel—

The third category Peter addresses is clothing. Even since Adam and Eve went into the clothing business the wardrobe has always been a major piece of female beauty. I wonder if Eve's fig leaves were nicer than Adam's!

Obviously there is no absolute prohibition against wearing jewelry. If we say that is wrong to braid hair or wear jewelry then we have to say that it is wrong to wear clothes!! This is not the point.

Some Christian women put too much emphasis on clothes and jewelry. This is just a manifestation of distortion elsewhere. They don't concentrate on developing inner beauty which is the main issue of this passage.

The point of this verse is a woman can have lovely hair, beautiful jewelry and stunning clothes but if her heart is full of bitterness, criticism and selfishness she is ugly on the inside.

Principle

Women who do not have inner beauty will not win their husbands.

Application

Peter's point is to show women not to expect outward beauty to win their husbands. The opposite of cosmos is chaos! Outer beauty will not win the husband. It will help, but this is not the central focus of how to appeal to the husband.

Although beauty helps, it is not at the core of attraction to a husband with any sense. A woman may be beautifully dressed, neatly groomed and yet destroy everything by a bad attitude.

Mutual exclusive attention to outer beauty does not make truly beautiful woman. It is possible to be the most beautiful woman in the world and never attract your husband. Women totally occupied with outer beauty miss the point.

Some women want everyone occupied with their outer beauty. They want people to be enamored with them. She wonders, "Why isn't everyone looking at me?" Many men are sharp enough to know that physical beauty is not everything.

Beauty is not everything. A man wants beauty on the inside. Physical beauty will only last for a certain period of time. Eventually it will wear off. Her skin will start to wrinkle. Her body gradually will grow old. Even though we grow old physically, we can become more beautiful throughout our life-time. Inner beauty will never age.

1 Peter 3:4

Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."

Verse four tells how a woman wins her husband.

Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart,

Peter's interest is not in what the adorning of the Christian wife should be but where it should be. Beauty is in the personality.

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

The word "hidden" is a medical term meaning the most deep-seated aspect of a person. The "hidden person" is the soul or seat of the personality. A woman's beauty should be in the deepest, most

inmost part of her being. The most significant aspect of her beauty is what is inside her. Put priority on making your soul beautiful rather than making your body beautiful.

If a woman is to win her husband, whether she is a Christian or not, she does it by inner beauty. The wonderful thing about is that she can decide to become beautiful inside at any point in her life.

The wife has a responsibility to fulfill the husband. The husband has a responsibility to fulfill the wife. This is a cycle - not a vicious cycle. Neither is this going around in circles. It is simply a cycle. Both have responsibilities to each other. At this point we are just looking at the wife's responsibility to her husband.

Principle

Christian women should develop beauty from within her spiritual being.

Application

Grace makes a beautiful woman. That which is on the inside will shine on the outside. No amount of make-up or clothing will make up for inner ugliness. Are you hard to get along with? Are you filled with yourself? Are you filled with pride? Are you quick to anger?

Anyone can dress up and look good. A woman who depends exclusively on physical beauty is only half beauty. God wants us to be adorned from within. The Christian woman's beauty should come from her inner spiritual disposition.

with the incorruptible beauty

Some women are very corrupt. I do not mean necessarily that they run around with a half a dozen men, but they fill their minds with anger, hostility, jealousy and bitterness. These things make up an ugly woman - corrupt beauty.

The woman who has "incorruptible beauty" is the woman with inner beauty. She is faithful to her husband. Neither body nor her soul is available to anyone other than him. Her husband fulfills her. Her inner beauty is incorruptible. Her husband can count on her faithfulness. When the wife puts the Lord Jesus first in her life, she moves into the sphere of the incorruptible. She is faithful to both the Lord and her husband. The more she loves her Lord, the more she loves her husband.

This inner beauty does not fade. No matter how old a woman becomes she can still adorn her

inner beauty. It survives the ravages of time. Outer beauty fades with time.

Inner beauty can grow. Fashions may change and physical beauty passes but inner beauty can blossom.

How does a woman develop deep-seated beauty? She does this by developing two categories in the seat of her being - gentle and quiet spirit. We will begin to study this next time.

Principle

Inner beauty frees women from seeking approval from men.

Application

The Christian woman who has incorruptible beauty is free from slavery to men. Some women marry lemons and feel sorry for themselves. They always look for approval from men. Her husband just happens to be around. She never instinctively thinks of him. She always seeks approval from him. She always wants him to think of her. She needs constant approval.

This wife always does something to gain his approbation. If she does not get it, she turns to other men. She is vain in her self consciousness. She tries to gain his attention by flirting with other men. Further, if she has lost hope with her husband, she does it simply for the attention of other men. She may spend hours a day in front of a mirror examining herself. When she steps out from the mirror she expects everyone else to admire her.

There is little instinct for true love for her husband. She is always looking looks for compliments: "Your hair looks great. You have nice legs. You look strikingly beautiful today." Just think of the poor man that married her. She is taken with herself.

A woman with true biblical beauty can change all this. She will begin to look at her husband in a different way. She will respond to him with positive volition. Her inner beauty will change her self-consciousness into other-consciousness. She is no longer that superficial person she once was. No longer is she taken with her own beauty. She shares her beautiful person with others.

of a gentle

Peter now prescribes the true ornaments of the soul of a beautiful woman: gentleness and a quiet spirit.

A "gentle" person is not a wimp. This woman is not mousy or whiny. She is not afraid to assert herself. She is not a fearful person. This is not the point here.

The Greek word for "gentle" means in-wrought grace. This is grace that God works into her life. She humbly recognizes that she is what she is because of what God has done in her life. This humility recognizes it is God who made her; God who changed her. Therefore, she is not the cause of domestic war. She so appreciates what God has done for her that she will take the high road - the road of spiritual maturity. This springs from her relationship to God.

A "gentle" woman is a person who orients to the grace of God. This person humbly accepts God's plan for her life. She appropriates grace. She is one who understands who she is and that she is who she is because of Jesus Christ and what He has done for her. She is not what she is because of what she has done. Jesus has made all the difference in her life. "Gentle" is therefore not self-effacement. It is an attitude of humility. Humility orients to the grace of God.

Principle

God's grace will feed the facets of a wife's soul.

Application

When God feeds the facets of a wife's soul, her husband will see something in her soul he never saw before. She no longer operates on jealousy. She no longer nags him. She is no longer angry, implacable, spiteful or vindictive. Her life calms down so much that he looks forward to coming home.

This woman does not think of Christianity in superficial terms, such as thinking Christianity is morality. It is something beyond that. She no longer thinks in terms of straightening out her husband. This Christianity is far beyond an overt system of morality. She no longer tries to pour her husband into her mold. That is not marriage but slavery. She believes that she cannot change him. Only God can do that. She keeps the apertures of her soul open to God and his Word.

Suppose for a moment that a certain woman destroys the inner beauty of her soul. Let us say that she allows jealousy to dominate her thinking. The Word of God is not foremost in her thinking so she sucks jealousy into the vacuum of her mind. This attitude sin turns off her inner beauty.

This leads to self-pity and produces self-induced misery. She then decides to hurt the man she loves by having an affair with another man. Her attitude sin becomes a soul kink.

She puts the soul kink into action. To do this she must violate her conscience, norms and emotions. She does not truly care about the man with whom she has the affair. Her true motive is to hurt her husband. Two wrongs do not make a right. We cannot build our happiness on someone else's unhappiness. Nevertheless she turns to this intruder.

Just as a thorn may infect our flesh, so does her emotional pattern become infected. She becomes even more vulnerable to other men. She has another affair. By repeatedly committing adultery, she knocks true emotions out of her soul.

By accepting this foreign norm, she will develop emotional scars. This will affect her relationship to her husband, if they ever get back together. Her sin started with jealousy and bitterness. It developed into antagonism. She went out and became unfaithful. She became corruptible. She rejects true love by her attitude sins. Her conscience will never resolve by this method of operation.

Women should avoid adultery because it will scar their souls. They should avoid any kind of lascivious activity. It ruins a woman.

and quiet spirit,

"Spirit" means disposition or attitude in this verse. This wife grounds herself in the principles of grace. She understands what God has done for her, therefore she is serene and tranquil. She is at peace in herself and in her disposition.

A quiet spirit is a calm spirit. She is peaceful in her attitude. She is not full of hostility. This wife is settled on the inside. She possesses a serenity of soul even though her husband may be a jerk.

Again, this word does not imply that this woman sits behind the scenes, afraid to speak. She may be very gregarious, yet she is quiet on the inside. She is settled in her soul. She does not rage because of her insecurities. No military campaign wars inside her soul. She has a sense of fulfillment and is satisfied with God's plan for her life. There is no raging sea inside her. Therefore, this has nothing to do with a woman refraining from talking or staying silent in public.

Principle

A beautiful woman is at rest on the inside.

Application

We all know some men who would love to have a mouse rather than a woman for a wife. They do not want her to talk in public. This is contrary to Scripture.

The Word of God argues that the word "quiet" applied to a wife means that she will not nag or complain. God wants a woman with a relaxed attitude -- at rest; at peace within herself. This is God's perception of a beautiful woman.

which is very precious in the sight of God

"Precious in the sight of God" is applied to something that God values. God honors a woman who orients to grace and is settled in her soul. God values a woman who is beautiful on the inside.

Principle

A benefit of a "gentle" and "quiet" spirit in a wife is that she beautifies her soul in the eyes of her husband and God.

Application

Are you a beautiful woman on the inside? Does your husband view you as beautiful on the inside? This is the essence of submission. Submission does not mean one is a cringing, mousy woman who is afraid of her own shadow.

If a wife is not beautiful on the inside, she is not in the will of God. It makes no difference how much work she may do in the local church, she is not in the will of God. If you are a raging, horrible, ugly woman on the inside, then your work amounts to little before God.

Anything that God highly values should be highly desirable to us. A woman like this is valuable to God. She is also valuable to her husband. Her non-Christian husband has never seen anything like this before.

The woman who tries to make a fool of her husband in front of others makes a big mistake. This may send him packing to the golf links every day, or cause him to stop at the local pub for a couple of bourbons.

A woman who understands her biblical role pleases her husband. She will go to some of the

places he likes. She may learn something about football. She will change many of her friends caught up in the same narcissism in which she has been. She will develop a new appreciation for sex based on love. She will operate on compatibility rather than self-orientation.

God's method for the wife to win her non-Christian husband, or her Christian husband for that manner, is to change her attitudes from negative to positive. Many women deck themselves in richly looking wardrobes but keep their inner person clothed in rags. A fur-bearing animal produces its beautiful fur from the inside. The Christian woman should depend upon the adornment from within -- her spiritual life.

1 Peter 3:5

"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands."

For in this manner

"This manner" -- in the manner of the woman who, in her inner disposition, has in-wrought grace and is settled in her soul.

in former times

"Former times" is Old Testament times. Women do not change. Styles may change but the soul of a woman does not change.

the holy women

"Holy women" is just a term for Old Testament women who believed in God. This type of woman has no halo over her head.

who trusted in God

"Trusted" means placed their hope in God. The issue here is more one of confidence. God was the object of their hope. These women had a sense of awe of God.

Women who know God personally and respond to his Word have the aperture of their souls open to Him. Because they know how to respond to God, they know how to respond to their husband's needs.

Principle

God designed Christian marriage cyclically so that each partner meets the needs of the other partner.

Application

Many people come to a deadly truce in their marriage. They live under the same roof. They disarm their weapons for fighting relationship wars. They do not argue anymore. Each spouse goes his or her own way and each lives his or her own life. Neither fulfills the other.

Other marriages live in deadly cycles. Joe Husband comes home from work. He has had a bad day. He is tired. His wife meets him at the door but he wants nothing to do with her. She says, "All I tried to do was to kiss you." He says, "Get away. I don't want to be bothered. I have had enough of people today." She says, "OK, I can understand that." He sits down to read the paper but the sport's page is missing. She used the sports page to wrap garbage with it. He then goes on his petty tirade about not touching the sports page. "Do what you will with the woman's page or the want ads but never touch my sports page." She is about to explode, but she bottles her anger. They sit down to eat, but because of this tension she overcooks the meal. He says, "What kind of garbage is this? I did not ask for a Burnt Offering." This is all she can take. They spend the whole evening arguing until they reach a stage where neither says anything to the other. Silence goes on for a few days until they forget about it and the cycle starts over again.

What should the wife do to avoid something like this? All of the descriptions of the husband were overt. He growled at the door when he came home. He complained about the sports page and the meal. If all she sees is the surface, she cannot meet his need. If she would have asked about his day at the right time, the result may have been different. Maybe his boss reprimanded him for something. Not only that but his coach dropped him from the baseball team because he was not good enough. All she sees is the growl. If she was mature and could see beyond his immaturity, she could step into his essential need. She can let the superficialities fly by her because she knows him. She can step into the interior of his life.

This understanding does not come overnight. It takes months and years to discover your husband's needs. This is more than talk. This is communication. This is more than an understanding of what he likes for a meal. It is an understanding of what is most important to him. Many women married for 20 years still do not

know their husband's essential needs. They have their own construct as to what his needs are.

A woman often form this construct based on her own needs. Her whole life centers on her own problems. She simply sees her own problems because her husband does not treat her right. She lets self-pity drive her relationship with her husband. Maybe the reason her husband does not treat her right is because she does not take the time to find out what he is all about.

Every man is different and unique. There is no categorization that covers all men. We cannot put every man into the same category. If a woman drags her dad into her relationship with her husband she commits a deadly error. "My dad did it this way and you are doing it that way." "My dad was horrible and therefore you are a monster." Each man is different. His wife must understand him for who he is and not have some imposed construct of what she thinks he might be.

Some of you may say that "It is too late for me. I am already married to the wrong man." There is hope, for there is the ingredient known as the grace of God. If a woman operates on the grace of God, she can change her situation.

also adorned themselves,

Peter now specifies what he means by adornment. The point is not physical adorning here. They adorned themselves in their person. However, neither does Peter put value on poor grooming. It doesn't make you more spiritual to neglect your appearance.

The Greek tense indicates that these women were accustomed to adorning themselves by being submissive to their own husbands.

Principle

A good relationship finds its foundation in personal maturity.

Application

Women who see a man with sex appeal and jump at him on a wave of libido make a big mistake. They will live in a vacuum. Very few women run down to the department store and pick out the first dress they see. No, they get a good picture of how it looks on them. Why should a woman jump at the first man she sees?

A woman with good sense does not fall for the fast line. She does not fall for clucking noises.

Everyone has strong points and weak points. This is true with everyone that walks on two legs. Everyone has points of strength and points of weakness. The woman who only sees strong points is vulnerable to the strong line. The man she falls for may be very unstable. She will not find the truth until it is too late.

Maturity sees both weak points and strong points. A mature woman can see the balance and love a man in the face of the true reality of who he is. True love has its eyes open. Love does not depend on the other person either. Mature love loves out of one's own capacity to love.

A mature woman is not in a hurry to become married. First, toward herself, she needs to build up norms, so she has mature judgment about people. Second, she can distinguish a cluck from a mature man. How many women who wear a size 9 dress would buy a dress size 16, or 6? Why would you marry a man who is size 16 when you're a size 9? Choosing a man is far more important than choosing a dress.

1 Peter 3:6

"As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

as Sarah obeyed Abraham,

Sarah followed Abraham from the city of Ur in the Mesopotamian Valley to Palestine. God eventually changed her name from Sarai (bitter, Genesis 16:6) to Sarah (princess, Genesis 17:15). Before her name change, she was a contentious wife. She constantly fought with Abraham. Even though Sarai was a strikingly beautiful woman, she was ugly on the inside.

Why did God change her name? The reason Sarai was bitter was that she did not have a son. God, in his grace, gave her a son (Genesis 17:15f; 18:12f). She relaxed in God's grace (Romans 4:16f). Hebrews 11:11 shows that she relaxed in God's grace by faith:

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised."

What happened to Sarai? God said "I promise." Sarah believed that promise. She relaxed in God's promise. The anxious, bitter woman became a beautiful woman. God stepped into her life. She

claimed by faith God's promise for her. So God singled Sarah out as an example of a woman who developed inner beauty.

The word "obey" comes from two words in the Greek: to obey and under. How does a wife arrange her life under her husband? By hearing under -- by listening to the essential needs of her husband. She does not do this with her mouth. She does this with her ears. She tunes into his core interests. She listens to his needs.

Christian women want to take the word "obey" out of their marriage ceremonies today. The reason is quite obvious but the reason is also quite humanistic.

calling him lord,

"Calling him lord" means showing Abraham respect. She acknowledged his authority over her. She recognized him as the leader of the household (Gen. 18:12). When Sarah was about 90 years of age God promised her a son. She believed God. She changed from a contentious person to a person of belief.

Lord is a title of respect for office. The husband's office is leader of the home. Sarah's held Abraham in high esteem. She never disparaged him.

Principle

God wants the wife to tune into her husband's essential needs.

Application

If a wife does not tune into her husband, she will not hear his needs. She hears his words, but not his meaning.

Many women do not listen to their husband's essential needs. Convinced that their view of his needs is right, they never question their assumptions about him. They, therefore, do not have their ears open to his true needs. Some men do not communicate their needs directly. They usually do not like to divulge the core of their being, yet they will reveal themselves if their wives develop an environment of inner beauty.

Why did your husband marry you in the first place? You made him feel more special than any other girl. You treated him like he was somebody. You believed in him. If now you downgrade him or never agree with him, you go against the very basis of why he married you. When you make him appear foolish and use sarcasm against him in public, you go against the very foundation of

your relationship. This also goes against inner beauty (vv. 1-5). Inner beauty opens men to disclose themselves to their wives.

whose daughters you are

If women of Peter's day follow Sarah's example they are her daughters. I do not think many women will form Sarah Societies today. This is to their own detriment, however. The purpose of the Sarah Society is to develop inner beauty by following Sarah's example.

The word "are" is really "become." The word "become" means that they became something that they were not previously. Previously they knew nothing of inner beauty, now they do.

if you do good

The word "good" means to do what is intrinsically right. We can translate "good" by the word "well." A Christian wife does well when she operates with inner beauty toward her husband.

and are not afraid with any terror

This is the only occurrence of this word "terror" the New Testament. A Christian woman does not let her husband - or anything else for that matter - terrify her. Some husbands can terrorize their wives into doing what is wrong. If women operate under terror they do not put their rest in God.

Principle

Fear hinders the development of inner beauty.

Application

Wives are to live with their husbands without fear. Fear hinders the development of inner beauty. The wife is not to infer, because God wants her to submit to her husband, that she is somehow inferior in person to him. She does not simply exist to meet his needs. Her role is to meet his needs and his role is to meet her needs. God's design for marriage is a reciprocal relationship. Each has a role to fulfill the other.

Submission through inner beauty happens to be the wife's role. This does not mean that she lives her life vicariously through her husband. Neither does this mean that she cannot achieve her full potential as a person. God designs that she also exists in her own right. God's design for the husband is not to live like a leech, sucking every ounce of blood out of his wife. Many men draw

the very life out of their wives and offer little in return.

Subordination does not imply inferiority. Submission is a purely pragmatic function so that each home has order. True, this does imply hierarchy but not hierarchy of person. This is simply hierarchy of function. No one argues that because the President of the United States has hierarchical authority over the country that he is the smartest person in the country. His role does not equate with his person. The role of the husband does not equate with his person. He is not superior to his wife.

Would we want pure egalitarian rights for our children? No. The reason for this is that they need the hierarchy of their parents to give them an environment to develop as people.

Christians who revolt against marital roles revolt against God. They allow deep invasion of their Christian belief system by a non-Christian, humanistic belief system. They never examine the assumptions of this cultural relativity.

1 Peter 3:7

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."

Today one out of every two marriages fail. Why is this? When people who are immature in their own person get into deep water with their marriage, they abandon ship and get a divorce. That is like having prefrontal brain surgery when you have a headache. Some people do not have the maturity to face their problems. Their judgments are weak because their spiritual judgment is immature.

We covered six verses for the wife. We have one verse for the husband, but Peter crams this one verse with a lot of content for the husband.

Most husbands don't know how to meet their wife's essential needs when they first get married. That is why most of us make a mess of marriage. We usually establish homes like the one in which we grew up.

Husbands,

With verse 7 Peter defines the role of the husband in marriage. This is an entirely different role than that of the wife.

In North America the role of the husband has dramatically changed in the last half century. After World War 2 psychologists discovered that 2.5 million men were rejected from the services for neurotic and psychotic reasons. People began wondering what was responsible for all this neurosis. Eureka! They found the culprit -- mom! Psychologists called it "momism." Apron strings were nothing more than emotional umbilical cords for these boys. They could not take the discipline of the army or the rigors of military service. They fell apart under the duress of boot camp.

A few years later another theory emerged. This theory postulated that it was not an over-protective mother, but a detached mother who was the problem. This mother did not care sufficiently or relate to her son properly. The pendulum swung to the other side.

Then someone suggested that it was the father who was the problem. He does not have time for his boys. Margaret Mead formulated the idea that husbands must become involved in the PTA and the Little League. Her theory postulated that we need to domesticate the male. With this, males almost lost their male identities.

Psychologists keep swinging the pendulum of theories. They develop a trend, then a counter trend about the role of the male. The Bible is very clear about the male's role in marriage.

Principle

God has a specific role for the husband in marriage.

Application

Some husbands criticize everything their wives do. They keep their wives off balance by constant criticism. They are insecure so they bolster themselves by minimizing their wives. She cannot be right otherwise they could not keep her off balance. They dole out money to their wives when their attitudes are right.

Other men pout and sulk if they do not get their own way. They bury themselves in golf or television and cease to communicate. They give their wives the "silent treatment." They do not assume responsibility as the head of the home.

likewise,

"Likewise" -- the husband has responsibility in marriage as well as the wife. Like the wife, the husband has a role in marriage. We had this same word for wives in verse one.

Some husbands say, "I thought it was my wife's responsibility to develop interpersonal communication. I don't have much time for such things. Isn't it the responsibility of the wife to be the 'keeper at home'?"

dwelt with them

The husband's primary responsibility in marriage is to "dwell" with his wife "with understanding." The word "dwell" comes from two words meaning to be at home and with. This is an intense verb in the Greek carrying the idea of sharing home life together. The idea is that the husband is to domesticate with his wife. The husband has responsibilities domestically.

Principle

God expects the husband to share his life with his wife.

Application

At times the husband becomes so busy and enamored with his job that he neglects his family. He neglects his children but he especially disregards his wife's needs. He is as busy as a bee, but someday he may find that his honey is gone!

A man seldom goes to work for his wife exclusively. He never says, "This business deal is for my wife." He is more likely to wonder if it will please his boss. Yet if a husband wants to kill his wife's spirit, all he needs to do is take her for granted. Husbands give their wives many material things. A husband and wife were arguing. The husband says, "Haven't I given you many material things." "Yes, Jack," she responded. "You have given me everything but yourself."

"It is not what we give but what we share, For the gift without the giver is bare."

Some men demand everything from their wives but give nothing. God wants men to master the art of understanding. Mutual understanding deepens the relationship between husbands and wives. God expects the husband to order his priorities with God first, his wife second and children third. She is to be precious to him. Apart

from the Lord, the most precious person on earth is the wife.

with understanding,

The phrase "with understanding" means according to the norm or standard of experiential knowledge. Husbands should understand their wives. He should be aware of her physical, emotional and spiritual needs. God expects him to protect and care for her (Ephesians 5:28-30).

There are a number of Greek words for "understanding." One means academic knowledge. Another means experiential knowledge. A husband must get personal, experiential knowledge of his wife. It is not enough that he knows basic facts about his wife. He needs to know her essential needs.

Women often have difficulty explaining their needs to their husbands. God expects husbands to know what their wives want out of marriage.

God expects the husband to know and love his wife (Ephesians 5:25-33) and avoid harshness toward her (Colossians 3:19).

Principle

God expects the husband to know how to make his wife feel secure in his love.

Application

A husband says, "My wife, just thinks about money, money, money." Some sympathetic friend says to him, "Well, what does she do with it?" The husband answers, "Beats me, I never give her any!" This is not dwelling with a wife according to the standard of experiential knowledge!

A man's wife is at A = not feeling cherished by her husband. She is afraid to ask for love because if she did she would not know if it were genuine. So she goes to B = a test of whether he truly loves her. He is about to play golf, but she asks him to put screens on the windows for the summer. Her interest is not primarily in the screens but to see if she is more important than golf. What she is truly seeking is C = to be secure in her husband's love.

Most husbands do not understand this. They cannot understand why she would make an issue about him not going golfing at this time. "I can put the screens on the house tomorrow." They miss the point because they do not understand that she does not want to ask for love. Yet they must understand it because this is at the heart of femininity. The wife prefers to respond to her

husband's initiative in love. This is how she proves to herself that he loves her.

Many men never know why their wives are upset. They do not know why their wives nag. Or why she is so miserable. It just may be that her husband has neglected to meet her essential need. Every woman needs to feel wanted and needed.

with understanding

The word "understanding" means experiential knowledge. The husband is to live with his wife according to his experiential understanding of her.

Principle

God expects the husband to understand his wife's needs.

Application

Here is a list of some experiential knowledge of the wife that the husband requires to meet her needs:

1. Make her feel desirable. "Honey, it is wonderful to be around you." Because of the routine of daily activities we can take our wives for granted. This gives the impression that she is no longer desirable. She gets the idea that we are not aware of her. Marriage implies some basic things. It implies companionship, sex, a home and children. A woman wants these things set in the framework of her husband's acceptance of her.
2. Appeal to her. Women want their husbands wants to continue to pursue them. She derives significance from being desired. Buy her flowers. This appeals to her significance to you.
3. Be kind and gentle. A man does not have to be feminine to show gentleness to his wife. The man who can be gentle is truly strong. A woman is a finely tuned instrument. A husband does not have to get back at her if he is mature. He can do this when he is inwardly strong. He does not immediately have to argue his point. He gives her time to think. A woman has little defense against real, tender love. She will melt before it.
4. Make her feel wanted and needed. One of women's biggest gripes is "My husband takes me for granted. He never thinks about me. He

goes on his way without considering me. He has his hunting trips every year. We never go on vacation by ourselves." The husband replies, "doesn't she realize I work in the salt mines all year?" This demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of his wife's situation. He is devoid of experiential knowledge. Does he not realize that her work too requires great skill? It is astounding how some husbands think they are the only ones doing any work. Every wife needs to feel that she is wanted and that she is an essential part of his values.

5. Be a man. A woman wants a man for a husband. It is true that some women distort their female role. When they have been rubbed the wrong way for a long period of time, some women become call us to their essential needs. She takes the leadership of the home. God did not make her for this role. Most women will let her husband lean on her emotionally. That is her nature. However, she will hate him for it.

I counseled a woman in her 60s. Her husband had just died. Something beyond his death was bothering her. She felt guilty for dominating him all through their marriage. I said, "Let me ask you something else. Did you also hate him for letting you dominate him?" For the first time in her life, she acknowledged that she hated him for this. She ran contrary to her fundamental nature of wanting protection from her husband. She dominated him which undermined her security. Women do not necessarily want a man who can press 250 pounds, they want someone with inner composure to handle the rough phases of life.

with understanding

As we saw in our previous study, "understanding" means that God expects the husband to have first-hand experience meeting his wife's needs.

Principle

God expects the husband to meet the essential needs of his wife.

Application

Here is a continuation of how a husband can meet his wife's needs:

6. Give her approval. "Honey, you look terrific in that dress." When was the last time you told your wife she is beautiful? What would

your wife say? "The last time? Well, let's see. Was it on our wedding day?!!" If your wife says, "Don't you think Suzie is cute?" Don't bite! You can say, "Dear, do you realize how beautiful you are? I picked you over all other women in the world. You are everything to me." It is easy to sit down for a meal and say, "You overcooked this one, didn't you? I like it well-done, but I don't like burnt offerings!" This is not experiential understanding of your wife. Experiential knowledge gives her approval.

7. Protect and shield her. Do you protect your wife? When you go to a party, do you run her down? How far do you carry joking about her?
8. Know her moods. Women are chemical creatures. It is amazing how many men do not know this. They take little note that it may be 10 days before her period. They may be totally oblivious to the reason as to why she is blue. They cannot fathom why she is up one time and down another.
9. Have economic responsibility. Economic insecurity is hard on a marriage. Economic stability makes a woman feel secure.
10. Set the emotional tone for the home. It is God's design that the husband set the tone of the home. If he does not do this, the wife will do it. Which requires her to leave her essential role and rule the home. If she sets the tone of the home she will become insecure. Femininity is essentially a responder. Masculinity takes the initiative. If a responder takes the initiative it distorts femininity. This will warp roles in marriage. If the husband is belligerent after a rough day at work and comes home howling then that is how the home will go. The kids will develop this mode of operation in their homes as well.
11. Avoid harshness (Colossians 3:19). The husband cannot take his wife for granted without consequence. If he is not sensitive to her essential needs then he will have trouble. He cannot neglect her without her feeling insignificant. He cannot be rough on her without distorting her femininity.

honor to the wife,

There is a word in the Greek that does not occur in this translation. It is the word "giving," which means to assign to, to portion out, give a share of.

God wants the husband to portion something out to his wife. That "something" is "honor."

Honoring the wife was a radical innovation in the ancient world. This was foreign to their thinking because women were next to cows in esteem. The Greek and Roman religions did not allow women to attend worship services in their temples. The only exception was the prostitute because she was the center of religion in the temple. Even in Judaism women had to sit behind a lattice or screen in the Synagogue.

"Honor" means deference, courtesy or respect. God wants the husband to hold his wife as worthy of value. She has intrinsic value. Someone said, "God did not create the woman from the head of man (to lord over him); nor from his feet (to be trampled by him) but from his side (to be a companion to him)."

The Greek is very strong -- "Give her an appraisal of preciousness." "Honor" means precious. Is your wife precious to you? Do you cherish her? Does she feel cherished? 1 Peter 1:19 translates this word "honor" as "precious" -- "the precious blood of Christ."

"Honor" means that the husband is to treat his wife with respect. She is a fellow heir of eternal life. He gives his wife deference. This implies that the husband perceives his wife's needs. We must see something before we can pay it regard.

Principle

God expects the husband to honor and respect his wife.

Application

It is popular to depict men as misogynists and exploiters of women today. Men are lower than a snake on snowshoes! If a husband heeds the principles of this passage he will understand an essential need of his wife.

There is an old proverb that says, "No one can stand the awful knowledge that he is not needed." The wife needs to know that her husband needs her. Our society greatly assaults the wife who stays at home. This lowers her self-esteem. The husband should not be a part of this attack.

The husband is to impart or portion out honor to his wife. The husband is to give his wife a very part of his being. In Christian marriage he cannot live as an entity apart from his wife. He must make his wife a part of his life.

The husband has the role of leadership in the home. As the leader, he has the great responsibility of initiating reconciliation after a quarrel.

"Honor" means worth. This means more than just saying, "Honey, you mean everything to me. You are the most important priority in my life." The husband must show that his wife is his number one priority by the time he gives her and by the emphasis he places upon her. To honor a wife means to attribute a quality to her. He has taken a long, hard look at his wife and then sees worth in her. "He that finds a wife finds a good thing."

Some men take their wives for granted. They so busily pursue their goals that they bypass putting priority on their wives. They cannot properly esteem them without putting priority on them.

A husband should cherish his wife like a precious gem. Some people have diamonds but they do not know how many carats are in that diamond. Is it a ¼ carat or 2 carats? They never stop to investigate whether their diamond has yellow streaks or whether it is crystal clear. Some people just do not know what they have. As well, some men do not know what they have. They never stop to examine the jewel called their wife. This is a fantastic lack of appreciation and awareness.

Husbands need to make a career of giving honor to their wives. They need to recognize her worth and let her know that she is precious. They should put her on a pedestal. This is quite a different interpretation of submission that what some men give it! To them, the woman is to be stepped upon. There is nothing in the Bible about that. The opposite is true. The wife is to be exalted, lifted up and highly prized.

Do you remember when you dated your wife before you were married? You dressed in your finest clothes. Others were after her but you wanted to be number one. You would go to the house and escort her to your car. Now married, you just beep the horn and yell "Come on, I'm ready." When you courted her you would put your arm around her as if to protect her. You opened the car door and seat her as if she were china. Now it is every person for themselves. You are half way down the street and she has not shut the car door yet. Now the marriage is simply a business partnership.

Where did the tenderness go? Where is the consideration you once had? You are good at

making her cry, why not be good at making her laugh? Pray this, "Lord, make me a blessing to my wife." If dad is a great lover, his boys will be great lovers too. If dad does not show much love for their mother, they will behave the same way toward their wives. Like begets like.

as to the weaker vessel,

This phrase says that the wife is the "weaker" vessel. In what sense is the wife weaker than the husband? Is she weaker mentally? Obviously not. Many women are more intelligent than their husbands. Is she emotionally weaker? Many women are stronger emotionally than their husbands.

Is the wife physically weaker? There are some aspects of physiology in females that are stronger than males. Women seem to be able to take more pain than men. If men had to bear children mankind would have ceased to exist millennia ago! They would talk about the pain of childbearing for the rest of their lives! Females do not have the same bulk or over-all bone structure as males. They generally cannot lift as much weight. They have broader hips so they can bear children. Physical weakness may be the point here but there may also be another issue.

Another possible thrust of this passage is that God placed the husband over the wife to be her guardian. The husband has authority over the wife in the marriage institution.

Genesis 3:16 says that God placed a "desire" in the female for her husband.

"To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3: 16).

The word "desire" means that the woman's orientation will be to her husband. She will be husband-centered. When she goes to the supermarket she looks for T-bone steaks because that is his favorite meat.

Many men do not realize this. Most women do not say, "Do you realize why I cooked this meal today? I cooked it for you." She may be the top surgeon in her field but she is still oriented to her husband. She may not be cognizant of it. If her husband does not show appreciation for this orientation she may begin to feel resentment toward him, without understanding why she

does. Remember the Frito-Lay potato chip ad -- "I bet you cannot eat just one." That is the point of the weaker vessel. The male meets a need in the female that she cannot meet without him. Both husbands and wives are vessels but God placed the male over (to "rule") the female in marriage. She is weak only -- in the sense that God gave the male the leadership of the home.

Husbands have a different field of operation. They operate by categories. A woman has but one category (her husband). Men operate in separate categories. When he goes to work, he pleases his boss. When he plays on a team, he does it for the team. When he loves his wife this is yet another category. If men do not realize this difference, they will have problems in marriage.

Principle

God designed the woman to respond to her husband.

Application

Some men feel that their primary responsibility from God is to repopulate the human race. No, his primary responsibility is to guard his wife's soul. That is why the Bible calls the wife the weaker vessel. God made her insatiable when it comes to her husband.

Let us suppose you have an insatiable desire for potato chips. You must have them. You may be very strong physically but physical strength has nothing to do with this. You are made weak by one thing -- the desire for potato chips. The woman wants her husband to fulfill her. No matter how noble or how great she may be in life, if she is truly feminine, she will be insatiable toward her husband's leadership. This however, does not mean that a husband can meet all of the needs of his wife.

This insatiability makes her dependent on her husband. That is why she is the weaker vessel. This starts with being "boy crazy" in her teens. Most women, no matter how poised they may be now, went through that stage. They discovered the male of the species.

This means that a wife orients to her husband. Her main occupation is to please her husband. This is why some women put up with some of the worst critters in the world. She wants to surrender her soul to him. Here is where rapport begins.

If there are two people in any institution one must have the authority to have smoothness of operation. Biblically, authority goes with the male. He may or may not be capable of handling this authority but, in principle, he has this authority.

the weaker vessel

"Vessel" here is utensil. We find utensils around the house. Every house has pots, pans, dishes, china, cups and silverware. The word came to mean instrument. The Old Testament uses the word "vessel" for a vessel in the Tabernacle or Temple. It was something set aside for special use. God sets the wife aside for special use.

The adjective implies that the husband is a vessel too. The wife is the weaker instrument.

God so sovereignly arranged creation that he built authority into it. God designed man to operate under authority. This authority comes out of the Trinity itself because the Trinity operates in authority. 1 Corinthians, chapter 11 shows how this principle relates to husband-wife the relationship.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11: 2-3).

There is alignment in the Trinity. There is hierarchy of authority in the Trinity. The head of Christ is God the Father. The alignment of the Trinity is Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Father has authority over the Son. The Son has authority over the Holy Spirit.

All three persons of the Trinity are God. They are one in essence yet align themselves under a hierarchy of authority. Each person of the Trinity has a role. The Father plans. The Son executes the plan. The Holy Spirit reveals that plan to the world. This does not make the Holy Spirit any less God than the Father or Son. It is simply his role.

God created the male first. The male, therefore, has priority in his role. He needs authority to carry out his responsibility as head of the home.

"Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the

angels. Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:9-11).

The man depends on the woman to a degree and the woman depends on the man to a degree.

Principle

Role in a relationship has to do with function, not person.

Application

If the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit operate under authority, should not the wife as well? It is not a matter of her person but her role. As the Holy Spirit is no less God than the Father or Son so the woman is no less a person than her husband.

In order for society to operate properly it is necessary to have authority. Authority gives order to institutions. The husband is also under the authority of Christ in the marriage relationship. Proceeding from the Trinity Paul argues that the head of man is Christ.

and as being heirs together of the grace of life,

The phrase "heirs together" means co-heirs. Husband and wife are joint heirs. This is a statement of equality. Cremer, the great Greek scholar, said that "heirs together" means personal equality based on equality of possession.

The word "together" means that the wife is a co-heir of fellowship, unity and sharing. What are they joint-heirs of? They are joint heirs of the grace of life. God gives them grace for living this life.

The wife has equal spiritual rights with her husband,

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 28).

Marriage is not an end in itself from a biblical viewpoint. God intends that marriage serve the ultimate end of glorifying God.

Principle

The woman has equal standing before God with the man.

Application

This verse says that the woman has just as much standing before God as the man. Man and woman are equal. They are not equal in role but equal in person. They stand equally before God. She has just as much eternal life as the man. She has just as many promises as the man. She has everything that the man has spiritually. She is a joint-heir with him. She is a co-heir with her husband because she possesses all that Jesus provided for her. Christianity flew in the face of the culture of its day. This was revolutionary thinking to the culture of that day.

that your prayers may not be hindered

"That" introduces a result clause. "With the result that your prayers may not be hindered." If there is bitterness in the marriage God will not answer the couple's prayers.

"Prayers" is in the plural indicating that this is family worship.

Do you know what "hindered" means? It means to cut into, to thwart. God will thwart our prayers. God will cut in on our prayers. The whole point is that the husband and wife must be in harmony if God is going to answer their prayers. If they do not have communication with each other they cannot have communion with God. If they are in domestic strife, they can pray from now until doomsday and God will not answer their prayers. If a husband does not honor his wife, if they do not live in harmony, God will not answer his prayers.

We may illustrate this by the telephone. The husband begins praying, "Hello God. I appreciate all you have done for me this past week. Thank you for blessing my business. I have a need. I would appreciate it if you will hear my petition?" At this point he hears clickety-click. God hangs up the phone on him. He has not dealt with a central issue—his relationship to his wife. "Lord, I cannot hear you" but the phone is dead. While the husband tries to talk to God, he has a problem with his wife. God will not hear him as long as that domestic problem is there. First get right with your wife then come to God in prayer. Then God will answer your prayers.

Principle

A broken relationship in marriage will hinder our prayer.

Application

An irate husband says to his wife, "Light bill! Water bill! Gas bill! When are you going to stop this wild spending?" Happy marriages depend on happy people. If you are a miserable person then your marriage cannot be happy. If you are a happy person then your marriage has at least a 50% chance of being happy.

Are you fulfilled in your marriage? God's design is that each partner in marriage fulfills the other. They can only do that if they are mature as individuals. Mature marriages depend on mature people. If you are a miserable person then obviously your marriage cannot be mature. If you are mature then at least your marriage has 50% chance of being a mature marriage. Marriage can be holy wedlock or unholy deadlock.

A woman telling of her marriage said, "I knew my husband 18 months before we were married but I really did not become acquainted with him until I asked him for money." That is the story with many marriages. Few people know each other before marriage. Each is attracted to certain things in the other, but rarely do they know each other before marriage. Maturity can see below the surface.

Young couples should set up a family altar on their first day of marriage. When children come they understand that a family has a family altar just like you are supposed to eat, take a bath or go to bed. Spirituality is part of a godly family.

1 Peter 3:8

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous."

Finally,

Peter now passes from specific exhortations to classes of people such as slaves, masters, husbands and wives to exhortations to all Christians. This paragraph sets before us the necessary information to live as true Christians. The issue now is how Christians should treat one another.

We now come to the responsibilities of all of God's own. Peter launches these directives by "finally." The household of God is to apply the following directives.

all of you be of one mind,

Classical Greek literature used "one mind" in connection with a war of common consent. World War II was a war of common consent. Just about everyone on the allied side felt the rightness of the war. It was a just war. The Vietnam situation was very different. Many people disagreed with U.S. involvement in that war. The point of these words is that Christians are to be in agreement as to our purpose. God wants us to have unity of purpose and mind. He desires common consent about oneness among Christians.

Harmony among Christians is the point here. Christians think in harmony when they agree on the principles of the Word of God together. God wants Christians to operate on values common to the Bible. He requires us to look at life from His point of view. His desire is that we bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

The early church operated "with one accord." The book of Acts uses this phrase eleven times. "One accord" speaks of spiritual harmony. Note the use of this phrase in Acts 1:14 (prayer), obedience (2:1), presence (2:1), purpose (2:46) praise (4:24, 31-37) unity in service (5:12), response to message (8:6), and unity for missions (15:25).

Principle

Spiritual harmony among God's own is important to the welfare of the body of Christ.

Application

For this "me" generation, everything revolves around the self. We expect everyone to submit to our way of thinking. God has a purpose to life that transcends our little world. It is God's desire that the church functions with one heart, not with compulsory uniformity. At high tide all the little pools blend together. Unity produced by the power of the Holy Spirit blends together differences among Christians. This is better than external unity.

Sin pulls people out of harmony with their family in Christ. Sin not only estranges us from our Lord but also from our friends. We have all seen organizations such as football teams fall apart because of suspicion and retaliation.

A baby is the center of his own universe. He demands that his needs be met. He wants immediate satisfaction. As he grows up, gradually he comes to realize that there are other people in the universe. He must adjust to them.

Development in the Christian life comes in part through this emerging interaction with other Christians. The new Christian becomes increasingly aware of the needs of others. At first he is a blind, unthinking little tyrant. But he soon learns that other Christians have rights. The more we experience loving others, the more we will mature. This is maturity via interaction. We do not grow by ignoring problems we may have with people.

Liberals unite on the least common denominator but conservatives divide on the least provocation. Some of us have the idea that just as long as we are orthodox it does not matter how we treat other Christians. This is to read the Bible with blinders on our eyes so that we see only what we want to see.

The best way to demonstrate that what we believe is right is to behave rightly. If we do not behave rightly it is because what we believe is not right. Without fail, belief affects behavior. Principle governs practice.

It is no wonder that wolves devour lambs. But it is a monstrosity for lambs to devour lambs. For lambs to devour lambs is a monstrosity.

The first challenge is in the category of our attitude. God wants all Christians to be of "one mind." This is not uniformity of thinking where everyone gets into line with how everyone else thinks. This is the farthest thing from Peter's mind. Diversity of viewpoint is a valid Christian value.

God does not desire Christians to have the same opinions but the same attitudes. His aim is not uniformity or same formulas of thinking. The idea here is, under diversity of opinion, to have a common loyalty to the Lord Jesus. As in the human body there is variety (eyelash, toenail, liver and bone structure) and unity of body, so the church has both variety and unity. This is unity in variety, not sameness of similarity. The church is an organism, not primarily an organization.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

This refers to likeness of disposition or sentiment rather than of opinion. Christians can disagree as to methods but we are to agree in spirit. Unanimity requires us to strike at the root of the matter. Such unity is not the product of indifference. It is spiritual unity. As a rope of iron

filings is held together by a magnet, so spiritual unity comes from the magnet of who Christ is and what He did for us.

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

Principle

God does not want the drab uniformity of bureaucrats but a dynamic unity, held together by overwhelming loyalty to Christ.

Application

In our bodies we have a muscle called the "adductor." The adductor draws one part of the body toward one another. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ. His work is to draw Christians together.

In the realm of music, there must be harmony for a tune to be delightful to our ears. Discord is hard on the ears. God wants Christians to be like a well-tuned piano. If a piano gets out of tune, this will result in discord and discord offends. Discord, dissatisfaction and murmuring damage the church. Two things are hard on the heart: Running up a hill and running down people.

Strife within the church causes more harm than persecution from without. We can explode a whole case of dynamite on top of a rock without doing much damage. However, if we bore a hole in the heart of the rock and insert one stick of dynamite we will blow that rock to smithereens.

One of the reasons there is such fragmentation in evangelicalism is that if we are not satisfied in one church, we can go to another. That is latitude and freedom. We don't need to be unhappy in a church that does not fit our style. If we do not like the music in one church, we can go to another. If we do not like the preaching in one church, then we can go to another church. If we like a less formal service, we can go where we will find it. There, we will be a blessing and we can rest at ease. We will cooperate and live in harmony with the church we choose. There, they can harness us to serve and there will be no grief or handicap.

Here is God's formula for spiritual unity: in essentials, harmony; in nonessentials, latitude.

having compassion for one another;

Peter proceeds to describe four characteristics of the "one mind." First, Christians with "one mind"

have compassion for others who are under duress. Christians with mental stability can think for others who cannot think under duress.

"Compassion" comes from two words to be affected and with. "Compassion" then means to suffer with someone else, to be affected in like manner. This carries the idea of fellow-identity. This is the interchange of fellow-identity. We get our English word "sympathy" from this Greek word but the idea is closer to our word "empathy." Empathy is participation in the destiny of others in all situations.

Empathy is not pity. Sympathy simply feels for someone else. Empathy attempts to identify with the other's need and meet it. God wants Christians to identify with fellow Christians in sadness or joy (Romans 12:10,15). Empathy is not feeling sorry for someone but doing something to help them.

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus can be touched. He is compassionate, a compassionate High Priest.

"For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven" (Hebrews 10:34).

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

God desires that Christians who suffered duress should express empathy toward those who are currently in suffering. God does not want Christian to go through life oblivious to the needs of others. He wants us to enter their experiences.

The Greek used this word for the harmony of celestial bodies. All bodies of heaven appear to operate in relation to each other. They all orbit in relation to one another. God expects Christians to orbit in relation to other Christians. He does not want isolation. When Christians hurt one another they want to withdraw from one another, but God wants us to weep with those who weep.

Principle

Empathy and selfishness cannot coexist.

Application

God expects us to take the viewpoint of people who suffer. This is empathy, which is more than mere sympathy. Do you identify with what someone else is going through? Have you ever participated fully in the pain of someone else?

People who lack empathy are correspondingly rigid in their dealings with people. They are usually indifferent and inhibited in their relationships. They keep to themselves because they find it difficult to identify with the responses of others. They do not make friends easily. Their social relationships are limited and formal. They cannot give themselves to another because they cannot put themselves in their place.

So long as the self is the most important thing to us, there can be no such thing as empathy. Empathy depends on the willingness to forget the self. God expects us to step outside ourselves and identify with the suffering of others. Empathy comes to our heart when Christ reigns within our hearts.

In music, harmony occurs when cords vibrate together. Do you vibrate with other Christians? Are you in harmony? Do you have affinity of heart with others in the kingdom? Compassion is two hearts tugging at one load.

It is because we love God's people that their misfortune, sickness, accident or surgery affects us. We feel badly that they have come upon evil days. Their tribulations and reverses concern us. Our first impetus is "I wonder if I can be of any help to them. Maybe I can get under their load during this time of trial." This is part of our responsibility to fellow Christians.

We belong to the same spiritual family. We belong to each other. We should tell those we love that we love them before they end in a casket. It is very difficult for our loved ones to hear us when they are in a casket. Why not throw verbal bouquets to them now while they can appreciate it? We think of this when Mother's Day comes around. "I am going to tell my mother how much I appreciate her," but she dies before Mother's Day. After her death you say "Oh, what a wonderful mother I had." Why not tell her now?

Some folk have a love for souls but have no love for God's people. This is inconsistent. They feel no responsibility to people in the local church. They think that their only responsibility is to get the gospel out. They are half right and half wrong.

Who wants to be 50% right? The same epistle that says "I am debtor" to the lost also says "own no man anything but to love one another."

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also" (Romans 1:14-16). I owe the lost and I also owe the saint. "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

love as brothers,

The phrase "love as brothers" is one Greek word. The word "love" is rapport love. It is a rapport-based friendship. We return love because someone loves us. This is reciprocal love.

This is not the word for sacrificial love but for human affection. Sacrificial love is the aggressive seeking of the good of others, independent of merit or reciprocation. This word refers to the return of someone else's love.

The love of God and the love of mankind go hand in hand. If there is no love of mankind there is no love of God. It is one thing to love but it is another thing to love as brothers. Do you love the family of God?

Principle

God wants us to love reciprocally as well as sacrificially.

Application

What are you doing for God's people? How are you helping God's people? This goes beyond missionaries. How can I help God's people in my home church?

We sing "Make me a blessing today." This is great spiritual ambition. "I would like to be a blessing to someone today. I wonder if I could spread sunshine and cheer to God's people today?" Pray this before you go to church, "Lord, make me a blessing to some discouraged Christian today. Make me a blessing to someone who is having a problem."

Not many people commit to being a blessing to God's people. We expect others to minister to us. We do not minister to them. Some of us cannot preach or sing but all of us can extend encouragement to someone. Why not determine that "I am not going to leave church without being

a blessing to some stranger or someone to whom I have not communicated for many months"?

As we become acquainted with the problems of others, our own problems shrink. We then realize that we are better off than others. Alas, we may not care and so, we may not help others. Then, we do not "love as brothers." God discounts loveless service (1 Colossians 13:1).

Are you waiting for an engraved invitation to serve others? Accept by face value God's Word that He wants you to minister to Christians. There is room for everyone in the service of the King.

be tenderhearted,

"Tenderhearted" comes from two words good and guts. This word literally means "good guts or inner bowels!" Obviously this is not the meaning here. The figurative and true meaning is good heartedness or good emotions.

The Greek world used this term for the seat of emotional life. "Good heartedness" moves us to meet the needs of others. God does not want us to relate to others with a hard heart. He wants us moved by the pain of others.

What are good emotions? Good emotions are emotions influenced by a mind that submits to the Word of God. When emotions influence our understanding of the Word then distortion of the Christian life will occur.

When emotions operate properly, they appreciate or respond to God's viewpoint and the Christian way of life. Emotions are the response of the soul. If we are going to enjoy our emotions, we must orient to the biblical viewpoint of life. When emotions control truth, then we will distort life. The whole issue is which controls which. If emotions control the mind then we are in danger of instability. If the Word controls our minds, then God gives us orientation to life. One situation is stable, the other unstable.

Being tenderhearted means that a person lets God's way of thinking orient his or her emotions. Biblically, the mind influences emotions, not the other way around. When emotions influence the mind the believer develops weakness in his or her soul.

Principle

Tenderheartedness is an attitude full of grace toward God's family.

Application

Our emotions appreciate the best of life based on who God is. Therefore, we must channel our emotions through the Word. The only way we can understand the essence of God is by the Word of God.

Emotions are not criteria for the Christian life. How we feel does not determine truth. We are not Christians because we feel saved. We are not spiritual because we feel spiritual. Emotions are simply the vent of our attitudes. Our status before God depends on what God says, not how we feel.

Are you cold hearted? Are you callused to the pain of others? Do you have the ability to imagine yourself in someone else's shoes? Can you put yourself in his or her place? Do you have an eye that can see the unseen? Some of us have lost our capacity for compassion. We are immune to the needs of others. Just as medical doctors become hardened to the pain of their patients, so Christians can become numb to the pain of their fellow Christians.

We can lose the ability to feel the pain in someone else's heart. Because of the exposure of so much grief through the media, we blunt our minds to the needs of others. When we hear daily reports of tragedy and suffering, we simply lapse into sloppy sentimentalism that can only feel the heartache of others for a moment.

We live in a sophisticated society where everyone develops a rhinoceros hide. We do that because of the dog-eat-dog world we in which we live. That is the kind of hide we need for the office. We need that to survive. The law of the jungle prevails there. It is every man or woman for themselves and the devil takes the hindmost.

That kind of societal attitude pervades our thinking and we bring that to church. We are not as tenderhearted as we should be. We are hard-headed instead. Our heart does not beat in harmony with God's heart. If our heart did, more of us would send get-well cards to the sick. Most of us do not have time for others. Why wait until someone lands in the hospital to send them a word of appreciation?

Tenderheartedness is at the very essence of who God is. His tender heart sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Only the overflowing love of God and the ability to identify with pain will give us a tender heart.

be courteous

"Courteous" is humble-mindedness. This word comes from two words humble and minded. This is to have a modest opinion of self. We are a creature, not the Creator. We utterly depend on God. In ourselves we can do nothing. Our standard of comparison is God Himself, and that is why we are humble.

"Courteous" means literally humility of mind. Such a person has no illusion about himself or herself. Because such a person is free from pride, he or she is also free from trying to impress other people.

Principle

God expects us to have an attitude of humility toward other Christians.

Application

A humble-minded person treats others with grace. Gracious thinking leads to gracious action. If you are a gracious thinker, you will treat others with grace because of how you view yourself. Even if they are rotten people, gracious thinking will produce gracious action.

Humble-minded people do not treat others on the basis of what they think. They do not lower their thinking to what others are thinking. They do not lower themselves to others' level. They forgive as Christ forgave. They do not hold things against others. They do not allow themselves to get into a feud. They are never bitter toward others. People who possess a humble mind demonstrate poise and confidence.

We can always compare down to people who have not reached our level. We have nothing to fear from this comparison. However, the Christian standard of comparison is Christ.

1 Peter 3:9

"Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing."

Not returning

"Returning" means to give back, to pay off. This conveys the idea of retaliation. The Christian does not give lip for lip.

Principle

A mature Christian does not retaliate.

Application

Two wrongs do not make a right. When someone says something bad about us, we do not have to get back at them. If we do, we lower ourselves to enter their game.

We do not have to build our happiness on someone else's unhappiness. Vindictiveness is not God's method of providing us happiness. When we exercise vindictiveness we take the matter out of the Lord's hands. Now it is a matter of dog eat dog. In this case, the Lord will kick both dogs! That's why some people never take one step forward in their Christian lives. Our vindictiveness, implacability, bitterness, hatred and antagonisms produce self-induced misery.

This results in multiple discipline. If we retaliate by gossip, we parade the sins of someone else, even though it can be imagined or real, God's discipline will come our way. Discipline comes when we try to hurt others. If the sin is real, God may take the discipline off that believer and give it to you (Matthew 7:1,2).

evil for evil

"Evil" is anything that is base or evil in character. God does not want us to return insult for insult. Personal revenge is not in God's plan for the believer.

"Do not say, "I will recompense evil"; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you" (Proverbs 20:22).

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27).

"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17-21).

"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

"For" is means in exchange for. Christians are not to give back an evil in exchange for an evil. Retaliation is not proper Christian methodology to resolve broken relationships.

Principle

Tit for tat is an immature approach to dealing with life.

Application

A quick retort satisfies our surface emotion at the moment but does not deal with the essence of the problem.

It is natural to return evil for evil. It is the easy response: "I'll get even with you if it's the last thing I do." Yes, it may be the last thing we do.

Retaliation makes two evils instead of one and can make it worse. If we have a streak of retaliation in us, we need another perspective on Christianity. If we use recrimination as our method of dealing with problem people, we do not operate on God's methodology. We operate out of a sour soul.

An evil is an evil in the sight of God no matter what reason we may give for it. It is a big order to operate in maturity. It is easy to be nice to people who are nice to us. We can freely shake hands with people who are friendly to us, but is much more difficult to shake hands with people you know will knife you in the back verbally.

If we render evil for evil this makes us no different from the non-Christian. If we render good for good that is man-like. If we render good for evil that is Christ-like, and rare. If we want to evaluate the progress of our spirituality, try putting on good for evil for size.

What is your attitude toward people who criticize you? Can you still smile at them? Do you pray for them? Can you treat them as nicely as you treat your friends? When we do this, we operate in true spirituality.

or reviling for reviling,

The phrase "reviling for reviling" is more specific than "evil for evil." "Evil" speaks of deeds. "Reviling" speaks of words, speaking evil to someone's face, not behind their back.

A "reviling" is a verbal wrong, a abuse. "Reviling" is retaliation. To revile is to execute malice toward someone in a fierce, bitter manner. When we gossip or criticize someone as a pay back, this is a reviling. This is a reproach.

Principle

Verbal assault is not a proper method of Christian communication.

Application

God wants us to watch our mouth. We do not have to always stand up for our rights. Rights have become a panacea to our generation. Everything is measured by rights. If we enter quarreling and angrily scold someone because they were that way to us, we move off God's will for us.

"Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Do you use scathing or insulting speech as your method of communication? Do you retaliate in kind? Note David's attitude to Shimei, a relative of Saul. David replaced Saul as king. Shimei called David a man of Belial (the Devil).

"Then Abishai the son of Zeruah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog [Shimei] curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!' But the king [David] said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' And David said to Abishai and all his servants, 'See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. 'It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day'" (2 Samuel 16:9-12).

When Christians adopt a "pay back" attitude they step into God's role. By taking vengeance in our own hands we play God. God reserves the right to take vengeance because He knows all the facts. We interfere with His justice when try to play his role. God reserves the right of vengeance.

but on the contrary blessing

"Contrary" means the opposite. God expects us to operate the opposite way of how we would normally behave when it comes to people who verbally assault us.

"Blessing" -- to speak well of, to praise, invoke a blessing upon, to cause someone to prosper, speak well of. Are you willing to invoke a blessing upon your enemies? Are you a blessing to those who do you evil and even rail against you?

"And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure" (1 Corinthians 4:12).

Principle

Blessing others is God's method of communication even in the face of verbal abuse.

Application

After telling us what not to do, Peter turns to what we should do. After negating vengeance, he shows us how to respond to our detractors -- to give contrary blessing. Do them good. God expects us to take the guff but he wants us to go farther -- he wants us to bless them.

We do not extinguish fire with fire but with water. Likewise, we do not extinguish verbal abuse with verbal abuse but with blessing. We have a much higher chance to resolve the issue by taking the high road of maturity.

Maturity returns blessings for railing. Matthew 5:44 says, "Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those that persecute you." God calls us to do the difficult thing. The source of giving blessing to others is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38).

If someone is vindictive toward us, God wants us to think about how He has blessed us. We put it in the Lord's hands (1 Peter 5:7).

Principle

God calls us, because of His salvation, to live a mature life before those without Christ.

Application

Most everyone seems religious nowadays. But how many true Christians have people met? They need to come into contact with people who do not give tit for a tat. They need to see mature reactions to verbal abuse. They need to observe how people can live above a life of retaliation.

Non-Christians may not be able to understand this initially but they will come to know that it is Christ who makes the difference in your life. They have little confidence in Christians who claim regeneration but their lives are no different than anyone else.

The way we prove we have come to know God personally is our behavior. If we claim salvation but do not behave saved, no one will believe us. They will discount everything we say. Are we a blessing to our enemies? If not, we do not live up to our calling.

that you may inherit a blessing

"That" is a result clause. We receive a blessing as a result of blessing those who revile us.

"Inherit" means to obtain by inheritance. Some people can receive an inheritance but get nothing in that inheritance. God, however, gives content in His inheritance. We must do something to obtain this blessing operate on God's viewpoint about retaliation.

"Blessing" means to speak well of someone. This is not the blessing of privilege. God called us to inherit His blessing, and this, in turn, should encourage us to bless others. God calls us to do this because He blessed us by His call.

Principle

God blesses those who bless others.

Application

God blesses us on the basis of His own character, not ours. This puts us all in the same boat because our blessing precludes merit. God does not bless us because of our good; He blesses us because of His good. He blesses us because of who He is and what He has done for us. Blessing, therefore, depends on the character of God.

We share God's blessing of grace when we "know" this. We cannot earn or deserve God's blessing, because it depends on our knowledge of God and His provisions in grace for us.

Understanding this grace blesses us. Retaliation deprives us of God's blessing.

The Christian who blesses others does so on the basis of His own blessing from God. This is why He can rise above retaliation. The maturity of His character transcends motley little resentments people may have toward Him. God blesses Him because of this.

1 Peter 3:10

"For 'He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.'"

For 'He who would love life

Verses 10-12 in 1 Peter 3 are a direct quotation from Psalm 34:12-14. Let us look at the historic coloring of Psalm 34. This passage deals with one of the darkest times of David's life. Being sought by Saul, David fled into the territory of the Philistines. David was a threat to the Philistines because he defeated them in war, so they brought him before their king, Achish. They would have killed him if it were not for the fact that he played insane. It was against Philistine culture to kill the insane. David left to the cave of Adullam in the wilderness of Judah. His friends joined him. He played the role of phony. Note the last phrase of this verse "And his lips from speaking deceit." David's method of deception became the subject of Psalm 34. He got nothing but misery for this.

"Love life." There is a vast difference between living life to the full and mere existence.

Principle

God expects Christians to live life to the full.

Application

Some Christians need a reminder that it is no sin to "love life." This is how God created us. God provides for every situation in life. Life will have its reverses but we can still love life in the midst of these times.

Jesus came to give spiritual life (John 14:6) and abundant living (John 10:10). Jesus delivers us from ourselves. If we live for ourselves, we will never "love life" to the full. Are you cynical and disillusioned with life? Do you anticipate each day? If you do not, this may be an indication of a spiritual problem. It is possible for a Christian to lose the quality of his life. Jesus can make our

lives meaningful by living for God's glory and man's good.

Some people are disillusioned with life because they are not Christians. By going through life without Jesus Christ, people live for themselves and waste their lives. Jesus came to give us a purposeful life. Otherwise we will go into old age sitting around waiting for the undertaker.

Most people have nothing to look forward to beyond the grave. They feel shortchanged and they are. Most people work, sleep and play. That is the full orb of their living. Life is a treadmill for them. Like a work horse, they plod through life. They die of boredom. They wish they could escape their dead lives. They have no high purpose for which they live. Some, as soon as they get off of work, stop at the bar to dull their feelings.

Throw yourself at the foot of the cross before you throw yourself at the foot of a train. Life with a capital "L" begins at Calvary (by believing that Jesus died for your sins).

And see good days,

"Good" is intrinsic value. Christians can live each day with intrinsic value by making every day a day that can produce something that honors God. When Christians see God's grace in their lives and see how God works out the situations in their lives, they will refrain their tongues from downing other people.

"See." We will never arrive at "good days" as long as we indulge in sins of the tongue. We will not have a good day if we sin with our tongue.

Principle

The Christian can have life at its best.

Application

Gossip, maligning and judging people cause "bad days." Do you impugn motives of other people? You do not know whether it is true or not but you think it is true so you "share" it with someone. This violates a "good life."

We have a phrase today called "The Happy Hour." It's called that in our society simply because it dulls the dead feelings of the stark life we live. There is a big difference between "the happy hour" and "good days."

There are not many Christians today who see "good days." Disappointed, disillusioned and

disenchanted, they turn to their own resources. They run on the treadmill of meaninglessness. They will see no good days with this belief system. They will not see God's viewpoint; they see only their own. These Christians lose the thrill of sins forgiven. They are dull to the divine operating assets of the Christian life, and they have little interest in spiritual things. They simply seek human success by using God as a gimmick to accomplish their humanistic ends.

It is amazing how many Christians have little interest in spiritual things. Christians in this condition begin to question the reality of Christianity. No wonder! Other judge themselves and say, "Maybe I am a phony. Maybe I have never truly become a Christian." No doubt many of these people never came to Christ in the first place. They drop out of church because the void violates their view of Christianity. Monkeys like to be with monkeys, cows like to be with cows and vibrant Christians love to be with vibrant Christians.

A person that keeps his tongue from reviling and speaking evil of others will "see good days." Christians who watch their tongue live peaceable lives.

Do you enjoy life at its best? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Be honest in your character. Noble attitudes produce noble living. This makes life worth living. We will see "good days," days that are worthwhile and beneficial to self and others.

Let him refrain his tongue from evil,

"Refrain" means to cease, desist, make an end or stop. Christians who fill their minds with hurt, anger or bitterness will manifest those attitudes in his tongue. Sins of the tongue will come to the fore.

"From" -- source. God does not want us to operate from the source of our evil attitudes. That's where gossip comes from.

"Evil" -- base or morally mean.

Principle

The mouth is an indication of our spiritual condition.

Application

The tongue ruins many lives:

"Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell" (James 3:5-6).

Refraining our tongues from evil means that we are to get a good grip on our tongue. When God saves a soul, He saves the tongue as well. Do you have a converted tongue?

Does your sharp tongue hurt those closest to you? Is your mouth unkind? People come to a place of maturity when they come to realize that most of what they say about someone will come back to them.

We need to learn to "refrain" our tongue from evil. How many times do we have to put our foot into our mouths before we learn this lesson? We cause more hurt with our mouths than anything else.

**"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips"
(Psalms 141:3).**

If Christians are to see good days they must refrain from something. Is that evil word on the tip of your tongue? Are you about ready to give someone a piece of your mind? A heart free from anything base is able to control the tongue.

**"Put away from you a deceitful mouth,
And put perverse lips far from you"
(Proverbs 4:24).**

**"Whoever guards his mouth and tongue
Keeps his soul from troubles" (Proverbs
21:23).**

**"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your
mouth, but what is good for necessary
edification, that it may impart grace to the
hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).**

**"Let your speech always be with grace,
seasoned with salt, that you may know
how you ought to answer each one"
(Colossians 4:6).**

1 Peter 3:11

"Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it."

and do good;

This "good" is the good of intrinsic value. Motivation for doing "good" is our relationship to Jesus Christ. We do not do good to gain approbation with God. We have his favor. We do good because we already have his favor.

"Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness" (Psalm 37:3). This is the right sequence. This is how we prove that we know the Lord.

Principle

We do good because of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Application

What kind of "good" are you involved in now that you have come to Christ? We have to involve ourselves in other people's problems. We confine our lives to our little world. We limit our relationships to our little family and a couple of close friends. Thus our lives shrivel into a small world.

Let him seek peace

We come to the third "Let him" -- "Let him seek peace." Christians already have peace with God (Romans 5:1) so we do not seek peace in that sense. Non-Christians should seek that kind of peace. Christians seek peace with people.

"Peace" is a well-ordered soul or a well-ordered relationship. In this context it means souls well ordered together. Christians can fellowship together even though they may differ about a lot of things.

Matthew uses "seek" of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness in the sense of striving after his kingdom:

**"But seek first the kingdom of God and
His righteousness, and all these things
shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).**

Here Christians are to attempt to attain the state or condition of peace with other people. When people lay charges against us, we seek peace with them.

and pursue it

"Pursue" is to do something with intense effort and with definite purpose. This pursuing person moves quickly and energetically toward some

objective. He strives toward peace with the idea of seeking eagerly after it. Romans uses this term literally of pursuing (as a calling) the things that make for peace: "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (chapter 14, verse 19).

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Principle

The mature Christian seeks to find a platform of peace even with his enemies.

Application

Are you in the midst of a running battle with someone? Some Christians avoid other Christians. They can hardly speak to them in a civil way. If they can keep from it, they will not shake hands with them. They go out different doors of the church. This is not a loving Christian life.

God wants us to be tenacious about peace. As a drill sergeant keeps after his men to accomplish their goals, keep going after peace until you win it. The world still has a problem with Saddam Hussein because the US did not "pursue" him till they defeated him. Is peace with people an objective for your life?

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

1 Peter 3:12

"For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,

Christians need not fear the cruelty of their enemies because God watches over them. When the Bible attributes eyes and ears to God, we call this an anthropomorphism. An anthropomorphism attributes human physical characteristics to God. This anthropomorphism usually describes an attribute or action of God that forms an orientation or policy toward us. The eyes of the Lord here is God's careful oversight of his people. God specially watches out for his people. He will never fail the righteous.

"Eyes" is qualitative in the Greek. God ever watches. He watches in order to bless us.

"For His eyes are on the ways of man, And He sees all his steps" (Job 34:21).

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13).

"On" means "upon." God's eyes are favorably watching us.

"Righteous" -- Christians are righteous in two senses: 1) God views us as righteous in His eyes so we do not have to gain His favor. This is judicial righteousness (Romans 5:1). We already have God's favor because of the death of Christ for our sins. 2) We are experientially righteous when we walk with the Lord. The latter is the point of this verse. This righteousness is experiential righteousness, not judicial righteousness.

Principle

God sovereignly and favorably cares for us all of the time.

Application

It is wonderful to know that the eyes of the Lord are over us all the time. He watches, provides and protects us. He anticipates our problems. He knows the trouble that lies ahead.

And His ears are open to their prayers;

"To" means direction toward. God directs his attention toward our prayers. He is not off in the universe attending to other things. He pays attention when we pray. He is there for us. We can be assured that our prayer have been heard. We can also know that he will answer our prayer for our ultimate good.

God is omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (everywhere present) in both his sovereign care and response to prayer. This is especially true with suffering. Suffering is the main theme of the whole book.

Should anyone threaten injury to us, God is willing and able to intervene for us. God attends to our requests. God has good ears. He can hear everything we say. That is another reason why we "refrain" our mouths from evil.

"Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" (James 5:9).

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14).

Principle

God focuses His attention on our prayers.

Application

What a picture of God! Here is God with His eyes focused on you and his ears earnestly listening to your cause, ready, willing and able to answer your prayer. He is ready to come to your aid when you pray. We do not have to propitiate him to gain his openness to answer prayer. He is already open to answer our prayer.

God is not too busy doing other things in the universe to answer our prayer. He delights to respond to our need.

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil

"But" -- this is a right-about-face word. In contrast to answering prayer, God will discipline those who step out of His fellowship.

"Face" is an anthropomorphism indicating fellowship with God.

"Against" indicates discipline of the child of God who steps out of fellowship with God.

"Those who do evil" -- those who commit some sin and do not confess it. The Greek indicates that these are people who not only step out of communion with God but stay out for a long period of time.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (Psalms 66:18).

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Proverbs 15:8).

"The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous" (Proverbs 15:29).

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3).

God provides everything necessary for our lives even in our discipline. He provides a way to get back into fellowship. If we immediately confess our sin God takes that discipline off our lives.

Principle

God does not answer prayer when we are out of fellowship with him but he does provide a way back.

Application

Are you trying to pray while out of fellowship with God? God in most cases will not answer your prayer. The only thing that you need to do is get back in fellowship with God by confessing your sin. Specify the particular sin you committed acknowledging that it took Jesus to the cross.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

We have now come to the end of the quote from Psalm 34:12-16 (1 Peter 3:10-12). Paul memorized Scripture. Obviously he could not have written this passage had he not memorized the Old Testament. The Bible permeated his thinking.

Principle

The memorization of Scripture is crucial for spiritual development especially under affliction.

Application

Those who wait till the trial is upon them wait too long. We need to get Scripture in our mind to fortify us against suffering. We cannot transcend our circumstances in the midst of suffering unless we already have the Word in our mind. We must transcend trial before the trial comes.

1 Peter 3:13

"And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?"

And who is he who will harm you

"And" is a continuation of the idea of the quote running from chapter three, verses 10-12. If God sovereignly and providentially cares for the righteous, no one can do anything to us that God does not approve.

"Harm" in this context means the discrediting of our testimony. Christians will face harm even though we attempt to live at peace with our enemies but our testimony will stand in the face of affliction. The issue here is how the Christian responds to suffering.

Principle

God promises Christians immunity, not from difficulty but from the discrediting of their testimony.

Application

This verse does not say that the Christian will be free from pain or suffering. That is against everything he says in the book. The point is that no harm can come to our testimony if we follow God's will.

Much pain that comes to Christians is due to our own problems, not our testimony. People find it hard to work side by side with us. We may be arrogant and contrary. Others of us may be inert or unprofessional. If we do what is "good" we will not suffer for these things.

Do you rest in God's providential care? Do you believe that God cares for you in such a way as to manage the circumstances of your life so that everything comes out to the good?

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

if you become followers of what is good?

"Follower" means to burn with zeal. A "follower" is one who deeply commits to something and is therefore zealous. He is an enthusiast. Paul calls himself "zealous."

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the

feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today" (Acts 22:3).

Zealots were uncompromising devotees. They were fanatics who swore to liberate their native land from oppression by every possible means. They prepared themselves to die if necessary.

The name "Zealots" referred to an extreme subdivision of Pharisees who were bitterly hostile to the Romans. Josephus refers to them as the "fourth sect of Jewish philosophy" (in addition to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes). Judas of Galilee founded the Zealots (Acts 5:37). After his rebellion in A.D. 6, the Zealots fostered the fires of revolution that broke out again in A.D. 66. This led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Simon, one of the Apostles, belonged to this sect (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).

"Become" means to become something that you were not previously. Christians in Asia Minor were not followers of the good but... Peter asks them to become zealots for the good. He wanted them to suffer for a good testimony, not for some reckless action.

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

What harm can come to God's children if suffering should occur? Note the qualification "if." God promises exemption, not from difficulty, but from "harm." Zeal for good robs opponents of justification of their wrong treatment of us.

God prevents our enemies from going beyond His providential concurrence of what will happen to us. Nothing happens outside His permissive will. He turns everything to good account.

"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He

has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 45:5).

Principle

Nothing happens to us without God's permission.

Application

We can rest in God's providential care for us when we do God's will ("good"). God exempts us from a tragic testimony when we walk with Him. In this, God prevents our enemies from stepping outside His sovereign permission. No hurt can come to us without His permission. He turns everything to accomplish His purpose.

Are you resting in God's providential care for you? Why do you churn if you trust God's sovereignty?

1 Peter 3:14

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled'."

But even if you should

"But" -- strong contrast. In contrast to suffering for sin, we suffer for "righteousness' sake." We either suffer for our sin or we suffer for God.

"If" in the Greek expresses strong doubt that they will suffer for righteousness. "If" deals with contingency. Suffering may not happen immediately. There is a risk of suffering. Pain always looms around the corner for all of us. Peter says, "I wish you were suffering for righteousness' sake but you are not." They were suffering for self.

Principle

We all face the risk of suffering and pain.

Application

Sooner or later we will all face suffering. If we depend on happy times to establish our character we will have a great fall one day. If we depend on the circumstances of life to make us happy, we will ultimately experience misery. We generally do this in periods of prosperity.

All of us will experience pain in our lives. Pain is for our growth. God allows two kinds of misery to come into our lives: primary and secondary.

Primary pain comes from God's sovereign placement of pain to gain our attention. Secondary pain is self-induced misery. This comes from personal sin. We pay the consequences of our choices.

suffer for righteousness' sake,

"Suffer" -- God does not make Christians immune from suffering. Everyone suffers in this life. We cannot get through life without pain. Some suffer more than others but we all suffer. None of us are exempt from trial.

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Even the godly suffer.

God calls us to do well and suffer for it (1 Peter 2:20, 21). He wants us to raise our suffering to a higher level than simply suffering for our sin (1 Peter 3:13). Suffering for righteousness sake is suffering for taking a stand for what is right.

Principle

Unrighteousness has difficulty tolerating righteousness.

Application

True righteousness irritates unrighteousness, for godly righteousness quietly condemns unrighteousness.

You may say, "It is not fair that I suffer for righteousness' sake." However, we do not expect things to be fair here on earth. People are unfair. Even Christians are unfair. In soccer, a referee may miss a call. It is not fair to the player fouled, but it is a reality. The referees are not fair and the folks in the away stands are not friendly. All they do is boo. Before we crush our hearts we better learn that things are not fair here. We are "strangers and pilgrims." We are on the devil's playing field. If the world dines and dances us, something is wrong with our testimony. They do not know where we stand. People know us by our enemies as well as our friends.

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26)

you are blessed.

The word "blessed" is different than the word "blessing" in verse 9. This word means privileged.

Christians who suffer for righteousness' sake will enter a higher state. God will give them felicity of soul. This is not happiness but the person experiences fortunate divine blessing upon his life.

When we suffer for the highest reasons God blesses us in a special way. He blesses those special people who make an impact during times of duress.

God chooses to bless us with the opportunity to represent Jesus Christ on earth. He suffered and we suffer. We can simulate His sufferings to a world who does not know Him.

Principle

God designs all suffering for blessing.

Application

"Blessedness" is a higher state than happiness. We have God's favor if we suffer for righteousness' sake. We enter a state of blessedness, even during duress in our lives.

Are you truly blessed for suffering for righteousness' sake? If we do right and suffer for it, we transcend the tawdry issues of time.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matthew 5:11).

People face many problems today. We endure domestic problems, financial problems and physical problems. If we suffer so many burdens and problems that we do not experience felicity of soul, we present a perverse picture of what it means to be a Christian.

How can we convert suffering to blessing? Some suffering has to do with divine discipline. If this is the case, all God expects of us is to confess our sin.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Suffering cannot touch the things that matter most. Changes and chances in our lives will not affect our state of blessedness. If we put priority on values of this life we make ourselves vulnerable. We could lose those things in a flash of time. We would put ourselves at the mercy of deep hurt. The man who transcends earthly

values is the man who is anchored in eternal things.

And do not be afraid of their threats,

Two important directives close this verse. The first is "do not be afraid of their threats." "Do not let people intimidate you." The second is "nor be troubled." This is dis-equilibrium of the person. Some people get off balance when trouble comes their way.

The Greek gives an implication that is hard to translate -- "Do not fear their fear." The word "threats" is the word "fear." It is the fear that arouses terror -- panic. This is the fear that causes flight -- dread, terror. This conveys the idea of not letting people intimidate us. First "fear" had the meaning of flight -- flight caused by being scared. Then the word came to mean that which may cause flight -- the intimidation of adversaries

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

"But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine'" (Isaiah 43:1).

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

Principle

God wants us to put fear to flight.

Application

What casts fear into your soul? You have the providential care of the Lord on your side (1 Peter 3:13). We have promises of God's presence (Hebrews 13:5). Most of us fear things that might happen but the future does not belong to us. We have no jurisdiction over tomorrow (Matthew 6:34) so why should we fill our minds with anxiety?

"There they are in great fear Where no fear was, For God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you; You have

put them to shame, Because God has despised them" (Psalm 53:5).

It is ridiculous to fear something that is not there. We are afraid of our own shadow. Why should we fear a shadow? That, however, is exactly what we do. We fear things that are nonexistent. We tell our children, "Don't be afraid, I am here." Nevertheless the fear is real to them.

Some people fear old age. Nothing is more pitiful than a crotchety old person. They know they are close to death and they are terrified of it. Pity them that have nothing to look forward to. The Christian is one day closer to being with the one he loves the most. He is one day closer to the open arms of Jesus. The best is yet ahead for the child of God.

Fear can ruin our outlook on life. We can become so disabled with fear that we will not venture into realms that we could. We thus live in a small orb entrapped by a world of our own making. We will ruin our lives if we permit fear to paralyze us from attempting feats beyond our confidence.

When we suffering for righteousness' sake, God can use us in a unique way to demonstrate the reality of Christ in our lives. Why should a Christian cower in fear? God placed us on the stage of suffering with a purpose. One reason why God allows suffering is to demonstrate how sick our heart is. This is a fresh direction about suffering for righteousness sake -- suffering is a high calling that demonstrates the reality of God in our lives.

Fear comes in many different sizes and lurks in unexpected places. There are many things to fear. Small children fear very few things. They do not fear traffic, fire or heights so they get into trouble. Teens have many fears. Fear stalks their paths all through high school. They are afraid that they will not be popular. They are afraid that people will not like them. They are afraid that the right kind of people will not date them. When we move into young adulthood, different fears loom larger and more complicated. The longer we live, the more fears will become a reality in our lives unless we know the One who delivers from fear.

do not be afraid of their threats

The above phrase is the second quotation of Isaiah 8 in 1 Peter 2:8. This phrase is the beginning of a quotation from Isaiah 8:12,13. Isaiah in the historic context exhorts Israel not to fear Assyria

but to fear the Lord because He sovereignly sent the Assyrian army for His purposes. As in the day of Peter, intimidation was true in the days of Isaiah. Assyria tried to intimidate Israel into submission.

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

There are two cautions in the beginning of this quote from Isaiah 8. The first is do not be afraid of their "threats." Many people are afraid of people. Fear of people will cripple an effective testimony. It will paralyze and immobilize us from achieving our goals. If we are afraid of what people say about us we will never accomplish much. Are you afraid of a person or a group of people? Fear of people will hinder our service for the Lord.

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6).

"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Principle

The fear of man destroys our potential.

Application

If the Christian is to have felicity of soul, he cannot fear people. There is no excuse for fear in the Christian life. If we fear, it is because we do not apply God's Word. We do not claim His promises.

People who live in fear that folks will not like them live in subjection to other people. Teens fear that their peers will not put their stamp of approval on them. Without that stamp of approval, they are done.

The pressure of public opinion begins in grade school. It intensifies until high school where peer pressure forces teens into patterns of life they do not like. Fear grips their heart. But character transcends the grip of peer pressure. It is character that helps teens choose the high road of living under the influence of God rather than people. No one wants to be an odd ball. Everyone wants to be accepted by the community. We all want to be popular. Whoever told us that we should live by the opinions of other people? Why are we out to win a popularity contest?

The only way we can be free from fear is to be faithful to higher purposes. God wants us to be faithful to Him. We know we can take our fear to Him. We can say, "By the grace of God I need no longer fear man. I do not have to gain the approval of my peers. I do not have to impress my peers. I only want to be what God wants me to be."

Do you not share your faith due to fear of people? Are you afraid that they might reject you? This will immobilize us from being an effective witness. May God deliver us from fear. Only He can.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

God does not want us to fear the fear people cast toward us. The only people who can march through life without fear are those who claim the promises of God and fear God, not man.

When faith shines, fear dissipates. This does not mean that we will never fear anything. We do not become dehumanized when we exercise faith. We, however, do know the one to whom we can take fear. We can trade our fear for confidence and courage. "I do not have to establish a reputation. I need not impress others. All I want is to please the Lord."

nor be troubled

"Troubled" means disturbed, agitated or ruffled, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into confusion, shake together, frightened, terrified. In this passage it means to not to allow ourselves to be intimidated, confounded, agitated, disturbed, disquieted. This is mental and spiritual agitation and confusion. People can trouble our minds, if we let them, we violate this command.

Secular Greek used this term for throwing an army into confusion and disorder. Thus, the army enters into anarchy and confusion. Are you in some sort of uproar because of acute emotional distress or turbulence? God does not want us to be in great mental distress -- "Do not be distressed"

Principle

God provides a way for us not to be upset by our enemies.

Application

God does not want trouble to get us down. Do not let that situation you're facing get you down. Rise above it. When someone asks, "How do you feel?", we often respond, "I feel pretty good under the circumstances." But we are not supposed to be under the circumstances. God expects us to be on top of the circumstances.

"Yes, but I'm defeated. I'm whipped. I do not know which way to turn. I cannot make heads or tails of the mess I'm in." What does it take to have a content mind? What would you give to have a content mind? Contentment frees us from greedily grasping for more -- more money, more power, more prestige.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

When pressure hits at a point in time, this person becomes disturbed and upset. The opposite of this is to be relaxed. We are free. No one is free until they are occupied with Christ. No one can witness without fear until they understand the presence of Christ in their lives. A young man shows his girlfriend's picture with pride. He does not tie himself up in knots talking about her. He is relaxed about it. He is proud of her. A Christian who loves his Lord tells of his grace with pride.

Our hearts automatically gravitate towards trouble. Because our hearts are trouble-prone we have a world filled with disturbed people. It does not take much to disturb some of us. We hear people say, "I am upset." This is the meaning of "troubled." To be upset means to be upside down. Why do we become upset so quickly? What made us blow our top?

What troubles you just now? "It is not what you eat that kills you. It is what is eating you that kills you." What is eating at you today? What is eating your heart out? What robs you of the peace that should be yours as a twice-born person?

"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1).

We gravitate to trouble. We have a knack for trouble. We stew about it and it looms larger and larger until we break under trouble.

"This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6).

"The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

God not only saves us from sin but he saves us from trouble. Physicians listen to people narrate their troubles all day. If he took all that home with him each night he would burn out quickly. We have one who takes all our problems to himself (Psalm 55:22; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 5:7).

Trouble comes in many packages. What kind of trouble do you face today? Why not put the situation in God's hands? Have you had bad news today? Have you had hurtful news about your children? That kind of trouble comes in an ugly package. How do you handle your problems? Do you take those issues to yourself? Some of us never learn what to do with our problems. If we take our problems to ourselves it will make us old ahead of time. It will stoop our shoulders and break our hearts.

"He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD" (Psalm 112:7).

God comforts us in the midst of our trials (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). God permits us to go through deep waters so that He can encourage us. We then can encourage other Christians who are in trouble. We then become fellow-workers with God. We can be a blessing to someone in trouble.

1 Peter 3:15

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to

everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"

But sanctify

"But" -- contrast. Instead of allowing fear to grip your heart, let the contents of this verse be your mode of operation. What is the remedy to "fear" and "trouble?" "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

The context is still the quotation from Isaiah chapter 8. Isaiah spoke to Judah on the eve of the Assyrian invasion. His message -- God is all sufficient in His power. Isaiah spoke these words when a great conspiracy formed against him. They were eager to destroy his reputation. As storms of personal accusations arise against you, how do you handle them?

"Sanctify" -- The word "sanctify" means set apart. Since the Lord is supreme, give him a unique place in your heart.

Principle

Give God a special place in your heart.

Application

If we enshrine or enthrone God in our heart, we place Him first in our values. We make Him distinctively foremost in our lives.

It is our responsibility to "set apart" or enshrine God in our hearts. That makes us a "sanctifier." No one else can do this for you. Only you can set apart. Your parents cannot do this for you. Your wife cannot do this for you. Your husband cannot "set apart" Christ in your heart. This is your decision. You come to a crossroads in your life when you make this decision. You come to realize that Christ is your entire life, not just a portion of it.

"Lord, I am yours: lock, stock and barrel; hook, line and sinker; body, soul and spirit." That relieves us from being the boss. The Lord alone has authority over our lives. Many Christians accept Christ as Savior but not Lord. "Savior, yes. Lord, no. Take your hands off my life. Mind your own business. I'll run my own affairs." That is why many of us spend a great deal of time in the divine wood shed.

When we back our belief with life and lip, we sanctify the Lord in our lives. If we do not sanctify the Lord in our lives, we have little to

say. We cannot back up what we say. Life does not match lip. If non-Christians see nothing in us that supports what we believe, then we do more harm than good.

Do not write a check for \$10,000 if you have \$1,000 in the bank. Some people are all talk in witnessing. Their lives show they have not set the Lord apart in their hearts. It is better to write a check for \$1,000 if we have \$10,000 in the bank. It is our responsibility to write the check. We should back what we say with how we live.

We never know when an opportunity will present itself. We are creatures of mood and moment. At times, we do not feel like sharing our faith and the opportunity slips away. We lost the opportunity. Some of us may not even recognize the opportunity -- we are that dull spiritually.

"So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

Set the Lord on a pedestal and put Him on the pinnacle of your life. Give Him His due. Crown Christ King in your heart. Bow before Him and say, "Lord, thank you for the sweet and the bitter. You have the right to do with my life what you please. My life is yours." Only committed Christians can live like this. Christ is more than their Savior; He is their Lord. He is more than a fire escape from hell. These Christians match their lip with their life.

the Lord God

God is "Lord." Once Peter himself said to God, "Not so, Lord" (Acts 10:14). Do you see the incongruity and inconsistency in this statement? If we say, "Not so" to the Lord then we dare not call Him "Lord." How can we contradict the Lord as Lord??

Later in Acts, chapter 10, Luke calls him "Lord of all" (Luke 10:36). The old statement that "If he is not Lord of all then he is not Lord at all" may not be fully true but there is some truth in it. He is not Lord over any area of our life that we do not yield to Him. He is still Lord in principle but not in that area of our experience.

"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). "For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and

rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 14:8-9).

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality" (Colossians 2:23-25).

in your hearts,

"Hearts" -- our entire being. The heart is the center of the self. Reverential awe should rest at the center of self. "Out of the heart are the issues of life."

Principle

God holds the right to rule our lives.

Application

The New Testament calls Jesus "Lord" 663 times and "Savior" 16 times. Jesus expects to be Lord of your life. He insists on being Lord of your home. He will not play second fiddle to your priorities.

The earlier we learn this lesson, the better. That will keep us from treating our own opinions as the most important. He is Lord of our work. Whether you are an employer or an employee, He must be Lord at your workplace. He must be Lord at school. You dare not cheat because it is outside the domain of Jesus' lordship over your life. He is Lord over your financial life and budget. He is Lord of your sex life. Your eyes and ears are His. You do not watch or listen to things that displease him. He has the right to do anything He pleases with His property without any whining from us. Our lives are not our own; they are His.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

When we set apart the Lord we make Him #1 in our lives. He is priority.

"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Do we suppose that we can ignore Jesus' lordship and still expect God's blessing upon us? The more we make much of Jesus the more blessing comes our way. It is impossible to make too much of Jesus. Nothing delights the Father more than making much of Jesus Christ (glorifying Him).

Jesus is not content with 90% of our affection. Your wife would be very unhappy with you giving 10% of your love to another woman! We cannot reserve anything for ourselves and still call Him Lord of our lives. He will not play second fiddle. He will not take a minor role in your business or home. He cannot be Lord and take second place.

Putting Christ in the center of the heart will orient us to eternal things. If we give Jesus Christ singular place in our hearts nothing can impair our proper orientation to life. If we come to a reversal in life, we maintain stability.

Without this, we are vulnerable to the whims of life. If our relationship to God is the most important thing to us we can never lose that. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." Because of the immutability of Christ, the chances and changes of life cannot touch us. Even in suffering we are free from instability. None of us can escape suffering but suffering cannot invade the things that we value the most.

and always be ready to give a defense

"Always" -- we are ready at any time to share Christ. Our defense of the faith should not simply be on occasion but we should "always" be ready to do so. Be ready to testify at a moment's notice.

"Be ready" -- prepared. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. In the plural "ready" means to be ready in many different ways. There is no one way to witness for Christ. Each individual is different so we must take different approaches with different people. We need to be flexible in our appeal. If we stereotype our method, we will not reach some people. Those who occupy their minds with the Lord are then always ready to share their faith.

Secular Greek used the word "defense" in the court room as a legal term meaning to talk off from. It used "defense" for an attorney who, by talking, got his client off a charge. This is oral defense of Christianity.

"Defense" occurs 8 times in the New Testament.

"But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17).

Principle

Every Christian's faith is on trial and the juror asks us for evidence of our Christianity.

Application

Our neighbors, the jurors ask about the evidence we have for what we believe. They consider charges against Jesus Christ. We should present a good case for Christ in the courtroom of life. Can you defend your reason for your life as a Christian?

The world is suspicious of Christians. It is inevitable that they will call upon Christians to justify their belief. "Tell me how you know your sins are forgiven." Eventually people will detect that there is something different about you. You do not operate like most people. When this stirs their curiosity you will have an opportunity to speak the gospel.

Many people have the custom of writing off Christianity as so much religion -- "Everyone has a religion and you have yours. After Christians go to church on Sunday they live different on Monday. It makes no impact on their lives." True, most people do not let their religion interfere with their lives. They might as well trade in their testimony. What good is it? What is different about your life?

Are you ready to orally justify your case for being a Christian? Do you give personal testimony to Christ? "Life" testimony is not good enough. We must give oral testimony to what we believe.

Christians should be willing to defend their faith. Do you believe that your faith is defensible? Are there good reasons for what you believe? Can you intelligently state your reasons for being a Christian? What is your position? Is your faith firsthand? Did you believe second-hand from your parents? If it is firsthand, then you have reasons for why you believe. Have you thought through what you believe?

The jurors will take the evidence of our lives, weigh it, and make their decision accordingly. Christians are on trial for their life, their Christian life. As the world examines us, they will make their judgment based on what they hear. They want information to form a judgment. They want

an accounting of the evidence for our Christian life.

The truth of Christianity does not primarily depend on academic defense by theologians but on you and your personal testimony. You mingle with the world but theologians, off in ivory towers, rarely see the people you encounter. People in your sphere see you every day. Every day they form judgments and give their verdict about you. By this they determine whether Christianity is valid or phony, real or false, whether they want it or not. You are a walking defense of Christianity. You are on trial every moment of your life. How do you stack up?

Maybe you feel that you are not on trial. You see no need to defend the reality of knowing Christ. "After all, I don't know the Bible. I'm no theologian. I'll leave that for the preacher and theologian." This flatly contradicts Peter's point in this passage. If you do not defend Christianity you will lose the case. Non-Christian jurors pronounce your life and faith guilty of fraud. He says, "You are guilty of inducing others to part with their belief when you are no different yourself."

to everyone who asks you a reason

"To" -- Give a clear cut testimony "to" everyone who asks about why we believe what we believe.

"Asks you" -- While under duress, some non-Christians will ask Christians why they believe. They want to know about one thing -- our "hope." Hope in the Bible is more than a wish -- it is confidence. Our "hope" is our confidence about God and eternity.

The word "reason" in the Greek is our English word "apologetics" (to give a defense of our faith). To give a "reason" is to give a rational account for your claim to Christianity.

Principle

We need to know why we believe what we believe.

Application

People take greater interest in our life than in our theology. Personal experience makes a testimony effective.

Is your faith a first hand discovery or a second-hand story? Do you know why you believe what you believe? God does not ask us to preach. He simply asks us to answer with our personal

testimony. "This is what I was and this is what the Lord did for me. This is what I am and this is what I am going to be."

Nothing is as potent as a personal testimony. On the witness stand defending the truth of Christianity, we cannot say, "I believe so and so." We must give witness to the facts. Our neighbors, the jurors, say, "We don't care what you think. We want to know what you know. What did you see or hear?" Based on our testimony, they will decide for themselves whether to accept or reject Christ.

In one sense, God is the true judge and our neighbors are the ones on trial. As He conducts court, He gives them a chance to respond to their advocate, Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1-2). We bear witness to Christ. By sharing our personal testimony, we have the privilege of giving non-Christians an opportunity to accept the clemency God has already given them through Christ. If they accept, as we have, His finished work on the cross, they will possess eternal life.

Jesus Christ is our "hope." We have no hope apart from Him.

for the hope that is in you,

"In you" -- the in-you confidence. "Hope" in the Bible is not a wish about the future but a conviction and confidence about what God will do. When people who bad-mouth Christians see what this hope does for believers, they will marvel at Christians' stability.

"Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5).

"If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Colossians 1:23).

"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

"In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Titus 1:2).

"That having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil" (Hebrews 6:19).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

The Bible depicts non-Christians as having "no hope."

"That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Principle

Christians have confidence about time and eternity.

Application

Confidence comes with accepting Christ. Christians have stability about time because they know they have eternal life.

We will never do a good job witnessing until we are confident about our place in God's program. Christ is our hope, not our religion or good works. How the world needs to hear this!

Do you pass the suffering test? In case you flunked the test of suffering, you will face another exam by God. If we pass this test, we qualify to witness. One of your friends says, "Why do you not fall apart like you used to do?" Confidence brings stability in the adversities of life.

If you have not believed that Jesus paid the price for your personal sin, you can have confidence that you will have eternal life if you believe that Jesus died for your sin.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18)

with meekness

"With" -- in company with. When asked about your hope, you answer in company with the two attitudes of "meekness" and "fear."

"Meekness" is in-wrought grace.

Principle

God wants us to witness with the attitude of in-wrought grace.

Application

If I have received grace from God, I should communicate with grace to others. Meekness has to do with treating others with a grace attitude. A grace attitude is one that acknowledges "everything that I have, I have from God."

Christians should not look down their self-righteous noses at non-Christians. Christians are sinful as well. We should not view ourselves as experientially better than non-Christians but simply recipients of God's grace. We need to extend the same grace to them that God does toward us.

We are no better than those without Christ. We need to remember what we were. We give our testimony in the spirit of what we were. We share with them our personal struggle. We put ourselves in their place.

We cannot win people with arrogance. An overbearing attitude may win an argument but it will not persuade non-Christians of the reality of Christianity. A grace attitude will disarm those we wish to influence for Christ.

Do you witness with the attitude that people must be fools if they do not accept Christ? Do you try to ram your belief down their throats? Is your approach to evangelism a bludgeoning method? The case for Christianity must come by the attitude of "meekness."

and fear

"Fear" -- respect or reverence. "Fear" means we respect people while witnessing to them. We recognize their significance as a person. They are a soul for whom Christ died.

The Bible sets forth many passages dealing with attitude in winning those without the Lord:

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

"A true witness delivers souls, But a deceitful witness speaks lies" (Proverbs 14:25).

"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-3).

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1).

"To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

"Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:33).

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Principle

The attitude of respect for people is a crucial aspect of the witnessing process.

Application

If non-Christians do not accept your testimony, you still love them. Be patient in your testimony with others. Make your testimony a process. Learn how to condense your testimony. Learn how to compress it. Also, learn how to enlarge upon it.

It is not our business to win people to Christ. That is the Holy Spirit's business. Our business is to share about our personal experience with Christ. We cannot force people into the kingdom. Give your testimony with respect for the person with whom you share your spiritual journey.

We will make mistakes in sharing our faith. We are not perfect. God does not expect perfect people to share their faith.

We are the only born-again person some people will ever know. We are the only conceivable person who will be able to reach them. We may be the best Christian that some people know. That is especially true with our family.

1 Peter 3:16

"Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed."

Having a good conscience,

The phrase "having a good conscience" develops "with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). We meet criticism by living a life beyond reproach.

The Greek word "conscience" is wider than the English word. It is not so much the intuition by which we discern between right and wrong as the soul measuring of itself.

Literally, conscience means to know with. We are witnesses to ourselves. We testify to our own conduct. This is especially true of the consciousness we have of ourselves in our relation to God. This is self-testimony. It is the result of our application of the Word to experience.

Our conscience will never condemn what we believe to be right. This is a conscience that springs from a "faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5). A good conscience is knowledge that we do right and are well-pleasing to God. It is a mind free from liability to itself.

"This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16).

A "good conscience" is the best way to set forth a testimony. "Having a good conscience" means holding to norms of the Word of God. These are God's standards, not ours. If we hold these standards we can handle any witnessing situation. When people detract from us, our

standards speak to the situation. This does not mean that we never fail, but that we operate with consistency and integrity.

Principle

Consistency in conscience establishes credibility with non-Christians.

Application

Unjust suffering puts Christians on the stand for all to witness. When asked to testify in court, we speak with the credibility of our conscience. If we do not have a good testimony we will not bear witness properly.

Our conscience is the internal monitor that establishes our standards for comportment. If we violate our conscience, the monitor lights up. We grieve the Holy Spirit. If we are carnal Christians, we will not bear suitable testimony to the wonder of Christ. We discount what we say with how we live.

Our conduct must not give lie to our confession. We uphold our witness with our conscience. We show that the slander against us is a lie by the authenticity of our lives.

The Christian is both defendant and attorney. We defend our faith with our mouths and back it up with our lives. Life and lip must match for a powerful testimony.

When non-Christians speak evil of us as wrongdoers, we bear witness to them with a consistent testimony. A changed life gets their attention.

The previous verse referred to the Christian standing before the courtroom of those around us who do not know Christ. As we stand in the spotlight of this courtroom our conduct must match our testimony.

those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed

Conduct is the basis for Christian testimony. Conduct justifies our testimony.

The immoral conduct of a few Christian leaders can cast a pale over all Christians. This can blunt our testimony until we can establish our own character of conscience. In this way our conscience is no obstacle to our affirmations.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they

were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it" (Acts 4:13).

"For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you" (2 Corinthians 1:12).

Principle

The best way to stop criticism is through a consistent life.

Application

We cannot escape criticism in this life. This is especially true for Christian leaders.

If we claim to be Christians and we live carnal lives, who will give a dime for what we have? Whom will we persuade to come to Christ? We meet criticism with changed lives that are beyond reproach. This will silence slander. It will disarm the critics of their criticism. The only unanswerable argument for Christianity is a consistent Christian life.

Does your life recommend Christ? Nothing we say with our mouth will undo the damage we do with our life.

1 Peter 3:17

"For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

For it is better,

It is axiomatic that Christians will suffer in God's plan. The only option is whether we will accept that suffering as the will of God for us.

There is a suffering of higher rank -- "better." It is better to suffer for "well doing" than for "evil doing." It is better to suffer for a just cause than to suffer for deserved discipline. All suffering is good for the Christian but undeserved suffering makes us partners in Christ's suffering.

if it is the will of God,

"If" -- In the Greek, this "if" is a wish. It is Peter's wish that Asia Minor Christians suffer in the will

of God for well doing. "I wish it was true that you suffer for 'well doing' but it isn't true." Obviously it is not the will of God that we suffer for wrongdoing. It is better for us to suffer in the will of God than out of it.

Suffering is the sovereign plan of God -- "the will of God." If it is inevitable that we suffer in God's plan, we need to make sure it is because of a good testimony rather than a poor testimony.

"For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:19-21).

Suffering never comes to us except by the will of God.

"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:15).

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

to suffer for doing good than for doing evil

Some people are surprised that they suffer for doing the "good," yet that is precisely the will of God at times. If we growl, grumble and accuse God of injustice in our lives, it sabotages our living in His will.

Principle

Nothing is as important to the life of the child of God as the will of God.

Application

Suffering comes by the will of God. Nothing is more important than the will of God for the child of God.

What God ordains for us is His will. We are not only to be in the will of God, but we are to live to the will of God. We live an exciting life because

God has something planned for us tomorrow and next year. Maybe tomorrow we will be in heaven. We do not know the future but God does. Therefore, we need not fear the future. We now live to God.

"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2).

What God ordains for us is the best for us. Child of God, if you face difficulty and are at wit's end, come to rest in the will of God.

1 Peter 3:18

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit."

Even though 1 Peter 3:18 is one of the greatest verses in the Bible, Peter introduces it incidentally while dealing with the broader issue of Christian suffering. This superb section of Scripture sets forth the wonderful work of Christ on the cross.

For Christ also

"For" -- The previous verse declares that it could be the will of God that we suffer for well doing. Now Peter sets before us the greatest example of suffering, the Lord Jesus himself. By connecting this "for" to verse 17 we see the connection between Christ's suffering and our blessing. This "for" guarantees our eternal blessing.

"Also" -- Jesus, like us, suffered for well doing. Jesus is not an example of suffering for non-Christians but for Christians. We cannot perfectly follow the example of Christ any more than we can imitate Rembrandt. Since we cannot follow his example, we cannot enter heaven and therefore we need a Savior. Only the death of Christ on the cross saves sinners. We cannot perfectly keep the ten commandments. We do not have it in us.

Principle

Only Christ can sufficiently suffer for sin in God's eyes.

Application

Some people complain "What have I done to deserve this?" They believe that all suffering is from sin. They gain satisfaction from this thought, "O.K., I had this coming. I'll stand up and take it

like a man." When the pain is over they say, "There! I've paid the penalty. I'm square with God." This is double suffering, because now they grieve their Lord by suffering for sin rather than accepting the finality of Christ's suffering for sin.

suffered once

"Suffered" -- Jesus died on the cross innocently and undeservedly. This is the point of bringing Christ's suffering into this passage. Jesus suffered undeservedly and we suffer undeservedly.

At the cross God the Father poured all of the sins of the world upon Christ. Jesus and he died for all sin there. No more dying is necessary for sin. No one needs to pay any further penalty than what He paid. Now God is free to save those who believe in Jesus but only by way of the cross. He is satisfied with the suffering of Christ.

Principle

Only Jesus' suffering holds efficacy before God for our salvation.

Application

I submit to you the Bible fact of the eternal efficacy of the death of Christ. We cannot add to the finished work of Christ on the cross. Christ plus nothing equals salvation. If this good news reaches your heart, you will enter into a right relation with God eternally. God will completely eliminate your sins eternally. You will know emancipation from paying for sins yourself. Christ's death eliminates all the sins of all time.

Christ's death for sin is the opposite of "good works" salvation. "Good works" gospel is spurious, a mere counterfeit of the real thing. Joining a church, baptism, trying to do good and being nice to your neighbor is not the gospel of the Bible. The finished work of Christ accomplished our redemption forever. The split second we accept this message God puts to our account in the bank of heaven all that Jesus is. This cannot happen apart from the cross. When we come to the cross this takes place.

Have you accepted Christ's death for your salvation?

once

"Suffered once" - once for all. Jesus suffered for sin once for all. There is no need for anyone else to suffer for sin. His suffering holds perpetual validity, not requiring repetition (Hebrews 6:4;

9:28; 10:2). The word "once" means a single occurrence -- one time. Jesus' suffering was a single occurrence to the exclusion of any other similar occurrence - once and for all, once and never again.

The word "once" shows Christ's suffering was conclusive in God's eyes (Hebrews 9:26-28; 10:10,14). Jesus' death for sin was unique because He suffered once for sin. This is in contrast to Old Testament sacrifices which were constantly repeated (Hebrews 7:27; 9:28; 10:10, 12, 14). Priests brought sacrifices repeatedly to the altar, but Jesus died once for sin to give us access to God.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the sacrifice for all sin for all time. Unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, his death occurred once. Christ's suffering for sin never to need be repeated. He eliminated any further sacrifice for sin. He paid the price fully. Now God can fellowship with us with integrity.

"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Romans 6:10).

Jesus defeated all sin for all men for all time. Jesus finally defeated sin in his death. There is not need for any repetition of his sacrifice because his sacrifice was sufficient for everyone for all time.

"Not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another -- He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:25-28).

"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

Principle

Jesus' death for sin was totally efficacious (effectual).

Application

On the cross, something happened that never needs repeating. Jesus suffered for sin and no one needs to suffer for sin again. Sin was finally defeated. On the cross, God dealt with humanity's sin in a way that is satisfactory for all sin, for all people, for all time. No one ever has to sacrifice for sin again.

Jesus' death eliminated any need for further sacrifice for sin. He paid the price for sin fully so we do not need to suffer for sin at any point. His sacrifice was the utter sacrifice. He fully paid the price for sin.

Something happened on the cross that never needs to happen again -- no one has to suffer for sin again. On the cross, God ended any further need for suffering for sin. The cross is sufficient suffering in God's eyes for all people, for all sin, for all time.

The work of Christ on the cross finished suffering for sin. We have a finished salvation, an accomplished redemption. Nothing we can do can add to the finished work of Christ upon the cross.

We need not do penance for sin. Jesus is the only person who has the coin that God Almighty will accept in payment for sins because He was the only "just" person who ever lived. The good news is that He paid for our sins fully.

No further enactments of Calvary are necessary. No further sacrifice of the body of Christ is necessary because He suffered "once" for sin. He suffered once and for all. Any attempt to react to add to the price he paid on the cross discounts His finished work on Calvary. To reenact that work is blasphemy.

Have you accepted the finality of the suffering of Christ for your sin?

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).

for sins

"For" -- The death and resurrection of Christ are the ground for what we do what we do. The word "for" carries the idea on behalf of. Jesus died on our behalf. Jesus' death on the cross is our substitute for suffering for sin. Jesus is the only sacrifice that could ever take away sin. His sacrifice was once and for all.

The word "for" explains Christ's example of suffering for doing right (1 Peter 2:14). Jesus was not exempt from suffering. His perfect life outraged people. This did not intimidate Him because He put His case in the hands of God. This should motivate the Christian to place their situation in the hands of God.

"Sins" interrupt the relationship between God and people (1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4; 1 John 2:2). Christ's sacrifice for sin resolves that broken relationship. He stood in our place to suffer for sin (Galatians 3:13). By Jesus' offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, He vicariously took our place. He died once for all sin. The whole object of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is to restore that lost relationship.

Jesus' sacrifice was substitutionary. The Father appointed Jesus to take the place of our suffering for sin. Jesus was God's delegate for hell. He took our hell that we might have His heaven. This is a great interchange at least for us, not for Him.

Principle

Jesus was our stand-in for sin

Application

Jesus' work on the cross was vicarious. God's holiness demands sacrifice for sin.

When we receive a receipt marked, "Paid in full" it is a great feeling. Jesus paid our sin debt in full.

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).

the just for the unjust,

One of the great titles of Jesus is the "Just." Jesus is the "Just" person. As the Just one He suffers for the unjust. His suffering brings cleansing to us when we accept His death on our behalf. Christ's person qualified Him to suffer for sin. 1 Peter 2:22 says Jesus did "no sin." He suffered for our sins, not His sins.

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

"For" -- instead of or in place of. Jesus' work was vicarious. He suffered in our place.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

Jesus took my hell. He died instead of me. He died to pay for my sins, not His. There is no credit to us that Jesus forgave our sins. No glory to us -- all glory to Him.

The object of Jesus' sacrifice is to restore our lost relationship with God.

"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Galatians 1:4).

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

"Unjust" is a title for those without Christ. This means that those without Christ are unjustified. They are not declared right in God's eyes. They are not forgiven or pardoned. They do not have the benefit of Christ's death for their sins. They must bear their own sin.

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites" (1 Corinthians 6:9).

Principle

Jesus substituted for our place in hell by going to the cross.

Application

This is the substitutionary work of Christ in our place. We should have died on the cross for our sins. Jesus took our place there. The holiness of God demands that He reconcile His perfect righteousness with our sin. Jesus' death on the cross meets that demand.

Are you an "un"? Are you unjust? "Un" means no, not, negative. If you do not know Christ's death for your sins you are a big negative in God's eyes. What will alert you to your condition? An accident? What will it take to awaken you to your actual status before God as an "un"?

If you try to save yourself by operation bootstraps, you insult the integrity of God who made it clear that only Jesus' death on the cross can save us from sin. If we try to pay for sin ourselves with our religious pennies, we do not realize that we are totally bankrupt in God's eyes. In our bank there are no assets. We have nothing in the checkbook to barter with God.

In God's bank (Jesus' death on the cross) we have all the assists we need to hold eternal status before God. Have you come to the place where you are ready to stand solely on the finished work of Christ on the cross for eternal salvation?

that He might bring us to God,

The sacrifice of Christ brings us into audience with God.

The words "bring us to" means lead into the presence of someone -- to lead before, to bring into the presence of, to bring to. This carries the idea of the ceremonial sense of "presenting" at court. Since Jesus takes the initiative this is His saving work, not ours.

At the court of kings in the first century there was an official called the Prosagogeus (the introducer). He gave access to the king. He decided who should be admitted into the king's presence. He held keys of access to the king's presence. The person who holds keys to go into the presence of the Father is Jesus Christ. He gives us access into the presence of God. Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18

Jesus' suffering brings us into the audience chamber of the King (Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18; 3:12). This is the right of access to God's presence. In secular Greek life an "introducer" would give access to the king. It was his function to decide who would be admitted into the king's presence and who was kept out.

Principle

The ultimate purpose of the cross is to bring humanity to God.

Application

We will never find God by ourselves. We would not know whether to go north, south, east or west. Only Jesus knows the way. Only He can bring us to God. Someone brought us into this world, now someone needs to bring us into the next world. Jesus is the only one who can bring us to God. John 10:16; Hebrews 2:10

being put to death in the flesh

The Romans put Jesus to death. Death was an experience that the Lord Jesus never knew from eternity. He constantly related to the other two members of the Trinity until this point. At His death He personally represented every member of the human race in His death. Even in His death, He brought good news.

"In the flesh" – the physical death of Christ on the cross. This defines that his death was a physical death. Here Peter transports us to the foot of the cross. It was the humanity of Christ that died on the cross, not His deity.

but made alive by the Spirit

"Made alive" comes from two words: to make and alive. This does not mean that Jesus was energized with a dynamic personality. It means His human spirit returned to His body. He became alive in His human spirit and body (Matthew 27:46).

At the resurrection, the Father restored Jesus to fellowship. Jesus' resurrection conquered death by His human spirit returning to His body lying in the tomb. Christ received resurrection. Jesus was in the grave for three days then the Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead.

"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24).

"Made alive" means to restore physical life. God restored Jesus' physical life at the resurrection. Jesus restores our physical life for eternity when we come to Him for salvation.

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

Note the contrast between "death in the flesh" and "alive by the Spirit." We should not capitalize "Spirit" here. This refers to the human spirit of the Lord Jesus.

The resurrection of Christ is a major foundation fact upon which Christianity is built (1 Corinthians 15:17). Five different times Jesus declared that He would die and rise again (Matthew 12:39-40; 20:17-19; 26:30-32; Luke 18:31-32; John 2:19-22).

Principle

The resurrection is the foundation fact upon which Christianity stands.

Application

The gospel consists of three parts: the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Without the resurrection there would be no gospel.

"And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

Do you believe 1) That Jesus died for your sins (took your hell)? 2) That He was buried to confirm His death? 3) That He rose again to give you eternal life?

1 Peter 3:19

"By whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison"

In 1 Peter 3:19-21 Peter focuses on two great judgments:

1) the judgment of Noah's day and 2) the judgment of fallen angels.

Peter presents the ark of Noah's day as the type of Christ's suffering on the cross. In verse 21 he gives the antitype (the reality behind the type) as salvation by Christ's baptism at Calvary.

By whom also

The remainder of this chapter is very difficult to interpret. The best interpretation is that Christ descended into Hades after his crucifixion to proclaim to fallen angels that their fall was unnecessary (2 Peter 2:4-5). This interpretation would equate the fallen angels with the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-2.

"By whom" refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit transported Jesus to Tartarus and enabled him to preach to fallen angels.

He went and preached to the spirits in prison

"He" refers to the Lord Jesus.

"Went" -- to be transported. The Holy Spirit transported Jesus to Tartarus, the residence of fallen angels. Tartarus is not hell but an underworld for demons (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

We better translate the word "preached" as, made an official announcement. This is different from the usual word to preach. It means to make an official announcement by a public crier. The issue is not the gospel here but a victorious proclamation to fallen angels that they did not have to fall because Jesus did not fall. Verse 20 clearly indicates to whom he made the announcement.

Jesus here asserts his triumph over the sin issue. Jesus came to undo the original fall -- the fall of angels. Angels were tested and failed. Jesus was tested and succeeded.

"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:15).

"To the spirits in prison" -- fallen angels of Genesis 7 (2 Peter 2:4). This was an angelic infiltration into the human race. These angles could not repent but they were brought to subjection (verse 22).

Principle

God will one day vindicate Himself.

Application

God demonstrates His vindication of Christ in the resurrection. In His ascension, God seated Him above all angelic powers. As we embrace new life in Christ, we too overcome what brought the angels down.

1 Peter 3:20

"who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." who formerly were disobedient,

The people of Noah's day rebelled against God's message while the ark was of being built over a 120-year period (Genesis 6:3). The "spirits" of verse 19 are probably those who rebelled against God during this 120-year period.

People of Noah's generation remained hardened in disobedience of unbelief. With all the warning they received over a 120 years, they remained unmoved. They laughed at Noah for building such a ship on dry land. Their disobedience of unbelief scorned Noah's message.

The people of Noah's day showed negative volition over a 120-year period. This rebellion was an angelic inroad into the human race as angels married human females (Genesis 6:1-4). Jesus went to Tartarus to proclaim victory over Satan's scheme to mingle humans and angels. The incarnation of Jesus was no mingling of human and angel. Jesus defeated this angelic distortion by taking on true human nature and living without sin throughout his life.

when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah,

God held back judgment for 120 years during the construction of the ark. God gave the people of Noah's day time to repent (Genesis 6:3).

"Longsuffering" -- God's patience was a long holding out under provocation. "Waited" comes from two words, wait and eagerly. The double compound means to wait out to the end. God's patience with their negative volition was extensive.

while the ark was being prepared,

"Prepared" means that Noah was in the process of fitting out the ark. The construction of the ark was a tremendous undertaking. No human ship builder showed Noah how to build a ship of such magnitude. The process of building the ark was itself a sermon of approaching judgment. People wrote him off as a religious "kook."

The ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Because of its' size, it attracted attention to itself. It drew questions about God's purpose in the world.

in which a few, that is, eight souls,

The eight souls were Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives (Genesis 7:13).

"In which" is the ark. They were saved by the ark, not water!! By analogy, Jesus is the ark.

were saved through water

This phrase says they were saved through water, yet the water could drown them. They were

actually saved by the ark. The same water that buoyed up the ark drowned unbelievers. It was the same water but the difference was that those saved were in the ark. The analogy is that we died in the waters of Christ's death, the ark of eternal salvation.

The water buoyed up the ark, saving those on board. They were saved before boarding. They were also saved by being on the ark. On the other hand, those not on board were destroyed by water.

"Through" -- intermediate agency. The water indirectly saved the eight souls by buoying up the boat. The ark, built by faith in God's promise was a sign to Noah of a future salvation. The water was a type of death from which God delivers believers. God brings believers to heaven through the death of Christ. God shelters Christians in the refuge of the ark. God saves us through the waters of judgment in the baptism of the ark (Jesus' death). The ark (Jesus) suffered the water's judgment.

The water was the intermediate agency and the ark was the immediate, or primary, agency. The flood's fury fell on the ark but it did not sink it. It was buoyed because of it. This is a picture of Christ's death for our sin (verse 18). The wrath of God descended on Christ at the cross. When it looked as if all were lost, He rose from the dead! Judgment came upon Christ on the cross but He rose from the dead.

In the antitype, God saves the believer in the baptism of Christ at Calvary. The baptism of the ark is a type of this. It was Christ who was baptized into God's judgment on the cross, the antitype.

Water was judgment for the unbelievers of Noah's day. God immersed them in water. Those "under" water were unbelievers. Those eight people above water were safe. So the baptism here of the eight was a dry baptism, not a water or wet baptism. They were dry in the ark.

Principle

Noah's baptism in the flood illustrates our participation in the death of Christ.

Application

Through Christ's death, we die to sin and the penalty of sin. We are free from paying for sin ourselves.

1 Peter 3:21

"There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"

There is also an antitype

The word "antitype" comes from two words anti (against) and type. An antitype is that which is set over against the type. The antitype is reality (Hebrews 9:24). The eight people in the ark were the type, but now we have the reality. The reality is the point of this passage.

The type here is the ark, the baptism into Christ's death is the antitype. Baptism of the flood answers to the baptism of Christ's death. The baptism of the flood symbolically foreshadows Christ's death for our sins. This is the picture of identification with Christ in His death.

TYPE:

ARK – type of Christ WATER – type of Christ's suffering

ANTITYPE:

Baptism of Christ's death at Calvary, which now saves us—baptism

The antitype goes back to "water." "Water" is the antecedent (gender). The water represents judgment and symbolizes baptism in the death of Christ. As the flood wiped out the old world, baptism represents a break with our past life.

This baptism is not water baptism for believers. Those who were wet were unbelievers and they drowned. Baptism in water does not save us because those immersed in water died in Noah's day!

The waters of the flood saves, but only as a counterpart, not actually. Old Testament sacrifices were counterparts of the reality of Christ's death on the cross. Those sacrifices did not save them, only in type. Waters of the flood saved the inmates of the ark only in type.

The ark suffered the judgment of the storm of the flood. The ark was baptized by the flood. Believers were sheltered in the refuge of the ark. In it they came out of the flood to a new earth. By analogy, today God saves us by the death of Christ from our sin. At Calvary, Christ was baptized into the wrath of God. Through that

baptism, believers are saved. God saves us by the death and resurrection of Christ.

(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God),

This is not referring to the washing away of our sin. Baptismal regeneration states that we become a Christian by water baptism. The waters of baptism cannot put away sins. Peter makes it clear that he is not dealing with H₂O. Therefore, this is not dealing with the external rite of baptism. Water baptism does not save for it is simply a counterpart or picture of salvation. To prove this, the Holy Spirit adds this parenthesis.

"Answer" is literally a pledge, the pledge of a good conscience toward God. This word is a business term. In business contracts, there are commitments that make it binding. God says to Christians, "Do you accept the terms of salvation?" Our position of death in Christ gives us a good conscience toward God.

From what does baptism save us? From a bad conscience. Baptism does not save from sin but from a bad conscience. Baptism is a testimony that we have been saved from sin.

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the pledge of our position before God. The resurrection of Christ saves us eternally. The resurrection is the factual indication that the death of Christ was adequate to save us.

At the resurrection and ascension, God accepts the death of Christ to save us. Here is the basis for our salvation. If the ark were not buoyed up by the flood, Noah and his family would have been lost. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we could not be saved. Our hope rests on the resurrection of Christ.

Principle

The resurrection of Jesus gives us confidence that God will accept us into His presence.

Application

Today, like in Noah's day, we escape through the baptism of Christ's death. In Christ, God gives us a new "status quo". This gives us a "good conscience toward God." When we enter the true ark (the death of Christ for our sins), God will save our souls. The resurrection stamps a

guarantee that God will bring us into His presence in eternity.

God shut the door of the ark and those inside are safe eternally. God saves us in the same sense that the water saved those in the ark. The water lifted the ark and the death of Christ saves our souls.

1 Peter 3:22

"who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."

If we read verse 18 immediately into verse 22 we understand the continuity of thought. Jesus died, rose again and then He

ascended and received exaltation from the Father. The sequel to the death and resurrection is the ascension and exaltation of Christ.

The context of the whole book of 1 Peter argues comparing the suffering of the Lord with the suffering of His followers.

Christians are not exceptional in their suffering. Believers in Noah's day had to endure the scoffing of the unbelieving. We endure the same today.

Verses 19-22 rest on the two phrases "being put to death" and "made alive in the spirit."

who has gone into heaven

This is Jesus' ascension. Peter witnessed Jesus' ascension personally (cf. Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:6-11).

and is at the right hand of God,

The right hand of God is the place of paramount honor, power and authority. This is the session of Christ in His human nature (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him

Here are three ranks of good angels. God exalted Christ above Michael, above Gabriel, above the Seraphim, above the Cherubim. God exalted Him to the very apex of the universe (cf. Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

All are subject to Jesus in his ascension. This is the climax of the argument running from 1 Peter 3:18-22. There was no positional truth for Christians until after the ascension of Christ.

Principle

The ascension of Christ to the throne of the Father guarantees our standing in His presence.

Application

Opposition from man or demon cannot thwart God's program of saving His saints. Jesus gained the victory when He rose from the dead and made His victorious proclamation to the fallen demons. The final proof of this is His ascension when God gave Him authority over all the earth.

We live in a culture of freedom. This freedom passes into licentiousness. This opens us to demon activity. Jesus is the victor over these forces. God vindicates us in Him. We need not fear. We need to live in the light of the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

1 Peter 4:1

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us

The "therefore" resumes the idea of 3:18 that Jesus suffered unjustly (1:11; 2:24; 4:13; 5:1). Jesus suffered undeservedly. He did not earn or deserve suffering. In 3:18, Jesus took up the cross and died for our sins. He was made sin and judged for us. He became our substitute and He is therefore the only way of salvation.

Peter now draws a new inference for Christians to deal decisively with sin. The phrase "arm yourselves with the same mind" indicates the impact that Jesus' suffering should make on us. Since He dealt decisively with sin on the cross, we should do the same. Since we are dead to sin positionally, we are free from the controlling power of sin.

in the flesh

Christ suffered in the "flesh" or body. As God, Jesus did not die. Eternal life cannot cease to exist. Jesus, therefore, did not die in His deity. That is why He became true humanity. As true humanity, He died with a human body. With that body He lived a life free from personal sin. It was as man that He suffered undeservedly. However, it was the second person of the Trinity who went to the cross.

Principle

If we are dead to sin we are free from sin.

Application

Christ suffered for us in His physical body. The child of God should hate sin because it took Jesus to the cross. Sin causes decay, degeneration, violence, corruption, disease and death. These things are the by-products of sin.

There are two reasons Christians suffer:

1. For sin
2. Undeserved suffering

God designs blessings for us for both types of suffering. If we sin, God brings discipline into our lives. His design for discipline is to restore, not punish. Jesus has already taken the punishment for our sin so God does not punish us for our sin. If we confess our sin, God converts discipline into blessing. Any suffering that comes our way after we've confessed our sin is undeserved suffering.

God designs discipline for our blessing. Whether we enjoy God's blessing for our lives, depends on our acceptance by faith, of God's correction. By faith we confess our sin and experience God's blessing. This means we believe that Jesus took the punishment for the sins we commit as Christians.

God blesses us in undeserved suffering as well. This is a major argument of 1 Peter.

arm yourselves

"Arm" means to put on armor, in the same way a soldier would. This is the only occurrence of the Greek word in the New Testament. "Arm" was used of a Greek soldier taking up his heavy weapons for war. The noun was used for a soldier who was heavily armed with javelin and large shield. The main idea is that this soldier is heavily armed.

Since Christ found it necessary to go to the cross and suffer because of our sin, we should develop the same kind of thinking. God wants us to significantly arm our minds with the same mind that Jesus had in the way He approached undeserved suffering.

There is a suffering that comes from breaking off from the fast crowd (4:1-6). The old friends will not take it lightly that you no longer run with them. This is a form of undeserved suffering.

Principle

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Application

Are you ready for spiritual battle? Have you prepared yourself for spiritual war? Have you fitted yourself as a spiritual soldier with heavy armor? We need to become as heavily armed as we can to fight spiritual war. We need to deal decisively with sin.

As we bring the Word of God into the battle with sin, the Word changes our thinking about sin (Psalm 119:9,11). If we appropriate the Word to our lives, the influence of that fast crowd weakens. The influence of our peers weakens against the power of the Word.

Every time we resist temptation, we become more equipped to resist the next temptation. Each time we conquer sin makes us better able to face the next attack. As we build momentum of conquering sin, we become more spiritually mature. Spiritual maturity guarantees infrequency of sin in our lives.

also with the same mind

"Mind" literally means to put in the mind. "Mind" is a particular manner or way of thinking, a disposition or manner of thought, an attitude. This word "mind" can mean purpose, intention, design. This word deals with forming motivations.

This particular word for "mind" is a rare term in the New Testament. The only other usage of this word in the New Testament is in Hebrews 4:12:

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

God's Word discerns morally questionable motivations of our hearts.

We need to intentionally resolve to deal with suffering the way Jesus dealt with suffering. Jesus formed His motivations and unbendingly followed the will of God in undeserved suffering.

Principle

Orientation to suffering comes by developing the mind (motivation) of Christ.

Application

Since we face a life-long battle with sin, we should deliberately arm ourselves with the motivation of Christ. With each occasion of suffering that comes our way, we need to form the motivational principle of Christ's attitude toward suffering. When persecution comes to our mind, we maintain an unbending orientation to follow God.

We need to draw on the same resolution Jesus did toward undeserved suffering. God wants us to think as Jesus thought. This has to do with forming the intention or purpose of our thought life. If we accept identity with Christ, we accept the principle that sinning is no longer acceptable.

It is the Word of God that forms the motivations of our thinking (1 Peter 1:13; Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16). Every Christian has a built-in Bible teacher (the Holy Spirit) who makes the Word of God come alive to each situation. Non-Christians cannot think God's thoughts because they do not have the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a closed book to them. Christians, on the other hand, have the power to conquer sin by developing the mind of Christ. Much of the Christian life is a life of the mind and motivation.

If we do not have our gun loaded and the safety pin off, we will not get a shot off in our spiritual battle. In the military, a new recruit goes through hundreds of drills. This changes his thinking into disciplined excellence. As Christians learn familiarity with our weapons and attitudes about how to use spiritual weapons, we form the attitude of Jesus.

We develop our attitudes the hard way, as a young person develops toughness of mind in boot camp. There are times when we wonder whether it is worth it all. That is where some of us quit and make our first mistake, because we do not arm ourselves with the attitude that Jesus did about suffering. When we get into suffering we must use God's thinking process. This is the stuff by which God blesses us in suffering.

If you are ever going to suffer for blessing you must have a mental attitude when you are under pressure. When we live in jealousy, vindictiveness, implacability and worry, all suffering is cursing.

We correct that attitude by confessing sin. When we are in fellowship, the cursing turns into blessing. We can never harbor attitude sins and at

the same time enjoy blessing in suffering. The longer we log attitude sins in our mind the greater the problem. It will be more difficult to reconcile as time goes on. The only thing that can break this momentum is confession, a shift into God's way of thinking. "Father, I am implacable and am fighting you."

It is one thing to confess sin and it is another thing to conquer that sin. We stabilize our Christian life with truth.

for He who has suffered in the flesh

By arming ourselves with the mind of Christ we will no doubt suffer the same suffering of Jesus. He suffered in the body and so will the Christian. If we suffer like Jesus suffered, we cease from sin. When we identify with Christ's suffering, we free ourselves from sin. God expects us to make a clean break with habitual sinning.

has ceased from sin

"Cease" means to stop, to make an end. When we think like Jesus thought, our sinful thinking comes to an end. This verse does not say that the Christian has ceased completely from sinning for that would be sinless perfection. No Christian can reach a stage of sinless perfection, but can come to a place of victory over sin.

This verse says that the Christian has ceased at a point in the past with the results going on (perfect tense). God gave us release from sin when we received Christ as Savior. God broke the power of sin at Christ's death. We can translate "cease" as "has been made to cease." We have been made to cease from sin in the death of Christ.

We do not fight for victory over sin because Christ has already won the victory. We fight a victory already won (Romans 6:6-11, esp. v. 7). God gave us release from sin by Christ's final suffering for sin. We react to undeserved suffering as a saint, not a sinner. It is God who gave us release from sin. God broke the power of sin by Christ's death.

Also, God did not free from sins (plural) but from "sin" (singular). Sin in the singular is the depraved capacity for sin that we received when born into this world. The potential for sin is always present in that nature because it never improves, never alters or changes. It cannot improve by education or refinement.

Principle

Dead men do not sin.

Application

We lose our tenderness toward Christ if we do not deal decisively with sin. He died to deal with sin and he dealt with it decisively on the cross. If we do not deal with it ourselves, sin will invade our daily relationship with Him.

We deal with sin first in our mind, not by outward rite of religion. Our natural mind is dark and alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18). That make us disingenuous with God. We are blind to our own wicked motivations until we deal with sin.

Some of us are so dull spiritually that we do not even recognize what springs from our sin capacity. Spiritual callousness sets in our soul and we become immune to deal with deadly sin in our lives.

We cannot know the will of God while in this shape. We remain under the jurisdiction of the old taskmaster of the sin capacity. A Christian who gets out from under this taskmaster makes a clean break with the momentum of sin. To take orders from the old slave master is to act out of character, like wearing a mask.

Identification with Christ's finished suffering sets up a compatibility with Christ that makes it difficult for us to sin. A man just released from the army has his discharge papers. He is now a civilian and free from the authority of the army. As he walks out of the gate of the military base he meets his sergeant who snarls: "Get in the kitchen and do the dishes." Out of force of habit he may have a tendency to obey but then he remembers that he has his papers so he says, "Oh no, you have no more authority over me. I have my discharge papers."

When the sin capacity orders us to do something, we need to realize that we have a new boss. His name is Jesus. Whenever we sin, we act out of character. Alas, we do act out of character. When we do this we fail to appropriate the finished work of Christ to the sin master of our lives.

1 Peter 4:2

"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

that he no longer should live

"That" is a term of purpose. We arm ourselves with the mind of Christ so that we can live to the will of God. When a person comes to Christ, our life changes. New birth transforms our experience right to the essence of our motivation (v.1).

The words "no longer" also occur in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

God does not want us any longer to live to self. The law of the jungle governs most people but the child of God does not rule his life by self. He is sick of living for self. As long as strictly self-interests satisfy us, we will remain outside the will of God.

the rest of his time in the flesh

"The rest of his time in the flesh" is the remainder of our time on earth as a Christian. We had a pattern of life before becoming Christians. Now we are oriented to the will of God for the rest of our lives.

When a person forms the new motivation of verse one, this also negates the old motivations. This is what Peter means by ceasing from sin (v.1). It is possible for a Christian to live with negative motivation throughout his lifetime. He can believe that the lusts of the flesh fulfill his ultimate needs.

for the lusts of men

The word "lusts" means desires. This is our lust pattern. The lust pattern manifests itself in sexual sin, approbation lust, power lust. We should no longer live to the desires of men. We do not please men as our ultimate aim but enter the domain of freedom from pleasing people.

If we live for pleasing people, we become puppets of their pleasure. They pull the strings and we do the jig. God's view is that when they pull the strings we do not dance. God's people should be free from pleasing people as their core value.

The world hates those who are different. The doctrine of this world is uniformity. It does not want a deviation from their values; it does not accept nonconformists, dissenters, protestants. It wants everyone stamped out on the same

assembly line, everyone to be identical. God's doctrine is individuality. That is why everyone has a different fingerprint. Every snowflake is different and every leaf is different.

Principle

God expects the mature Christian to be free from peer pressure and independent of its influence.

Application

We no longer run with the fast crowd that we ran with before we became Christians. As long as we run with the fast crowd we will not enter the sphere of the will of God. When we break away from the fast crowd we move into the "no longer" bracket.

The fast crowd always looks glamorous. A girl graduates from high schools and goes to college and runs into the fast crowd. At first, that life appeals to her. Then later she breaks off from them after seeing the implications of living like this. She moves into the "no longer" bracket. As soon as she hits the "no longer" bracket, the fast crowd turns on her.

Some athletic or sorority organization puts pressure on her. Does she have the independence and maturity to stand alone? Some girls just jump into this crowd. Some groups, at first, look glamorous such as a football club. She thinks this is the greatest thing and these are the nicest people in the world. She goes around saying how wonderful they are. They always present their best side until she breaks out.

When she breaks out, they immediately hit her with pressure. She sticks to her guns and keeps to her "no longer" bracket. When she does this she enters into the blessing of the will of God.

When a Christian enters the "no longer" category the opposite happens -- she enters God's blessing. This "no longer" bracket begins with confession and proceeds with inculcation with the Word.

but for the will of God

If we count ourselves dead to sin in the death of Christ, we can live to the will of God. When Christians live for the will of God, they affirm that the will of God is best for them. Making the will of God our rule of life demonstrates our essential motivation for life (v.1).

"If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God

or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17). If we are willing to be lead, God will show us his will. We must be willing to do his will before he will show it to us.

"So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done'" (Acts 21:14).

Acceptance of God's will is an important attitude for the believer. God opens doors and closes doors. God is the God of providence. No circumstance comes into our lives without His will. We do not knock doors down. We wait until He opens the door. A closed door is as good as an open door if the Lord closed the door. We love open doors but we are not enthusiastic about shut ones.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

We prove the will of God as God transforms our minds.

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).

It is possible to understand the will of God. God's will is no esoteric idea difficult to grasp. God does not tease us with His will by making us wonder what it is.

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9).

Are you "filled" with the will of God? It is one thing to follow the will of God occasionally and it is another thing to fill our whole lives with the will of God. When we operate like this we will not run contrary to the will of God.

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

There is no doubt about the will of God here. Christians need to develop a capacity for appreciation for what God has done in their life.

"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:15).

A life of integrity shuts the mouth of our critics.

"For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:17).

The will of God is for Christians to suffer for integrity, not inconsistency.

"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

Those who suffer in the will of God understand God's providence in allowing suffering to enter their lives.

The word "will" carries the idea of purpose and design. Purpose plus design equals the will of God. God has a purpose for our lives. When we enter God's plan for our lives we enter maximum blessing.

Principle

God wants our volition to comply with His volition.

Application

Suffering is for God's glory and our good (Romans 8:28). If we suffering according to the will of God, we will not allow Satan to slander God's character when we face trial.

We do not cave into the devil's lie when he subtly suggests "God is not good because he allows you to go through this problem. God is not fair or kind. If God is good he would never let you suffer like this." Satan loves to slander God's character when he tries us to the breaking point (Job 1:21; 1 Samuel 3:18; Matthew 11:26).

When we submit to the will of God, God settles our soul in the trial. We know that we are in the place that God desires for us. Would you rather be a failure in the will of God than a success out of the will of God? That is a hard pill to swallow.

We are safer in the will of God in the most savage place in the world than outside the will of God in the safest place in the world. We should not settle for cheap substitutes for the will of God. People try to sell us on substitutes for name brands. They claim that it is the same, only cheaper. We get what we pay for. Do you let Satan substitute something in place of the will of God?

1 Peter 4:3

"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries."

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime

This phrase literally reads in the Greek: "For enough, the having passed by of time, the will of the Gentiles to work out." The "having passed by of time" means to go out of existence. Our life before Christ ceased to exist when we embraced Jesus as our Savior.

Now that we have become Christians, we mark that passage of time as non-Christians as a thing of the past. We clearly mark the distinction between our life before and after knowing Christ. Years without Christ were the wasted years -- the time between birth and new birth. Our entire career before Christ was a waste and we were sick of it. That life did not satisfy us. It was a wretched treadmill of vacuous sin. We came to hate our sin and bad habits.

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

"Lifetime" is time as a series of events. We get our English word "chronology" from this word. This is the time when we ran with the fast crowd. Peter lists that fast crowd's life style by six examples later in this verse. Some people get into this fast crowd in an instant. (Maybe that is why they call it the "fast" crowd!) Before coming to Christ we simply put in time on Earth. We went through the motions of life without any true purpose or meaning.

"Enough" means sufficient, adequate. Peter greatly emphasizes this word in the Greek by being placed first in the sentence. Living that life in the past is emphatically sufficient! "Enough" pertains to what is sufficient for some purpose and resulting in satisfaction. We came to a place when we said, "Enough is enough already! I have had it with that kind of life. It does not satisfy."

"Sufficient for the day are its troubles" (Matthew 6.34)

Principle

Knowing Jesus personally gives ultimate satisfaction.

Application

At a point in our life we came to realize that our former life without Christ was "enough." We had our fill of it. When we met Christ that life no longer satisfied us.

It is difficult for us to think about past sin and the harm that we did before coming to Christ. Our sin built upon itself until it sent us into a spiral downward. Sin is not a static thing because it creates a momentum of sinning. At the point when sin completely controlled us, it was only then that we came to realize the futility of our lives.

in doing the will of the Gentiles--

Peter encourages us to live for God's will in verse two. Now He states our past purpose of life. Verse two concluded with the idea that Christians now live to the "will of God." "Doing the will of the Gentiles" stands in contrast to doing the will of God. God rearranges our furniture.

The word "doing" implies in the Greek that we worked out fully the will of the Gentiles but came to a point where we closed that course of our lives.

The word "will" in "the will of the Gentiles" means that which we desire with the implication of accompanying some reasoned plan to accomplish the desire. "Gentile" is a synonym for a non-Christian. Non-Christians always rationalize their sinful way of life.

"Not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God" (1 Thessalonians 4:5).

Christians have a new passion. We no longer live like we used to live. If we do, we are phonies. We would need another dip. When God comes into our lives He rewires us. Our drives and desires, our likes and dislikes all change. Salvation revolutionizes character. The Savior changes us from the inside out.

Our former friends and life-style are now a thing of the past. We do not live for sin and Satan. We no longer immerse ourselves in that life style. We are aliens to that kind of living. Our new values

do not allow us to yield to the customs of our culture.

Principle

We can reach a point of maturity when we can stand independent of the crowd.

Application

Most people are not independent of the crowd. If a group of people puts pressure on them, they cave into their will. They are herd bound. Once they get into the fast crowd, the peer pressure of the crowd itself will glue them to their destructive lifestyle.

when we walked

"Walked" signifies to go on one's way, to depart from one place to another, to go from one place to another. This is the Jet Set mentality. Some people run from Paris to Morocco to Hawaii seeking pleasure. On the local level some people run from one bar to another, from one party to another. They hang out in many places.

Life on the run is a characteristic of the fast crowd. They keep changing places to find something better. The search for greater pleasure eventually ends in emptiness. That is why they change locations. The old place of sin gets boring very quickly. Often they also change locations because of illegal operations such as drug use.

Note other uses for this same Greek word for "walk:"

"These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 16-18).

"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3).

Asia Minor Christians walked in six ugly sins before they became Christians. These characteristics mark the will of the Gentiles. Those without Christ have strange standards. These standards change every day for the worse.

Standards of morality and decency are disappearing in North American society.

Peter does not insinuate that all non-Christian people are marked by all six standards of the Gentiles. Many respectable non-Christians live without this lifestyle. Their sin is more respectable. Nevertheless they may be the most respectable people in the Lake of Fire. How would you like to be the most respectable person in Hell?

Non-Christians love to plan their own lives (1:14). They fashion themselves by their own plans. They fashion themselves according to their lusts. Christians live by God's standards.

"Walked" in the Greek also means that we closed our former course of life at a point in the past. Our life before salvation is a closed matter. Old things have passed away. We now say goodbye to it forever. That chapter of life is done with.

in lewdness

Lewdness means excesses, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness; debauchery, sensuality. Lewdness is wanton or unabashed sensuality. These people parade their deviant sexuality not caring what people think of them. They have no concern about even their reputation, much less their character.

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (Romans 13:13).

"Lewdness" may relate to the Phallic cult of that day. This cult participated in unrestrained sexual activity. This was a dominant religion of that day. Everyone wanted to belong to that church! Their goddess was Aphrodite (Greek name; the Romans called her Venus and the Semitic peoples called her Ishtar).

"Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:19).

"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

The behavior of these people completely lacks moral restraint. "Lewdness" usually carries the implication of sexual licentiousness or extreme immorality. They live like promiscuous dogs.

"Lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced" (2 Corinthians 12:21).

Some Christians in the church at Corinth were guilty of this sin.

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness" (Galatians 5:19).

The prominent idea is shameless conduct. Lewdness takes part in actions that disgust and shock public decency. These people carry open outrage against decency. They tolerate no check or rein on their will.

Principle

Lewdness is characteristic of a society without any standards.

Application

Unrestrained obscenity and pornography are examples of lewdness. The Internet will launch unrestrained lewdness into greater influence in our world. Girls will unabashedly and provocatively portray their whole bodies to the entire world. The filthier, the more blatant and flagrant, the more the pornography will spread. We give people what they want and what customers demand.

The world demands filth because it runs alienated from God. Without God, there can only be arbitrary standards.

lusts

"To lust" means to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else, to covet. The word "lusts" simply means passionate desires of any kind. When we direct our inner drive toward something outside the will of God we live for a purpose different from what God has planned. Before becoming Christians we gave our thought life over to vile thinking, not only to sexual sins, but to bitterness, rivalry and many other mental attitude sins. Lusts cover many categories: power,

approbation or money lusts. These things are equally the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16, 24; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Peter 2:18; 1 John 2:16).

The word "lusts" also describes the orientation of the soul, the natural tendency towards things evil. Such lusts are not necessarily base and immoral. They may be refined in character.

Principle

People who gratify their lust patterns do not develop toughness of soul when trial comes.

Application

When we live to gratify lusts, we will not develop toughness of soul. When suffering comes we will fall apart.

Using the passages below, evaluate your thought life.

"I have not coveted anyone's silver, gold, or clothing" (Acts 20:33).

"Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully" (Matthew 5:28).

"Many foolish desires" (1 Timothy 6:9).

"Youthful desires" (2 Timothy 2:22).

"The former desires when you were ignorant" (1 Peter 1:14).

"Do not gratify the desires of the body" (Galatians 5.16).

drunkenness

This word for "drunkenness" implies the consumption of a large quantity of wine. This is debauchery via drunkenness. "Drunkenness" comes from two words: overflow or bubble up and wine. The idea is to tie one on, to be stoned.

The Bible identifies drunkenness as a sin, not a disease.

"Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor

extortionists will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Principle

Drunkenness is not a disease but a volitional sin.

Application

Inebriation is clearly a sin in the Bible. No doubt certain people have a biological tendency toward drunkenness but this does not preclude personal responsibility.

We live in a victim oriented society. The idea of being a victim is that we are not responsible for what happens to us; something or someone else is responsible. As long as we use biological tendency as an excuse for drunkenness, we will delay recovery.

revelries

"Revelries" are wild parties, drinking parties involving unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior. This is the Greek word for an orgy. People love engaging in revelries to carouse. They love to go to the night clubs and party. They treasure merry-making.

In the first century these people took to the streets with their parties. These parties were wild, furious and ecstatic. They carried torches and sang songs to Bacchus as they marched through the streets. Sex orgies were a big part of these parties.

"Revelries" occurs two times in the New Testament. In each of these two occurrences the New Testament associates "revelries" with drunkenness. Where you have one you always have the other.

"Let us conduct ourselves properly as people who live in the light of day; no orgies, no drunkenness" (Romans 13:13).

drinking parties

"Drinking parties" or drinking bouts involved unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior. Drinking parties signify not simply a banquet but a drinking bout.

This is the only place where this word occurs in the New Testament. A cocktail party is one thing but this is a riotous party. Wild things come out

of these parties. Usually the longer the party goes the worse it becomes.

Some people can only have a good time when they tie one on. They are greater lovers, greater singers when under the influence of alcohol. They can quote poetry or play the piano. They also can become dangerous and stab someone. They cannot have a good time without liquor. What is a party without booze?

This sin and the previous sin are sins of the group. People in a group start out drinking and end in sex orgies because group psychology changes their conviction for the moment.

Principle

Sins of the group carry people further in sin that they would go as individuals.

Application

Do the people you hang out with influence you to do immoral things that you would not do as an individual? If this is so, change your friends. What is more important, your friends or your God?

and abominable idolatries

Idolatry in the first century was far worse than simple idol worship. The entire list of sins in this verse came with this idolatry. Also, brutality and debauchery were part of this worship.

The word "abominable" occurs in Acts 10:28 for that which is "unlawful." It pertains to what is bad and disgusting because idolaters love to do that which God does not allow. These people love to break the rules and go contrary to what is right. The forbidden is a lure for them.

Romans associates idolatry and immorality (Romans 1:22-25). Paul traces this to a lack of the gratitude to God. An idolater is a slave to the depraved ideas his idols represent (Galatians 4:8-9) and thereby to the different lusts of those gods (Titus 3:3).

Principle

We worship whatever is first in our lives.

Application

God hates idolatry even if the idol is yourself (Exodus 20:4-6; 1 John 5:21). Anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our lives is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

We may worship money (1 Timothy 6:10). Money is not the root of all evil, the love of money is the root of all evil. Money can cast a seductive spell on us. If we make \$100,000 a year we want to make \$200,000 a year. Money never satisfies us. We never have enough. Neither money nor fame can satisfy our heart. Many wealthy and famous people commit suicide.

If we have a closed Bible there is less likelihood that we will open ourselves to God's will. Our return to the Lord from idolatry will take longer. God must use some other means to get our attention. If we step into the pigpen, He may use a chisel, hammer or an automobile accident to get our attention. This is divine discipline.

What is first in your life? That is what you worship.

1 Peter 4:4

"In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you."

In regard to these

The "these" is the list of six values of the fast crowd of verse 3.

they think it strange that you do not run with them

"They" here is the fast crowd of verse 3.

"Run" means to run together with. Metaphorically it means to run a course of evil with others so as to be closely associated with them in a particular type of conduct. The fast crowd gathers together to live out the same values jointly. They get confidence from closely associating with each other. They justify what they do by mob thinking. The Devil's crowd does not tolerate anyone out of harmony with its values.

The cults of Artemis and Demeter centered in Ephesus and the cults of Dionysius and Cybele in Phrygia and Pergamum are illustrations of these kinds of mobs.

The fast crowd depends on group influence so they want us to run "with" them. They maintain their course of evil by peer pressure. If you are going to be "with it," you must accept their extreme values.

It is surprising ("strange") to the fast crowd that the Christian broke away from them. They cannot

imagine any value system other than their own. The fact that the Christian chooses values polar opposite to theirs' blows apart their assumptions about life. The mob is so closed in its view of life that when one of their crowd makes a decision like this, it is astonished. It seems so strange that a person would make this decision. It is a cause for wonder. They think you are crazy for leaving this party life. They wonder at this as something unusual. The Christian's testimony gets their attention.

Principle

God wants the Christian to run the race of life independent from crowd psychology.

Application

The mature Christian is free from mob thinking. Many people feel security in being herd-bound. Those who find their security in the mob will malign the person who stands independent from the mob. They deem independence to be an assault on mob values.

We are no longer the puppets of men when we stand independent from the crowd. We no longer please men as our central value. When we live for and suffer for the Lord, we free ourselves from that kind of slavery.

If we live for the Lord, who ultimately will judge us, we free ourselves from living for men. When mob pressure comes we can break away.

What gives a person this independence? Maturity comes from applying principle to experience. As we learn enough of the Word we become more independent from other influences in our lives.

in the same flood of dissipation

"Flood" is an extremely high point on a scale of extent: excessive, extreme. Literally, "flood" mean pouring forth or pouring out, then it came to mean wide stream. The classical Greek used this word of a tide that filled the pools lying off the beach. This is negative excess. The fast crowd would do anything, such as the things listed in verse 3.

The word "dissipation" portrays debauchery, profligacy, prodigality, wastefulness. Literally, "dissipation" is "unsavedness." Dissipated people have reached a point of incorrigibility (Ephesians 5:18; Titus 1:6). They waste their life with profligacy and are prodigals. This word occurs

three times in the New Testament and always refers to moral degradation.

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

"If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination" (Titus 1:6).

This behavior shows complete lack of concern for the consequences of actions. These people are reckless because they do not give thought to what they are doing. They are impulsive and therefore their behavior is senseless (Luke 15:13). The prodigal son lived without thought of the consequences of his actions.

"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living" (Luke 15:13).

Principle

Radical living requires radical redress.

Application

Some people operate in debauchery and give no thought to the consequences of that life-style. The fast crowd thinks the Christian is nuts to leave their wild parties.

It does not pay for us to become promiscuous because we will ultimately face the consequences of our actions. In our day a consequence of debauchery is AIDS. There are other consequences such as having a jaded soul, making it hard to trust others. If we do not trust other people, we end in isolation from wholesome relationships.

The more jaded we become the more difficult it will be to overcome. Make a decision right now to leave that life of debauchery. Radical living requires a radical decision.

speaking evil of you

"Speaking evil" is literally to blaspheme but means in this context to malign. The fast crowd of verse 3 does not like Christians because the life of the Christian condemns them. People hate to have their sins exposed. The new life of a Christian

stands in stark contrast to theirs so they love to rail at Christians.

"Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed" (1 Peter 3:16).

They will slander you and lie about you. They will misquote you. They will try to do anything to ruin your testimony.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).

Principle

Dynamic testimony will draw criticism.

Application

The Christian's testimony threatens the value system of those who live without limits so the Devil's crowd will seek to injure your reputation. They will drop words to defame your character. They love to slander Christians because Christian testimony casts aspersions on the direction of their lives.

The surprise of the wild crowd causes them to slander Christians' new values and orientation. It seems incredible to them that you would walk away from a philosophy of pleasure: "Why lose all these pleasures?" They cannot comprehend this. "How can you go for that Jesus stuff?" They will use anything to ridicule Christians.

Do you care about what the fast crowd thinks about you? Are you in slavery to opinion or do you stand independent from the crowd? The group usually preys on people who do not have core to their character. They capture people who are swept along by the opinions of people. This is not true for the Christian.

The Christian who breaks off from the fast crowd becomes a point of conversion among the group. They crank up negative attitudes about this. The group develops bitter attitudes. They do not like to be jilted.

You may have to stand alone in the office or school. You may stand out like a speckled bird but when they come to a crisis they will

remember you. When that divorce comes along they will remember that there is another alternative. Our testimony condemns them as nothing else could.

1 Peter 4:5

"They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

They will give an account to Him

The "they" are the Devil's crowd of verses three and four.

"Give" means to give back. The Devil's crowd will one day give an account to the Lord (maybe a verbal account). We can translate this phrase literally as "give back a word." However, a better translation is to give account. The fast crowd may not think that they are accountable to God now, but they will be accountable one day. None of them will flee accountability for their immoral conduct. God will ask them to give an explanation of their behavior.

The first time Jesus came was not to judge, but the second time will be a different story. At His second coming He will come to judge.

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn [judge] the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).

As God, Jesus must be absolutely righteous. As God, Jesus is omniscient and knows all the evidence. As God, Jesus is omnipotent and is able to execute thorough and swift judgment. The same Jesus who received judgment on the cross will be the Judge.

Principle

If God is just, there will be pay-day someday.

Application

Vance Havner used to preach a sermon called 'Pay-day Someday'. Everyone will render back to God an accounting of their lives.

Non-Christians will come to the end of life's short road. At that time, they will give back an accounting of their lives. Everything will come out -- all of their immorality, lies, thefts, blasphemy and murder. The central issue is not their sin, but whether they accepted the death of Jesus for their sin.

The issue at the Great White Throne Judgment for non-Christians is whether they accepted the finished work of Christ for their sin. If they did not do this, God will not admit them into His heaven.

who is ready

God will fulfill an obligation to Himself to judge. God does not expect people to live under a threat, but He must be consistent with or true to Himself. We do not do what we do for the sake of doing good, but out of love for God. Thus, it is of the very nature of being related to God to be subject to requital or accountability. Sin works retribution against us. God conjoins accountability, love and forgiveness through redemption by the blood of Christ.

God holds Himself ready and prepares Himself to judge. He will leave no stone unturned.

to judge

"To judge" is in the future tense. Non-Christians will face the Great White Throne Judgment one day.

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Death is bad enough, but to face the judgment of Almighty God is worse.

the living and the dead

God will judge the "living" -- those unbelievers alive at the last judgment.

God will judge the "dead" -- unbelievers who died physically before the last judgment. God the Father gives the function of judgment to His Son to judge both the living and the dead.

"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was

ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

God will judge non-Christians at the Great White Throne Judgment.

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

Principle

Non-Christians will face accountability to God at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Application

If you do not know Christ these words must terrify you. There you will stand with all of your sins.

However, there is the wonderful news that Jesus paid for all of your sin, for all time, by His death on the cross. If you accept that truth by trusting God's promise, you will not face this judgment.

1 Peter 4:6

"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

This verse is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to interpret. The rules of interpretation that we should keep in mind is that we interpret unclear verses with the clear verses, and the minority of texts with the majority of texts. Neither is this verse clear, nor the majority of texts dealing with this subject.

For this reason

"For" is a term of explanation. Peter is explaining that everyone must give account to God (v.5).

"This reason" means unto this end. For what purpose was the gospel preached? There is a twofold purpose found in this verse:

1. that non-Christians will evaluate Christians as people in the flesh, and
2. that those who accept the gospel will live forever according to God's norms

the gospel was preached also

The tense in the verb "was preached" is most important (aorist tense [one point], indicative mood [actually happened]). Peter deals here with the historic past. He is not saying that the gospel is in the process of being preached to the dead. The preaching took place when these "dead ones" were still amid the living. This is the only time when preaching is effective -- when we are alive physically on earth.

to those who are dead,

There is no verb "are" in this verse. Literally, this phrase would read "to dead ones." They are dead from the viewpoint of the remaining Christians on earth. The dead Christians of verse six had the gospel preached to them while alive on earth (aorist tense; indicative mood). They became Christians while on earth and are now dead. They heard the gospel while alive and have now passed into eternity before the writing of this epistle. This statement encourages Christians that they have something for which to live beyond this present life.

What is the difference between the "dead" of verse five and verse six? The dead of verse five "will give account" (future tense). Therefore, these persons are spiritually dead, dead in sin. They are eternally out of fellowship with God (Romans 5:12; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). The dead of this verse are Christians who have come to Christ and have their sins eternally paid for by the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.

Principle

Christians face an altogether different future than the lost.

Application

Is there a gospel of the second chance? According to this verse--no! There is no second chance. The only time we can come to Christ is when we are alive on earth.

The Bible says that those without Christ are dead while still physically living. They are dead spiritually.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

Are you dead spiritually? Would you like to come alive spiritually? All it takes is trust in Christ's death for your sins to give you eternal life.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

Note that the above passage says that you immediately pass from death (spiritual) into life (eternal) at the moment of belief. Will you now trust what Christ has done for you?

that they might be judged according to men in the flesh,

The judges in this case are non-Christians who hear the gospel and make their negative evaluation of the gospel according to their own set of norms. They judge the Christian according to their own standards. They set up their own norms of evaluating the Christian life and they slander what they see. The impact of this is that all those who malign Christians will themselves face the Judge of all the earth. This is the point of the "for" at the beginning of the verse.

Although these people came fully face to face with the gospel, they rejected it because they measured the gospel by a different scale of values ["according to"]. They rejected the gospel, even though they sufficiently saw its power in the lives of Christians around them.

but live according to God in the spirit

The Greek has a contrast that is not evident in English -- "That they might be judged according to men on the one hand but live according to God in the spirit on the other hand." This deals with a double purpose: that Christians may be judged by non-Christian norms on the one hand and that they may go on living by God's norms on the other hand.

The judgment of men's norms is not the final end of Christians. That is only one side of the story. The other side of the coin is that Christians will live eternally according to God's norms in the spirit. Christians will live according to God's standards in eternity. Christians will live forever after their physical death.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'" (John 11:25).

Principle

Christians live according to a different set of values than non-Christians.

Application

God will not judge Christians in eternity. Their sins have already been judged by the death of Jesus on the cross. Therefore, God will not condemn Christians (Romans 8:1), because they accepted the gospel while on earth.

Therefore, the Christians live according to a different scale of values. We abide by a different manual. We march according to a different drumbeat. We look at life differently because we have been born from above. We do not live "according to the norms" of the world.

On the other hand, we concur with God "according to the standard of God in the spirit." We do not fit in the herd any more. The Savior spoils us for "living according to the standards of men in the flesh." He spoils the values of the old crowd. We did not give up those values but they gave us up because the Savior gave us soul satisfaction. That satisfaction more than compensates for the fair weather friends we lost when becoming Christians.

1 Peter 4:7

"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers."

Now Peter turns to a new subject--the effectiveness of the believer's life in the middle of suffering (vv. 7-11). Do you have stability under pressure? When disaster comes, do you know how to cope with it?

But the end of all things

Peter now presents a motive for facing trials. He appeals to the "end." The "end" is the limit at which a thing ceases to be what it was up to that point. The "end" here probably refers to maximum disaster coming from Roman persecution in Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

Up to this time, early Christians were relatively free from persecution. But at that point, Nero was out to persecute Christians. He used Christians as bait for wild animals and as subjects to fight gladiators. He also used them as torches to light the streets of Rome. Therefore, this was the end of a period of calm for Christians in Asia Minor.

Peter prepares Christians for a radical change of circumstances. This preparation demands a thorough understanding of God's perspective on the purpose for suffering. It demands an understanding of prayer.

"All things" is emphatic and refers to the conclusion of this era of history in the first century. The sweep of this statement is awesome. The next thing on God's program for Asia Minor Christians is now at hand.

is at hand

The phrase "is at hand" means approach, come near, to move nearer to a reference point. Peter is talking about the imminent coming persecution on Christians in Asia Minor and uses these words to motivate these believers to hang in there through the suffering they will face.

Some think that this statement by Peter is a claim for the imminent coming of Christ. Immanency means that there is no prophetic event that needs fulfillment before Jesus comes again. He could come at any moment. This is why some think Peter can make the statement that the coming of Christ has drawn near. It is near in the sense of imminence. Although the New Testament teaches this truth elsewhere, the context does not argue for immanency here.

Immanency is not immediacy. Immediacy means that Jesus must come shortly. Immanency means that the coming of Christ could occur at any moment. There is nothing prophetically

preventing his coming. The next event in prophetic history looms ready to take place (Romans 13:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 2 Corinthians 5:2; Philippians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; James 5:8; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18; Revelation 1:3).

Jesus may appear at any time. Do you have a constant expectancy of the coming of Christ? That appearing is hastening on. We do not know the hour or day when we shall meet Him. We should live all life in the shadow of eternity.

"At hand" is also a formula for the rapture of the church, this being used as another argument to claim this passage refers to the rapture (Romans 13:11, 12; Philippians 4:5; James 5:8, 9). The rapture is seven years before the second coming. The rapture is an event that may happen any moment. Jesus is right at the door. He may come momentarily. No prediction must be fulfilled before He comes. The signs of the times such as the Jews going back to Palestine, the apostasy of the church, the increase of violence are all signs of the second coming, not the rapture. It may take place today, tomorrow, or sometime in the twenty-first century. Only God knows.

However, the meaning in this context is the coming persecution of Christians in Asia Minor. This persecution will momentarily come on these Asia Minor Christians. When it comes, Christians must have already prepared themselves for it.

Principle

God wants Christians to be prepared for disaster.

Application

If this verse refers to the rapture, God wants us to live in constant expectancy of Christ's return. None of us know whether we will live to see the end.

Since this verse probably refers to coming persecution, the meaning is that Christians will come to the end of calm in their lives. Each Christian will face maximum disaster situations at least a few times in his or her life. God wants us to prepare ourselves for coming disaster. Each of us will face stark situations in life. None of us will get through life without severe problems.

Peter's point is preparation. Are you prepared for trial when it comes? If you wait till trial comes to prepare yourself, it will be too late. Under major duress we do not think clearly. We cannot learn properly when emotionally upset. Therefore, we

must prepare our souls before trial comes. Do you know enough principles of God's Word to face the bad times when they come?

therefore

"Therefore" draws an inference to the phrase "the end of all things is at hand." Because of the coming crisis, Christians are to follow the following seven directives (vv. 11-17). These are as binding on the child of God as "you shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

The Holy Spirit sets forth these commands in light of the immanency of the dire situation these Asia Minor Christians were about to face. They were to lay these things to heart. The "therefore" is the verbal link between the seven exhortations that follow and the pressure the Asia Minor Christians are going to encounter.

Principle

We need to operate on divine directives during duress.

Application

It matters how we think under pressure. The Word of God will mold and direct our thinking. As the Spirit of God deposits truth in our mind, our thinking will change (2 Corinthians 3:18) and God will progressively transform us. Eventually the Lord of glory will dominate our entire thinking apparatus. He is Lord of the mind (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Our head is usually the last citadel to capitulate to the sovereign Lord. "I know better. I am too wise. I am too smart. It doesn't stand to reason..." This is a proud head. We are too top heavy (2 Corinthians). In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Eve wanted to be smarter, more brilliant and clever. We can corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ.

If we do not operate on the principles of the Word, we will fail miserably under trial. We must use the resources of God's Word. Many of us run to some friend for sympathy. If we depend on a sympathetic ear, we will not learn to pipe the Word into our soul in times of disaster.

People who attend churches that do not teach the Word but operate on entertainment and social life will end in tragedy. People indifferent toward the Word will not cope in times of deep trouble. Social life does not carry us through disaster. In

times of disaster, we do not think in terms of musical chairs! If we are mature the thing we remember is what God says about suffering. No incubator Christian living will carry us.

be serious

"Serious" comes from two words: to keep safe and mind. This is a term of mental health -- to be in our right mind, to be reasonable, sensible and serious, to keep our head, to be temperate and discreet, to show self-control, to come to our senses, to learn self-control. Peter says in effect, "Preserve your sanity. Keep things in their proper proportion."

This is what is important while under duress. "Guard your mind." God expects us to stabilize our thought pattern. Why should Christians get upset and fall apart when trial comes?

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

Peter wants us to keep our minds safe, to preserve our sanity. A great attribute of sanity is that it sees things in proper balance. It sees what is important and what is not. It is not impulsive and capricious. It is not subject to fanaticism nor indifference. It sees the circumstances of time in the light of eternity. Circumstance finds its importance in the light of eternal values. When God gives us this perspective, all things take proper place in our thinking.

"Serious" signifies alertness (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13). Metaphorically, it does not in itself imply watchfulness, but is used in association with it to mean thinking soberly. Christians are to be clear in their thinking about how to live the Christian life. God wants our minds stayed and solid. Such a mind restricts excesses from coming into our lives.

"Be serious" is an urgent command. It demands that we deal decisively with our instability, without panicking. The person who is never at rest does not do much praying. Stability comes from orientation to the plan of God. When we keep balance in our thought life we are not flighty and carried away by distorted thinking or by attacks from people.

The idea is that God wants us to have a life free from frivolous and irresponsible living. We take life seriously. We understand the consequences of our decisions for time and eternity. We know the

impact of our decisions on self and others and take a responsible approach to life. We do not abandon ourselves to such excitement that we lose self-control. We cultivate spiritual calmness.

Principle

God wants us to establish balance in times of disaster.

Application

Christians should have stability in their thinking. Do you keep your thinking stable in times of trouble? It is very easy to allow some disaster to cause a wide variety in the consistency of our thinking. Our thinking determines how well we live the Christian life.

The Christian life comes down to what we think. Mental attitude sins such as bitterness, antagonism, fear, worry, anxiety, jealousy or a guilt complex will destroy our stability. We need this stability before we enter the storm. If we enter suffering conditions without stability, we will crack up mentally.

We need something greater than ourselves to face disaster conditions. This greater thinking reflects upon the Word of God and His providential care for us. The more of the Word we get into our orientation toward life, the more stable we will be. We will have greater capacity to deal with whatever we face. As you move into the storms of life, we need to have the Word firmly lodged in your thinking patterns. This will give us the stability we need in the trials of life.

Some Christians enter psychotic or neurotic dimensions even without being under heavy duress. If we buckle under the charge of the mosquito, how will we handle the charge of the elephant? How we handle the former will determine how we handle the latter. In principle, the elephant should go down the same way as the mosquito. It is when we are in the normal experiences of life that we need to learn how to cope with mosquito issues. We cannot depend on other people to help us. This is something that we must learn for ourselves.

Do you approach life frivolously and irresponsibly? Do you take life seriously? We should keep the importance of eternal issues before us at all times. We need to be aware of the consequences of our actions both for time and eternity. We need to be aware of the effects of our actions on ourselves and on others.

and watchful

The word "watchful" means self-controlled, dispassionate (1:13; 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5). God expects those under suffering to be spiritually alert, vigilant, on guard. He wants us to be in control under any circumstance. A person on guard can be calm and collected when difficult times come. Keep your cool when things go haywire.

The New Testament used "watchful" as an antonym of drunkenness. Drunkenness means that we are not in control of our mind or thought processes. A characteristic of true character is self-control.

God expects us to behave with restraint and moderation, not permitting excesses. He wants believers to have sobriety of thought that avoids excesses in passion, rashness or confusion. "Do not be intoxicated with anxiety, care and pleasures. Be calm and collected. Don't always be on a tear worrying about this or that" is this message to us. Everybody needs self-discipline. We need it for school. We need it in business. We need it in prayer.

Even though the Lord warned Peter, James and John not to fall asleep, they doze off in spite of what He said. He woke them up and yet they fell asleep again. Three times this happened.

"Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Matthew 26:40-41).

Principle

Effective prayer takes self-discipline.

Application

Do you have a calm, sober disposition and self-discipline fit for prayer?

Watch that you do not fall asleep in prayer. Look out, lest your mind wanders from conscious contact with the Lord. The Devil will cause our minds to wander. We will think about a dozen different things rather than truly pray. Ten minutes will pass and we will think we have prayed but all we will have done is let our minds wander.

If our sin capacity is increasing we will have no interest to pray. Peter, who wrote this epistle,

knew all about this (Matthew 26:41). He did not watch and pray. He slept and prayed!

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1).

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

in your prayers

This is the third reference to prayer in 1 Peter (3:7, 12). "Prayers" is in the plural and refers to both the quantity and quality of our prayer life. We need balance and vigilance in every prayer situation and in every kind of prayer.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

In the Greek "in" connotes "with a view to." Carry out the above commands with a view to your prayer life. The first issue of prayer is the desire not to get what we wish, but to discover the will of God. If we fulfill the seven commands of verses 7-11, God will answer prayer. A calm and collected spirit and self-discipline facilitate our prayer life. If we do not have a capacity for self-restraint in our mentality, it will be difficult to pray.

When we have qualities of seriousness of mind and self-control in prayer, we can face trial properly. If we employ these two qualities, this will help us to pray. Christians need to know how to restrain themselves, to rein themselves in and operate in an orderly manner. God wants us to be apt to pray. A calm and collected attitude enables us to be more effective in our prayer life.

Sober prayer stands in striking contrast to the frenzied prayer of pagan worship of the first century. This is the opposite of the undue excitement or mania prayers of those who do not base their prayers on the finished work of Christ.

"Not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come" (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

Principle

Stability of mind is necessary for effective prayer.

Application

Christians always on the race do not pray much. We need sobriety and self-discipline in prayer. Are you self-disciplined in prayer? When people succumb to pressure, they no longer concentrate. Hysteria indicates a lack of concentration and discipline. Stability of mind is absolutely necessary for your prayer life. Prayer takes concentration. Unless we can pray under pressure, we will not pray properly.

Are you sleepy in your prayer life? Dullness prevents dynamic prayer. If we fulfill the two commands of this verse, we create an environment conducive to answered prayer. God wants us to keep an inner steadiness while in prayer. Keep your heads. It is difficult to get through to the presence of God if we try to force our way through a crowd of anxious thoughts and sinful desires. We will rise from our knees disappointed and frustrated every time. We will say prayers but not pray.

Apathy, sluggishness, lethargy prevent dynamic prayer. Peter slept when he should have prayed. Peter was filled with anxiety and confusion in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers arrested Jesus. Lacking sane judgment, he grabbed a sword and cut off the ear of a slave. This is not how we are to handle pressure under duress.

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

When we have an unbalanced mind, we cannot pray as we could otherwise. If our approach to life is selfish and irresponsible, we cannot pray as we ought. We do not know what to ask. We ask for the wrong things, because our priorities are wrong. The first priority of prayer is that we discover God's will for our lives, not that we beg to get what we want.

Do you have an aversion for prayer? Aversion to prayer is bizarre, since prayer is a great promise and opportunity provided by God. We make a great mistake if we think that spiritual business will compensate for lack of communion with God. A full prayer life is a powerful life.

All of us do not have the same amount of money but we all have the same amount of time. We all have equal opportunity to pray.

1 Peter 4:8

"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins."

And above all things

The phrase "above all things" gives love first priority above all other virtues. We see the priority of love in other passages such as these:

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14).

Love is the most important virtue (John 13:34; 1 John 4:7-8; 3:14) and is indispensable for Christian relationships. Sacrificial love is of first importance in living out our relationship to others.

Love is more than simple emotional affection but a divine capacity to sacrifice self for others. This kind of love is at the very essence of the love of God (John 3:16). The very essence of God is love (1 John 4:8) for God loves us with an everlasting, unconditional love. God loves without limit. Such love manifests itself in unlimited sacrifice for others.

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:22).

Principle

Sacrificial love deserves the highest priority among Christian virtues.

Application

Sacrificial love is the pre-eminent virtue of the Christian life and is a prerequisite to all other

virtues of the Christian life. Three great apostles agree that love is the highest virtue:

Paul said that Love was the greatest virtue (1 Corinthians 13:13; Romans 13:8). John said the same thing (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:23). Peter here in this passage.

All three apostles agree that love is the supreme qualification of character for the Christian. Love makes all other virtues of the Christian life what they should be. Love is a prerequisite to any Christian activity. Our love to God will show itself in sacrificial love for fellow Christians (1 John 3:17).

Show me electricity without energy and I will show you a faith that does not produce the love of God. Show me fire without heat, then I will show you a faith that does not express itself in sacrifice for other Christians. As the sun shines its light so must a person who has come to Christ shine his love to others.

have fervent love

The word "have" in the Greek carries the idea of "keep on having." "Fervent" love should be not sporadic or occasional. God's desire is for us to unceasingly love with perseverance. God wants us to be eager to preserve our love in a warm environment. The idea is to keep love constant.

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1).

The word "fervent" denotes strained, stretched, eager, earnest; hence, metaphorically, "fervent." This is an adjective of intensity. Have intense love for others.

The Greek used "fervent" for the taut muscles of an athlete who strains every ounce of energy to win a race. In the 100 yard dash the runner strains and stretches his body to stretch across the tape first. This love is intent, earnest and will extend oneself to the limit for others. Do you exert yourself for others? Do you go out of your way to help others? You say, "Yes, if it is convenient." However, this love has a quality of fervor that sacrifices self for another person's welfare.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I

live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

This love is the opposite of self-centered love. Sacrificial love gives self to others. We will exert every effort and go to the limit of our strength to love others properly. This love is not sentimental, sloppy emotion but demands the best of our spiritual sinew. It means loving the unlovely, unloving and unlovable. This love is not easy but will love in the face of insult and injury. We will love when someone does not return love. We love even when love is spurned.

This kind of strenuously sustained love is not blind but recognizes and understands the faults of others (Proverbs 10:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

for one another,

Peter does not say "Have fervent love for those without Christ" but for "one another" as Christians.

Principle

Christian love requires muscle and sinew.

Application

It is not good enough for Christians to stop rendering malice toward other Christians. Sacrificial love goes far beyond the negative. Positive, sacrificial love intensely loves other Christians. We spare no effort to make sure we love Christians.

Do you keep your love at the boiling point? Do you have an ardent love? This love is not easy. It takes effort to love properly. True love is not sentimental, sloppy emotion but exerts itself to the limit of its strength. This love demands our greatest effort. The Christian loves as an athlete who strains every muscle to reach his goal. This means he will love the unlovely. He will love in the face of insult and injury. He loves when no love is returned.

The Christians of Asia Minor were about to face a storm from the Roman government. They needed to keep short accounts in their relationships. When we face personal the personal storm of suffering, we need to be free from attitude sins.

We want to rig our attitudes for the storm. If we do not batten down our hatch and free ourselves from attitude sins, the storms of suffering will sink our ship. We will not be able to face disaster when it comes because we are out of accord with those closest to us.

What we are like on the inside determines how well we will do when disaster comes. For example, people with attitude sins tie themselves up in knots thinking about their guilt. If we keep all the hatches and port holes open when we enter suffering, we will sink our spiritual ship.

Have you properly rigged yourself for spiritual storms? Do you have a hole below the water line of your spiritual ship? If you harbor attitude sins, you will not be prepared for the storm. You will sink under the storm.

for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'

"Cover" carries the idea of concealing, veiling, covering over. God expects us to conceal the sin of others so that no one can see a trace of their sin. This is not our own personal sin but the sin of our fellow Christian!

Fervent love orients us to forgive and forget wrongs committed against us. We readily cover their sin against us. We will not aggravate the wrong by spreading gossip around the Christian community. When we do not publish the failings of others, we eliminate a lot of gossip. Gossip does not love; it hurts others. True love does not hint at past failure.

"Multitude of sins" indicates a mass of sins that has come to the notice of a particular Christian because of some special personal contact with the perpetrator. Do you have some unique association with someone out of the loop with God? This passages forms a principle for how to deal with such people.

"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

The phrase "love will cover a multitude of sins" is a quote from Proverbs 10:12,

"Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins."

Principle

Sacrificial love protects the reputation of fallen Christians.

Application

True love is blind to the faults of others. Do you drag the problems of your fellow Christians into the open so that all can see? This will not build a bond between you and them. It will also hurt their reputation. By protecting fallen Christians and seeing them as Christ sees them, we encourage one another and strengthen each other.

Some of us think that God commissioned us to expose the sin of others. Instead of covering their sin, we advertise their sin. There is a sadistic glee in this. A true family protects its own. They cover up for their loved ones because they love each other. This is a missing element in the church of the living God--co-dependency notwithstanding. Co-dependency means that we enable our loved ones to continue with their problem, such as alcoholism by covering it up. Refusing to make a spectacle of a loved one is not co-dependency. It is not a panacea.

We hold little interest in covering the sins of fellow Christians. We have great interest in covering our own sins. We would rather cover our sins than confess them (1 John 1:9). God wants us to make a clean-cut break with sin. If we rationalize our sin away, we will not deal with our personal sin. This is like alcoholics who will not admit they are alcoholics. They will not address their alcoholism until they admit that alcohol controls their life. We will not address the sin of our lives until we confess our sin. Our natural tendency is to cover our personal sin and expose the sins of others.

An environment of love among Christians helps sustains believers under persecution. Love cannot endure indifference. All of us need to be wanted and understood. Hate does the opposite. Some people snoop about in order to find some sin in someone else and then broadcast it over their personal network. They may even exaggerate the sin and gloat over it.

We often slight Christians who fail. We eliminate a lot of gossip when we cover the sin of fellow Christians. A gossip does not truly love others. If we ask someone to spread feathers around the neighborhood and go pick them up a week later, this would be an impossible task. It is also an

impossible task to retrieve gossip spread around the community.

Love forgets as well as forgives. Love does not keep hinting at past failures. Love is willing to hide the sin of others in an anonymous grave. Who is without fault? If we attack others, this implies that we are innocent of sin.

Covering the sins of others, on the other hand, does not imply that we condone their sin (Proverbs 28:13). We should deal with public sin publicly and we should deal with private sin privately. Nor does covering sin imply that Christians not confront their sin.

Do you have a passion for bringing stray believers back to fellowship with God? Do you love people as they are, faults and all? Or would you rather proclaim their failures from the housetop?

1 Peter 4:9 "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling."

We come to the fourth directive of chapter 4, verses 7-11.

Be hospitable

"Be hospitable" means to be friendly to strangers or guests (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). A "stranger" is someone who is not regarded as a member of the extended family or a close friend. Strangeness produces mutual tension between natives and foreigners but hospitality overcomes the tension and makes friends of aliens.

"Hospitality" is not entertainment or an attempt to amuse people who do not need it. The idea is not that of showing hospitality to people who require help. Hospitality was usually extended to travelers and strangers.

Times of persecution and distress obligated Christians to be hospitable to one another. Some Christians lost everything they owned and were driven to distant countries for safety. This hospitality sustained people uprooted by persecution. Many of their homes were ravaged and burned. Parents were taken away into the great slave market of the Roman Empire. Children were often slaughtered.

Love--love given in return for love--was pragmatically important to these ravaged Christians who escaped from this treatment. Hospitality enabled these desolate Christians to relocate, to establish new businesses, to find work and to assist them on their travel. In the first century there were very few Motel 6's or Holiday

Inns. Those that did exist were places of prostitution. Hospitality became an important means of dealing with a number of issues for the church in that day.

"Hospitality" became a customary means of Christian living in the first century: Acts 16:15; Philemon 22; Matthew 10:9-13; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Timothy 3:2; Romans 12:12-14; Philippians 2:14; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2.

Hospitality is a manifestation of the love of the previous verse. Hebrews makes the connection between love and hospitality.

"Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:1-2).

Traveling ministers also required this service in order to spread the gospel around the Roman Empire. Thus, hospitality was crucial for strategic transmission of the gospel. God strategically used those with the gift of hospitality. Can we use this gift strategically today?

Hospitality was also used for evangelism. By inviting non-Christians into their homes, Christians could demonstrate the reality of their life in Christ.

Principle

If we have room for people in our heart we will have room for them in our home as well.

Application

Our attitude toward hospitality should be this: if we have freely received from God we ought to freely give to others.

Hospitality gives a great opportunity for us to share our life experiences and personal history with others. This places us in close social contact with others. For non-Christians to value Christianity they need to see it up close in the life and behavior of a Christian of authenticity.

One of the best strategies for evangelism in our day is evangelistic home Bible studies or simple evangelistic parties. In this way non-Christians can get up close and personal. They can see the reality of Christ in our lives. We live in a transient world where people have very few roots or friends. People move regularly. The ability to

establish lasting friendships is not very great in our society.

Hospitality also enriches the Christian. It will expand our fellowship and understanding of the dynamics of Jesus Christ in the lives of other people.

to one another

"To one another" means to others of the same kind. This means that believers are to give hospitality to fellow believers. If Christians do not treat each other well, we surely will not treat those without Christ very well.

"Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2).

Think of entertaining an angel. Angels usually appear as men, not women, in the Bible. "Angels" means messengers. It may be that these messengers were those who were spreading the Gospel around the world.

Principle

If Christians do not treat each other well, we surely will not treat those without Christ very well.

Application

God expects Christians to give to Christians. Selflessness is at the core of the character of Christianity. Jesus established this model.

This is the complete opposite of the philosophy of the world.. The world's philosophy is "me first," "the survival of the fittest," "the law of the jungle," "might makes right." That is not Christian. We think that if we say that we are number one loud enough and long enough people will believe it.

When Christians conflict with each other, we accentuate emotions of distrust, hatred and fear. In this we lose sight of our true goals and turn to focus on undermining each other. Strife on football teams ruins many great teams. Our true goal is to live and share the wonder of the glorious gospel of our wonderful Lord and glorify God with this.

A great accusation against many churches is that they are not friendly. They are like country clubs that exercise discrimination. If you are not the

right color, or do not dress properly, or are not from the right strata of society, they give you a cold shoulder. "I will not attend there again. They are not friendly." Do people say that about your relationships?

Sometimes teens are clannish and catty. If you do not look like them and dress as sharp as they do, they will cut you dead. This is non-Christian.

without grumbling

"Grumbling" means to mutter, murmur, speak secretly. The idea is to express one's discontent, to complain and murmur as a sign of displeasure. The way we carry out hospitality is important. We are to do it without complaint. A person who is hospitality-oriented does not mutter or grumble at the expense and inconvenience. It is one thing to be hospitable and it is something else to give hospitality with cheer.

"Murmur" is an onomatopoeic word representing the significance by the sound of the word. The meaning is to say anything in a low tone as in the word "murmur" itself. "Murmur" was used for the cooing of doves and means low muttering, especially of discontent.

"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6:1).

"Do all things without complaining and disputing" (Philippians 2:14).

The papyri (secular manuscripts) used "murmur" of the murmuring of a gang of workmen. Also the papyri used this term of the Romans murmuring while the Emperor (late 2nd century A.D.) was interviewing a rebel.

Israel spoke against God with a complaining mentality,

"And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me' (Numbers 14:26-27).

"Murmur" is a term of rebellion. "OK, God, I will do it, but I am revolting on the inside." These statements reveal our rebellion against our lot in life. "Why do they always call on me to..." "I do

not have the money to entertain." Such grumbling is protest against God. It is a cancerous attitude that has selfishness at its core. Selfishness pushes out love. Are you a person who only "gets" but does not "give?"

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Principle

Complaint is a manifestation of discontent toward our lot in life.

Application

Grumbling does not encourage Christians nor show gratitude to God. It is a complaint against satisfaction with how God made our lot in life.

When we complain we assail the providence of God. "God, give me my desires but do not inconvenience me with having to deal with the problems of people." God wants us to do this with more than just an outward smile of apparent pleasure to serve others. No, his desire is that we serve others with a smile of the heart.

Do not give with a grudging attitude. If we do, we lose the blessing. When we use our car, house, finances for God, God will bless us. Do you serve out of a sense of duty? Do you complain because someone asked you to give to others?

1 Peter 4:10

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

As each one has received a gift,

"As" means to the degree that we received our gift. "As" sets up an analogy between the grace of how we received our gift and the grace of how we are to minister the gift. It is by grace we received the gift and it is by grace that we use the gift. We serve God because God gives, not because we earn the right to be used of God. God gave us our gift entirely by grace and we minister it entirely by grace.

"Each one" indicates that every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. God excludes no one in the distribution of gifts to the body of Christ. We receive these special supernatural endowments at our salvation (1 Corinthians 12:11-13). Spiritual

gifts enable the body of Christ to function as a whole (1 Corinthians 12:15, 21). All spiritual gifts must operate in the environment of love (1 Corinthians 13). We should give greatest priority to the gifts that relate to maturity (1 Corinthians 14).

Each of us "received" the gift. We did not work for it. We did not earn it. God gave it to us with no strings attached. Everything that we have, God donated to us. Therefore, there is no ground for bragging. What do we have to brag about?

What did we do to get the gift? Nothing. It was a donation. How did we "receive" our gift? By grace. We do not get this gift by some super sacrifice, by working for it, by hustling for it, by living a clean life or by agonizing in the closet. Since we did nothing to acquire our spiritual gift, we should minister it in grace.

"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

This use of the word "gift" is the only occurrence outside the writings of Paul. A spiritual "gift" is a special, supernatural bestowing of a special capacity to serve the body of Christ or reach those without Christ. It is a special, supernatural endowment by the Holy Spirit to do the work of God (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10).

The word "gift" is derived from the same root as "grace," denoting something freely given, a favor bestowed. A gift is the capacity to benefit the body of Christ. Christians cannot claim that this capacity came from themselves. They cannot claim to produce this gift because it was a grace given by God. Our gifts belong to God, to be used for His purpose.

Two chapters in the New Testament catalog the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12 catalogs 7 gifts and 1 Corinthians 12 catalogs 11 gifts. Some gifts are duplications. Eliminating duplications there are 14 distinct gifts in those two chapters. In total, there are over 20 gifts when we consider all the gifts of the New Testament.

Principle

We exercise our gift in grace because we received our gift by grace.

Application

God does not want us to be ambivalent about the gifts He gives us. In fact, He warns us not to neglect our gifts:

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership" (1 Timothy 4:14).

Some of us may not feel gifted but nevertheless God has gifted us. We may not have a public gift or a sensational gift but we have a gift. Paul tells us to activate our latent gifts. Our gift will not function without animating it. In order to discover what our gift is, we must read the label on the gift to see if God addresses the gift to us.

"Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

If someone were to give us a gift at Christmas and we threw it in the attic without opening it, it would be an insult to the giver. If Christians receive special supernatural endowments to do the work of God and leave them latent, this is an insult to God who gave the gift. God gave every Christian a special endowment to do His work without exception.

Will you stand at the judgment seat of Christ empty-handed with no representation of using our gift responsibly? It will do no good to say, "Well, I'm not talented. I really do not have anything to offer the church. I am a speckled bird that does not fit in. I can't do anything. All I can do is sit. All I can do is be a religious spectator all my life. I watch others serve. All I can do is pity myself."

Neglecting our gift indicates our lack of appreciation for the grace of God. Very few Christians seize their gifts and use them for God's glory to the benefit of the body of Christ. Never did so many owe so much to so few.

minister it

"Minister" signifies to be a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon, minister. The New Testament uses this term in connection with official service in a local church, "they that have served (well) as deacons" (1 Timothy 3:13).

"But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless" (1 Timothy 3:10).

"Minister" is used of believers who serve one another in various ways. "Minister" is service:

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matthew 25:21).

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

to one another

"To one another" has to do with ministering to each other. Verses eight and nine also emphasize the reciprocal relationship of fellow Christians.

Peter throws forward the phrase "to one another" in this sentence. This emphasizes the object of the gift. Our gifts are for others, not self. Gifts are not to terminate in selfish gratification. Our gift is from God and for others.

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption" (Acts 13:36).

What a tribute to a man's life! The summary of David's life is that he served his generation by the will of God.

Principle

Gifts serve no purpose except to serve.

Application

Each gift is a pipe that relays the blessing for which God designed the gift. We are a pipe, not a reservoir. We are a channel of God's blessing to others. We are the channel through which God's blessing flows to others.

The idea of "minister" is that we are to use our gift. Get with using this gift for the glory of God.

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first" (Revelation 2:19).

"And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward" (Hebrews 3:5).

Jesus ministered by serving:

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant... 'just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26, 28).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Do you willing serve the body of Christ?

as good stewards

God not only asks us to be a steward but a "good" steward. "Good" emphasizes quality. God wants us to use the stewardship of our gift in a qualitative way. First Timothy 4:6 says that we are to be a "good minister" and Second Timothy 2:3 urges us to be "good soldiers."

In the first century, land owners placed stewards over great estates. These stewards were slaves captured from other parts of the world. Often these slaves were the leaders of their countries or business types. A "steward" was first a manager of a household or estate.

The owner of the estate held the steward accountable to faithfully fulfill the trust committed to him. The owner put his goods and property into the steward's hands. God wants us to faithfully administer our gift like a manager of an estate. A steward is one to whom God entrusts certain property. Joseph of the Old Testament was a trustee of Pharaoh's goods. God placed us as a trustee of our gift.

"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

God uses "steward" of the leader of a local congregation.

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money" (Titus 1:7).

Principle

Christians are managers of God's grace through their gift.

Application

God wants us to be faithful, not famous. He does not even want us to be successful but faithful.

"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Stewards serve others by distributing their gift to meet the needs of others. A good steward manages God's provisions well. As a minister of Christ, God entrusts us with the treasures of the gospel. The first requirement is trustworthiness.

What kind of steward have you been with God's gifts to you? Have you opened your gift? Have you neglected your gift? Do you use your gifts to serve others? There is room for everyone in the service of the King.

of the manifold grace of God

"Manifold" means various kinds, diversified. Originally it meant many-colored, variegated and was used of spotted leopards or fawns. God's grace shows itself in many diverse manifestations. God also gives great variety in the gifts he bestows on the church. God uses various means by which we can serve him (Romans 12:3-8). God makes His church multi-faceted.

God gives the Christian the responsibility to manage the many-faceted graces of God to the body of Christ. The Christian's gift is itself a grace from God and everything that it yields represents God's grace. Since God gave us the gift we cannot claim merit for it. No gift belongs to us. It belongs to God and we must use it in God's interest. Every use of God's gift must manifest God's grace, not our merit.

Principle

God's gifts of grace come in all sizes and shapes.

Application

The grace of God comes in all colors, shapes and sizes. It takes a great variety of gifts to produce a healthy, growing church. Our computer has outward functions but below the surface are many little parts that make it work. You may be one of those small parts. Without you there would be no effective church of God. That is the way God works. The church needs big parts and little parts, big roles and little roles without which the church would not be the church.

Will you make yourself available to be used of God in the local church? Without you, the work of the Lord will suffer loss. We ultimately do not serve the church but we serve the Lord.

Say to the Lord, "Here I am. Harness me. Put a saddle on me and I will do my best." All He expects is our best, nothing more. All He wants from us is to do what we can with what we have.

1 Peter 4:11

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Verse 11 presents two types of gifts:

- 1) speech gifts and
- 2) action gifts.

This verse shows us how to glorify God with our gifts.

If anyone speaks

"Speaks" here refers to the act of speaking rather than the content of what is said (John 12:49-50; Romans 3:19; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Sometimes "speaks" refers to utterance as opposed to silence. It is a spiritual gift of communication.

Principle

God gives us the gift of dispensing revelation.

Application

God expects us to dispense truth like a mother who coaxes and makes palatable God's Word.

God has a great pantry of truth. We do not stock our own message. We proclaim a message out of

the goods of God. The message is not our own. We are just messengers who deliver the telegraph of good news. We do not say a messenger is great because of the good news in the telegram. The glory is in the content of the telegram.

Men are simply mouth-pieces for communicating God's truth. We do not trust in our own powers but live under a power not our own.

let him speak as the oracles of God

"Speak" means oral presentation.

"As" means manner. The manner of our speaking should represent the Bible. God expects us to speak God's Word with conviction and a sense of awe. Our presentation should display earnestness and humility because we speak God's holy Word (2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). We are the mouthpieces of God. What we speak we speak from God's Word. These are statements from the mouth of God.

The word "oracles" means a short saying or pronouncement. It was used of a saying originating from a divinity. Originally this term meant an oracular utterance of heathen deities. Pagans used "oracles" for a saying that came from their gods.

In Christianity "oracles" came to mean divine revelation. Acts 7:38 uses "oracles" of revelations received by Moses. Romans 3:2 uses this term for God's promises. In this verse the use is of Christian gifts with special supernatural capacity to serve God with words. We pronounce the content of God's truth.

The person who speaks the "oracles" of God does not speak his own opinion or propagate his own prejudice. He makes sure his message is from God. Speaking gifts require Bible study. We must ask for illumination so that we can confidently proclaim the Word of God.

The phrase "as the oracles of God" precedes "speaks" in the Greek text making the phrase emphatic. We do not trust our own powers of speech. We do not seek applause for self by our ability to communicate. We possess power beyond self. We speak with the authority of one who knows God's Word.

We suffer from humility in the wrong place today. Today people speak the Word of God with timidity. We remove humility from motivation and put it into the domain of conviction where it was never meant to be. We may doubt ourselves

but we cannot doubt God's Word if we are to present it with conviction. We are on the path to producing a batch of Christians too timid to believe the multiplication table!

Principle

To speak as an oracle of God is to speak with authority.

Application

Do you speak the Word of God with conviction?

Anyone who "speaks" the "oracles" of God dispenses revelation to others. We do not seek to please men when we speak God's Word. We speak the truth unabashedly. John the Baptist is an example of one who was not a weather-vane but a guidepost who gave clear direction. Neither was there anything mousy about the way Jesus spoke. That is why they said, "Never man spoke like this man."

Today we have a finished Bible completely written for our edification. The unabridged, exhaustive edition of the Bible is the foundation for everything we believe. All our convictions are within the confines of this Book.

God will use His Word (Isaiah 55:11). God does not promise to use an outline or a sermon or a lecture. He has promised to use His truth. Do you depend on oratory and logic? Depend on His Word and He will bless your ministry. Preach the Word and leave the results to Him.

Speaking as the oracles of God is expository preaching (Nehemiah 8:8). When we expound Scripture, we can speak with authority. This is what God says, chapter and verse. If you want to argue, argue with the Bible. The beauty of expository preaching is that verse 2 follows verse 1. No one can accuse us of preparing messages for specific individuals.

Do you speak God's Word or are you a purveyor of your own notions? In speaking gifts, God designs that we transmit His truth. We simply chime the truth and the Holy Spirit does the work of applying truth to experience.

If anyone ministers

"Ministers" signifies to be a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon, minister. This is a serving gift. As we depend on the Lord to speak God's truth accurately by receiving illumination so we depend on the Lord to serve others. When we

serve, the life of Christ in us edifies others. We do not do this with natural strength.

"Ministers" refers to all forms of ministry other than speaking ministry--all acts of ministry.

Principle

A characteristic of Christianity is to serve others.

Application

Do you have a ministry to God's people (Hebrews 6:10)? Few of us minister to saints. Most of us cater to our own needs. We love to minister to ourselves.

let him do it as with the ability

"Ability" indicating strength afforded by power. Our ministry springs from the power of God. This is a person who already possesses strength and can put it into action.

"Ability" is endowed power. This is a power that is not our own. It is a power bestowed upon us. This may refer to the filling of the Holy Spirit. God makes effective and authentic what we do by the power of the Spirit. We do what we do in the power of God. It is a power God gives as a possession.

The book of Revelation ascribes this power to God denoting might, strength, power. Ephesians 1:19 refers to His mighty power, i.e., power (over external things) exercised by strength.

Principle

God will give us the ability to minister.

Application

God will enlarge our capacity to serve Him. He first gives us the capability to minister by giving us a gift. Then as we cultivate the gift, He makes us more potent. If we are faithful to our gift, God will enlarge our area of responsibility. He will push back horizons for greater ministry.

Are you dying of spiritual dry rot? If God opens an opportunity for you, seize the day no matter how insignificant it may seem. If you are faithful in the small thing He will give you something greater (Matthew 25:21). God has his own system of promotion and demotion. God will take you from an untrained, unequipped background and use you mightily. All He asks is that you are willing. God looks at the heart.

You may not have eight cylinders; you may have only four. God will use those four cylinders for His own glory. No college can gift people for ministry. That is God's prerogative. The school can only develop the gift that is already there. It cannot supply the gift. It is God who gives the ability (Zechariah 4:6).

which God supplies

"Supplies" is a more powerful term than the idea "gives." We get our English word "chorus" from the Greek term. "Supplies" is a term for someone who pays the expenses of putting a play on stage.

In ancient Greece a philanthropist would pay the expenses for the chorus. So "supplies" came to mean to defray the cost of bringing out a chorus at the public feasts. Usually some wealthy person paid the expenses of a chorus for the performance of a drama. The drama was a very expensive operation. In Athens wealthy citizens bore the burden for the expenses of the Greek dramas.

The idea of this word came to mean to furnish abundantly with a thing. Sometimes this word was used for the supplies of war. The point here is that God liberally gives for our good (2 Corinthians 9:10; James 1:5). Here God is the philanthropist. God will foot the bill and defray any expense when it comes to ministry. God is a God of grace when we exercise our gifts.

God will give extensively from his grace apart from any human merit. He is a liberal Giver (2 Corinthians 9:10; James 1:5). God will make available whatever is needed for ministry. He will provide for our needs for ministry.

Principle

God supplies any provision we need to minister for Him.

Application

We do not invent our gift. God both gives the gift and produces the ability to use the gift. God is both the source of our gift and the sustaining of it.

We often act as if it is our great gift that produces the results. We forget that God both gave us the gift and gives us the ability to use the gift (1 Corinthians 4:7). There is no room for pride because from beginning to end it is God that supplies.

that in all things God may be glorified

"That" indicates a purpose clause. This phrase expresses the ultimate purpose of God for creation. The aim of everything is to give glory to God (2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 2:11). Purpose gives meaning to our ministry. Because God is the source of grace, we give Him glory with the exercise of our gifts.

"Glorify" means to speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor--to praise. We attribute high status to God by honoring Him (John 5:23).

"Glorified" is in the present tense. God will keep on glorifying Himself through our spiritual gifts. God's glory is the standard by which we measure the quality of our service. We serve in such a way as to give glory to God.

through Jesus Christ

"Through" indicates that Jesus is the instrument by which God glorifies Himself, not us. God gives glory to Himself through Christ in three doxologies--Romans 16:27; Jude 25--and in this verse. Glory is given to Christ in Romans 16:27; Revelation 1:6; 5:13; 7:10; 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 13:21.

Principle

Our purpose in life is to manifest God's glory.

Application

Use of our gifts is a combination of self-possession and self-abandonment. We should exercise our gift with a sense of excellence and yet the gift should not call attention to ourselves. The focus should be upon the Lord Jesus.

Excellence is the result of knowledge, conviction and thorough preparation. Self-abandonment is the result of placing our confidence in God. Self-possession without self-abandonment will call attention to self. Self-possession with self-abandonment will call attention to God.

Humility is the recognition that we are what we are because of God (Romans 12:3). It is a proper evaluation of our place in the program of God's providence, no higher, no lower. When they asked John the Baptist who he was, he said "I am a voice." He was no more and no less than a voice. We are who we are by God's grace.

Do you live a life of doxology? All doxologies ascribe glory to God (Ephesians 3:20-21; Jude 24-

25; Galatians 1:23-24; Psalms 29:2). Do you ascribe to God what God truly is? There is always the temptation to ascribe glory to ourselves. If we speak or carry out an excursion for the Lord, we tend to take the credit. We must not steal God's glory.

God does not share His glory with anyone. When we are tempted to pat ourselves on the back, we tread on dangerous ground. We might break our arm patting ourselves on the back. Do not take the credit or praise.

to whom belong the glory

"To whom belong" means glory and dominion belong to Jesus, not us. The focus is on the person.

"Glory" primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, brightness, splendor, radiance — magnificence, fame, renown, honor. The implication is of external appearance, splendor and radiance. Glory is anything that catches the eye and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion. Glory has to do with credit. Jesus gets the credit because of His work on the cross and provisions in time. The credit or glory belongs to Him. He gets eternal renown from His work for us.

"Glory" also implies a manifestation of power characterized by glory - glorious power, amazing might (Romans 6:4). It is that which causes wonder or that which causes people to marvel.

The New Testament uses "glory" of the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation. Glory is what He essentially is and does as exhibited in whatever way He reveals Himself. This glory is particularly revealed in the Person of Christ, in whom essentially His glory has ever shone forth and ever will do (John 17:5, 24).

"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The issue in the glory of God is not so much what God is in His essence but what His essence becomes in manifestation. We manifest God's glory by the use of our gift.

Principle

God's purpose for us is to be God-centered

Application

What is your motive for ministry? Do you do what you do for self? Are you self-centered or God-centered? The message here is that God wants us to be God-centered. Everything we do, we do to the glory of God.

Our motive for ministry ought to be to do what we do for God. This is the same motive that moves God. God is motivated by His own nature, by His own glory.

and the dominion

"Dominion" is power exercised in rule, force or strength. This is might--especially manifested power. This is ruling power. "Dominion" implies authority. God has the sovereign right to do what He does.

"Dominion" occurs frequently in doxologies (1 Peter 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Revelation 1:6; 5:13; 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 2:14). Dominion is God's power to rule or control.

Note how this passage puts emphasis upon God: "manifold grace of God" "oracles of God" "ability which God gives" "God may be glorified"

Principle

God wants us to recognize His sovereign rule for our lives.

Application

Do you recognize God's manifested power in the circumstances of your life? Do you see God at work in your situation?

God also has the sovereign right to do with us as He pleases. God gave us our life to manage for Him. Should He chose to do something with our life that is not our will, we should recognize that we are not our own.

forever and ever

"To" in "to whom" means with a view to eternal values ("forever and ever"). God wants us to orient to the eternal order rather than temporal order.

"Forever and ever" is an expression for eternity. The idea is unlimited duration of time, with particular focus upon the future - always, forever,

eternally. Peter wants Jesus to receive the glory into eternity (Ephesians 3:21; Luke 1:33; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 25; Hebrews 1:8). Extensive expressions of "forever and ever" are emphatic and are found especially in doxologies.

Amen

"Amen" is an assertion of fact, not an expression of a wish. "Amen" means "I believe it." Peter believes that glory and dominion belongs to Jesus into eternity. He believes in the sovereignty of Jesus over his life. This orientation will prepare people for any disaster that may come their way

Principle

We need to put our gifts in the perspective of eternity.

Application

Our master motive should revolve around the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). If we live for the glory of God, our gifts will be used for eternal purpose.

What we do in time counts for eternity. The phrase "forever and ever" puts our ministry and gifts in eternal perspective. We need to keep eternal values in view. We look at time from the viewpoint of eternity.

None of us walk with aimless feet. Every effect has a cause. We have a motive for everything we do. We cannot act without a motive but we can choose which motive we want. It is not the motive which seizes the man but the man seizes the motive. A person of integrity cannot be influenced by a bad motive nor can a person of little integrity be influenced by a good motive (Luke 6:45). Our motive is as we are. What we are is decided by our character. God wants our goal and our motive to be one.

Pleasures are passing states. They possess no enduring value. We feel one way at one time and feel another way at another time. So no pleasures, no matter how extensive they may be, can bring us ultimate satisfaction.

Our true source of satisfaction comes from an eternal God. Therefore, our motive is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Our highest motive is to live for God. We ought to operate on the same motive that moves God. God is motivated by His own nature and glory (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

1 Peter 4:12

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."

With verse 12 we begin a new section of 1 Peter. Peter anticipates the duress the believers of Asia Minor were about to face. The Roman government blamed Christians for the burning of Rome. Rome covered some of them with pitch and used them as living torches to light the imperial gardens at night.

Peter now regards suffering as an imminent possibility. He now directs believers how to cope with this suffering.

Beloved

"Beloved" is a title of endearment for believers. This reminds us of love from Christians and love from God.

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).

"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved" (Philippians 4:1).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

True love has the capacity to empathize with those who suffer. That is why Peter calls these Asia Minor Christians "beloved." True love finds its greatest expression in times of trial. It is important to know that we are loved in times of trial whether it is God's love or the love of fellow Christians.

We ask, "If God loves me, why does he allow this to happen to me?" God's answer is hammering hardens steel and crumbles putty. God's purpose in trial is to build character.

Principle

We mean so much to the heart of God that He expresses His love to us in terms of endearment.

Application

God calls His only begotten Son "beloved." We mean so much to the heart of God that He uses the same term for us as He did for His own Son. Do you think that no one loves you? If you do, you have not read the New Testament very carefully. God loves you unconditionally, eternally.

do not think it strange

Suffering should not take Christians by surprise. Some think it is unusual that Christians suffer. We should expect adversity. Those who do not anticipate problems are more vulnerable to problems. No Christian should be surprised by the attitude of the world toward either the Christian or Christianity.

Jesus endured rejection and persecution, why should Christians be any different than their Lord? This is why Christian suffering can be referred to as "Christ's sufferings." We suffer the same nature of suffering as He suffered.

Literally this phrase is "Stop thinking it a thing alien" to you. "Stop being shocked by the maximum pressure coming to you." The Asia Minor Christians thought because they were Christians they were immune from suffering. They thought suffering was foreign to Christian living while God thinks it is innate to the Christian life. Suffering is not foreign but part and parcel of living before God. Christians should expect suffering.

Suffering should shock no Christian. Any disaster or catastrophe that comes our way comes by way of the plan of God. Why should a Christian be shocked or surprised when problems come to him? God does not design trial to ruin us but to test our capacity of soul.

Principle

God expects us to suffer as a Christian under an eternal plan.

Application

The Christian thinks differently than those without Christ. He has an orientation to the eternal plan of God. That plan includes God's

providential care for us. Nothing happens to us without going through God's filter system.

Even Jesus was "perfected" through suffering (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8-9). He needed adversity to mature His faith in His humanity. If Jesus needed suffering to advance His faith how much more do we need it? Jesus was not imperfect in the sense of sin. He was imperfect in the sense of development. If the sinless human Jesus needed development, we certainly need spiritual development with all our sin.

concerning the fiery trial

A "fiery trial" is a trial by ordeal. Christians face testing by fire. These trials are not light ones. Flames of persecution will scorch them.

The word "fiery" may refer to the smelting process. Smiths put gold or silver ore into a smelting pot to separate the dross from the gold making the gold pure. As the ore heats the dross comes to the top leaving pure gold at the bottom. God puts Christians into the fire to separate them from their sin.

The Roman government made a hostile policy change toward Christians at the time of the writing of 1 Peter. Christians were unjustly blamed for bad things happening to the Roman Empire. Hundreds were killed for apparent treachery.

Principle

God puts us into the fire to separate us from sin and to build our character.

Application

Not all trial is a "fiery" ordeal. Some of our troubles are not serious but simply pesky little things like mosquito bites. At other times a bumble bee will sting us. That is more serious. There are times when God calls us to go through "fiery" trial.

We should not take the attitude that "I don't know what I ever did to deserve this." You may not have done anything to deserve deep suffering. This is part of God's plan for you. Trial is inevitable in that plan. No one gets through life without hurt and pain. Just because we become Christians does not make us immune from suffering and exempt from trial. You will weep. You will hurt.

We get the idea that when we become Christians God puts a glass cage around us so that no problem will come our way and nothing can hurt us. For sure, God does hedge us about. Absolutely nothing can touch us unless He initials it first. No trial can come to us without the Lord giving it His OK first. Everything He permits is for our good and His glory.

We may not fully appreciate this while we go through the trial. We cry, "This is hot! It hurts!" Sure it does but we will come out the other side stronger and better Christians. After gold is refined it is more valuable. After the dross is removed, gold is more beautiful. God is in the process of removing the dross from our lives. He is in the process of making us more beautiful. Do not think this is strange. This is par for the course. This is God's plan.

No Christian goes to heaven on "flowery beds of ease." Yet we have the promise that God "will never, ever, ever, ever, ever [5 particles in the Greek] leave us" (Hebrews 13:5).

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2).

We can count on the Lord to go with us when we go through fiery trials. It is just like the Lord to be with us in trial.

which is to

"To" means face to face. If we meet trials face to face, we will benefit from the courage of honest examination of what God is doing with our lives. When we face trials with a relaxed attitude we can withstand anything that comes our way.

try you

All trials for the Christian seek to prove character. God designs adversity for our benefit. God learns our character by subjecting us to extensive testing.

Principle

God designs trouble for us so that we will prove that the Christian life is real.

Application

We dare not seek to detour God's plan for our lives because then we would deflect God's purpose for us.

"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed there unto" (1 Thessalonians 3:3).

"Appointed" means that God ordained our suffering. God makes an appointment for us to suffer.

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

God "calls" us to suffer. This is our calling. "I didn't count on that when I became a Christian. I thought I was going to be free from trouble." No, but we do have the hand of God on us while we go through these things. God provides and protects and allows nothing to happen to us that He does not personally screen. We would not want it any other way.

God knows the straw that will break the camel's back. He will never heap upon you more than you can carry (1 Corinthians 10:13). You will find that He is under the load as well, helping you to carry it. He will carry both you and your burden.

as though some strange thing

"Strange" is something alien or foreign in nature. Suffering is not foreign to Christian living. Christians should expect trial to come their way. God has a purpose for allowing pain.

Although God designs suffering into our lives, He can handle any reversal that we may encounter. There never was nor ever will be a trial or heartache or disaster that is too great for the plan of God. When the Christian links with the providential plan of God, he can orient to suffering.

The "thing" could be anything. It could be the time when you were admitted to the emergency room and wondered why. You may find in your hospital room someone who needs the Lord. They watch you as you cope with pain. Now you know the reason. God put you in that hospital to be a testimony to the nurses, to the patient in the next bed. You would never have met that person

otherwise. You would never have had the opportunity to share Christ so extensively.

God has a plan, a program, just for you. That is why we know that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).

happened to you

Nothing just happens to the Christian. Everything that comes his way comes from the providential hand of God.

Principle

The Christian should anticipate adversity as part of the plan of God for his life.

Application

What happened to you last month? What is happening to you this week? Put down the things that happen to you as God factoring in "good" into your life. To understand this you must come to the quiet place near to the heart of God. There you can say to the Lord, "Yes, Lord I know your providential care for me. You have a plan for me."

We learn from the test so that we do not have to take the test again. We write over the test, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). We settle the test once for all. We need not go through it again. We can give our lives in reckless abandon to the One who loves us unconditionally.

1 Peter 4:13

"But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

But rejoice

"But" introduces a contrast. In contrast to the time when disaster hit and we fell apart, we now "rejoice." Instead of thinking it strange that we suffer, we can now rejoice in the suffering. We do not rejoice in the trial itself. We do not rejoice in the reversal but in the Lord who never changes.

The joy of these Asia Minor Christians was not in persecution itself, but in the fact that they were able to suffer for the Lord. They took a stand for the Lord.

to the extent

We rejoice in accordance with the degree that we suffer with Christ. To the degree that we share Christ's suffering we rejoice.

Principle

The degree of our devotion to the Lord is measured by our willingness to pay the price for Him.

Application

Persecution is a test of our faith and a test of the reality of our faith. Only those who are willing to suffering will take risks that will put them jeopardy. These people truly love the Lord. Their convictions go beyond convenience.

The Lord uses both the rod and the staff on us. The staff comforts us. The rod comforts us as well, but the rod disciplines us so that we return to fellowship with the Lord.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

We now keep on rejoicing (present tense) through anything that may come our way. No trial can daunt the dynamics of our lives. To the contrary, we can have joy in trial. This was the testimony of Paul and his colleagues.

"And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:40).

that you partake of Christ's sufferings

"Partake" means to have a share of, to share with, to take part in with the implication of some kind of joint participation. We share in the sufferings of Christ. We share mutual interest in suffering with Christ. There is a close relationship in facing adversity together. In some cases, football teams that go through adversity together draw closer together. Christians who go through trials with Jesus draw closer to him.

We suffer now with him but we will also share in his glory in the future.

"And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

The New Testament uses the word "partake" in other passages dealing with chastening.

"But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8).

We partake of divine discipline when we step out of fellowship. "Chastening" means child training. The purpose of child training is remedial, educatory, and not punitive. God is not trying to get even with us. He never loses his temper nor loses control of His emotions. He educates us so that we will not make the same mistake again.

"For they [our parents] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He [God] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

We partake of God's holiness as a result of suffering.

Principle

We share more intimate fellowship with the Lord when we enter his suffering.

Application

We are in partnership with the Lord's suffering. We partake jointly in Christ's suffering. We have no choice. This is what it means to be a child of the King. God thinks too much of us to let us get away with murder. God cares too much to let us have our own way. He is a Father raising his children.

Some children are left to themselves. They grow up to populate prisons and asylums. However, in the family of God, our Father is faithful and disciplines us when we go astray. His children do not intimidate him. He is not afraid to deal with us.

We are in partnership with Jesus the Lord. Part of that partnership involves persecution.

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10).

that when His glory is revealed

The word "that" connotes a purpose clause. The purpose of our joy is the return of Christ. We keep eternal values in view during our suffering. We may suffer now, but when we see the Lord we will be specially blessed. The Christian's future is a basis for hope.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:18).

"Is revealed" means to unveil, to uncover, to cause something to be fully known. It means to reveal or to disclose who Jesus truly is. "Is revealed" in the Greek is not a verb but a noun. Literally the phrase reads, "in the revealing of His glory." The revealing of His glory is the unveiling of the truth of who Jesus is in His coming.

Note how Peter weaves together both the suffering and the glory of the coming of Christ. First comes the suffering, then the glory. The glory has not yet been revealed. When he comes in glory our glory will be revealed as well. When the glory of Jesus is revealed, our glory will be revealed. In the meantime, we suffer with him. Some suffer for him.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1John 3:2).

Principle

There is glory in knowing that the history of suffering will culminate with the coming of Christ.

Application

We face the reproach of Christ, the offense of the cross and the afflictions of the gospel. We must deal with these three ugly experiences. We deal with them by keeping the coming of Christ in view. God reveals His glory in persecution.

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Hebrews 11:26).

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer

persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased" (Galatians 5:11).

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Jesus' "glory" is His essence as manifested at His coming. Believers will see that glory at the rapture and non-believers will see it at His second coming (Matthew 19:28; 25:31).

you may also be glad

"Glad" means to enjoy a state of joy and well-being-to rejoice.

"I rejoice as I suffer for you" (Colossians 1:24).

"Although saddened, we are always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

"Glad" is the same word as "rejoice" in the first phrase of this verse. "Glad" is not a good translation because it may be understood as a superficial emotion that comes from outward stimulus. You buy a new car and therefore you are "glad." At another point you graduate from college and you are glad. Joy transcends gladness. Joy is an inner animation of soul that bases its orientation on truth.

Principle

Christian joy is not superficial emotion but jubilant celebration of the person of Christ.

Application

A little boy was sailing his toy boat in the middle of a pond when the wind stopped leaving the boat in the middle of the pond. An older boy came along and started throwing stones near the boat. The younger boy was greatly disturbed until he began to see that the waves moved the boat toward shore. God causes many waves to splash against our lives but each wave is for our own good. When we recognize that God causes the waves of our lives for a purpose, we accept suffering as part of His divine design.

When we realize that the purpose for our suffering is for the name of Christ, there will be true celebration when Christ comes back again.

with exceeding joy

"Exceeding joy" means to celebrate a victory. We experience a state of great joy that often involves verbal expression - to be extremely joyful, to be overjoyed, to rejoice greatly. When we arrive at the point where we have inner joy based on what God does for us then we have something to celebrate. Celebration is a result of victory.

Faith lays hold of future glory. Christians have a wonderful future. We therefore need not fear old age or what the future holds in time. There is no comfort in the future however, for those without Christ.

"Exceeding" means to go beyond and carries the idea of exulting. In that day we will have an intense joy and a transcending joy. This is joy that goes beyond anything we have ever known. We cannot adequately describe this joy.

"Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The only joy in which non-Christians can participate is temporal joy - a joy which never lasts.

Joy is manifested in the Christian who is controlled by the Holy Spirit,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Galatians 5:22).

Principle

Suffering forms a backdrop for God to demonstrate his grace, making us exult in inexpressible joy.

Application

David spent much of his life as a lonely shepherd boy and later as a fleeting nomad. This prepared him for his role as king. God operates the same way in our lives. He prepares us to be conformed into the image of Christ. David said that "It was good that I have been afflicted."

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

Black clouds make us appreciate the sunshine. The grace of God cannot be seen unless he has a means to manifest it through suffering. When trials come our way it is an opportunity for God to display his grace. Persecution blesses us because it forms a dark backdrop for the true radiance of the Christian life. The stark contrast of God's blessing in trial is like a brilliant diamond that sits on pitch-black velvet.

Affliction is the emery wheel that takes off the rough edges of our lives. Suffering makes us more mature and appreciative of eternal values.

1 Peter 4:14

"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

If you are reproached

The "if" carries the idea of "since" in the Greek -- "Since you are reproached." These Asia Minor Christians were in the process of being reproached for the name of Christ. No Christian should be surprised that people laugh at him/her because of their faith. Ridicule is part and parcel of the Christian life.

This is persecution of slander and of the tongue. "Reproached" means defame, disparage. Reproach is verbal abuse by disparagement because of our testimony. Someone puts us down because of our faith.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11).

How many of us have been reproached for Christ?

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to

enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Moses turned down the prestige and wealth of the greatest leader in the world of that day. In his day the pyramids stood in their majesty. He had the proper "estimation" or viewpoint. He had the right set of values. What have we given up for the name of Christ? Not much. Moses knew how to add spiritually.

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased" (Galatians 5:11).

The "offense of the cross" goes with "reproached for the name of Christ."

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Principle

People who share their faith will experience verbal attack.

Application

Christianity in our day does not cost much nor does it demand much. We have an anemic Christianity today. It is a flabby Christianity compared to that of the first century. Is it possible that we believe the same things the apostles did? When we read the book of Acts it appears that they had one different brand of Christianity and we have quite another.

1 Peter 4:14b

"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit

of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

for the name of Christ

"Name" refers to all that Christ represents. Our name represents us. If we write a check or note that name represents our person and character.

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save

His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21) [Jesus means Savior.]

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20) [We gather together representing Jesus.]

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12) [We believe in what He represents.]

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14) [We pray on the basis of the character of Christ.]

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16).

"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23).

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31) [We have eternal life because of what Jesus represents.]

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38) [We are baptism in what Jesus represents.]

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12) [Jesus name is the only basis of salvation.]

"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14) [We are called to represent His name.]

"Then Paul answered, 'What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus'" (Acts 21:13) [We die for what Jesus represents.]

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11) [The Father gives Jesus a distinct Name.]

"For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved'" (Romans 10:13).

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10) [Appeal to unity is on the basis of Jesus' Name.]

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17) [Everything we do we do representing Jesus the Lord.]

"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

"He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ...And He has on His robe and on

His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:13, 16).

Principle

Everything we are and everything we do we represent Jesus' name.

Application

What kind of representative of Jesus are you?

blessed are you

When insult because of our testimony comes our way, God gives us a special blessing. God gives us a special beatitude

when we face insult for our faith.

"Blessed" means a well ordered soul (1 Peter 3:14; Matthew 5:11). Suffering for Christ is no penalty, it is a privilege.

"Blessed" does not mean happy. Happiness depends on circumstances and circumstances depend on chance. People who

depend on chance happiness as the basis for their orientation do not operate on God's principles.

These people are shallow

and unstable. A blessed person is someone whose state of soul is neither produced nor affected by outside circumstances.

Principle

A well-ordered soul comes from God.

Application

A well ordered soul is a distinct quality of God and cannot be acquired apart from him. We cannot have what God has apart from God himself. God is independent of circumstances. We can be independent of circumstances.

A well-ordered person needs nothing. He is independent of circumstances. He is not dependent on luck, but upon divine resources within.

Blessedness is the state whereby one enjoys God. It is a state that belongs uniquely and intrinsically to God (1 Timothy 1:11). No one can make God blessed. So this is a condition of soul whereby the soul derives its satisfaction from the source of God.

for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

There are many titles for the Holy Spirit in the Bible but this is the only place where he is called "the Spirit of glory." In other places the New Testament calls him the "Spirit of truth," the "Spirit of life," the "Spirit of Christ," the "Spirit of God," the "Spirit of the Father," the "Spirit of adoption." "The Spirit of glory and of God" refers to the Holy Spirit's divine presence with us. He bestows glory on us. This glory is the reflected glory of God. The idea is that God is glorified in those who suffer for his name (John 12:23; 13:31).

"Rests upon you" refers to his indwelling of Christians. God blesses us because the Holy Spirit is with us. He is not only with us but he "rests upon" us. This means the Holy Spirit works with us in these situations.

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16).

Jesus uses "rests upon" in the phrase "I will give you rest."

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Principle

Christians can rest in the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit when they share their faith.

Application

We do not normally think in terms of the Holy Spirit resting on us. The Holy Spirit has many ministries to the Christian. He guides, teaches, convicts, and protects us. This is the reason Christians are blessed when slander comes their way. The Spirit of God is there to fortify and strengthen us.

The Lord takes it upon himself to give us rest. In this passage, the Spirit of glory rests upon and causes us to cope with the venom and hate that

people cast upon us. This is not a rest from work, but the harmonious working of all faculties of the Holy Spirit upon us.

On their part

"Their part" refers to those who reproach Christians for sharing their faith.

He is blasphemed

"Blaspheme" means to slander. People rail at Christians who take a stand for the Lord Jesus. They speak evil of the Lord. They wonder why you do not hold to their values anymore. They cannot figure out why you do not still run with them (1 Peter 4:4; 2:12).

but on your part He is glorified

How do Christians relate to Christ? We glorify Him. We make much of Jesus. When we glorify God we fulfill God's purpose of creation for us. Our purpose is to glorify the Lord Jesus. We do not have to be brilliant or gifted to glorify Him, we just have to be clean. God's purpose in suffering is to glorify Christ.

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).

"And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:40-42).

Principle

God's purpose in suffering is to glorify Christ.

Application

People take Jesus' name in vain everywhere. Have you ever heard anyone taking Buddha's name in vain? Did you ever hear anyone say, "For Buddha's sake," "For Confucius' sake," "For Mohammed's sake?"

The Christian holds the name of Jesus in high regard. He portrays Him as the most exalted person in the universe.

1 Peter 4:15

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters."

But let none of you suffer

The subject of Christian suffering is the theme of First Peter. We can suffer for good or evil. We can suffer as a thief or as someone with a vibrant testimony.

as a murderer

Peter lists four sins whereby Christians are vulnerable in relation to persecution. The first three deal with violation of laws of the land. Peter now throws out a caution--suffering is no justification for anarchy.

First, we cannot justify murder even though people may have killed our loved one. Not committing murder was the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13). Brutal treatment is no excuse for being brutal in return. We cannot play God with someone else's life. The potential for murder lies within every Christian. We have the potential of committing any heinous crime.

Principle

The potential for any sin lies within any Christian.

Application

Murder is the worst sin that we can imagine. Peter obviously saw the possibility that some Christians might go to this extent. The best people, if they are driven far enough, might commit murder. The best of people need to be warned against the worst of sins.

a thief

No Christian is exempt from the possibility of becoming a thief. Those that think that they are beyond the reach of gross sin need to read 1 Corinthians 10:12.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Principle

The potential for thievery is in each of us.

Application

The potential for stealing resides within each of us. Satan will test us on this by little things. Someone gives you too much money in return. You rationalize, "Well, it is their mistake. They should be more competent." Suppose the situation was turned around, would you want them to return the money? "Oh sure, it's my money."

God wants us to respect the property of others. Some Christians might rationalize that "Since someone stole my goods, I can steal theirs." Talking about a Christian stealing is like talking about an honest thief.

The Christian businessman that does not operate with cutthroat means may cost him business. If a Christian operates on principle, it could cost him his job. He might pay by losing a promotion.

The Lord Jesus spoils us for the stealing business. Our children can tell if we cut corners. They know if we cheat. Where do they learn to cheat on exams? Where do they learn to do shady things? Most learn it at home.

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Some of us have never learned to respect the property of others.

an evildoer

An "evildoer" is one who customarily engages in doing what is bad. In this passage, evil-doing may refer to civil disobedience. This is a wrongdoer in relation to society.

No Christian is immune from evil. The capacity for evil is still resident in the sin nature. When we become Christians we do not lose the capacity to sin. The apparatus for sin is still resident.

"Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

If we are going to be a good lover, we need to be a good hater of evil.

"You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He

delivers them out of the hand of the wicked" (Psalm 97:10).

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate" (Proverbs 8:13).

Principle

No Christian should partake in civil disobedience unless he is called upon to deny his faith.

Application

An evildoer ignores the rights of other people. An evildoer is a person who participates in civil disobedience. This person orients to mob psychology. Mobs destroy property, lives and rights of individuals. No Christian should develop mob thinking.

God expects us to develop a hatred for civil disobedience. Anarchy destroys society. Even bad government is better than no government. At least the bad laws give some protection for law-abiding people.

Some people are spiritual anarchists. They are a law unto themselves.

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

or as a busybody in other people's matters

Peter says, "Do nothing that would give your enemies an excuse to attack your Christianity, even to the extent of meddling in other people's business." Some people love to meddle in others' affairs. This person is a self-appointed overseer of other people's business. These people love to run the lives of other people. They interfere in business not their own.

We have more busybodies in church than murders. We have more busybodies than thieves. We have more busybodies than evildoers. Do you make it a practice to stick your nose in other people's business? Some people tell others how to raise their children when they have brats of their own.

The Bible speaks to the issue of meddling in the affairs of others in a number of passages:

"That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward

those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

Evidently we need to take lessons on how to be quiet. It takes some study to learn how to mind our own business.

"That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (2 Thessalonians 3:11).

Principle

It is unchristian to meddle in the affairs of other people.

Application

Too much idle time introduces the problem of being a busybody.

"And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

If tattlers and busybodies find no one to listen, they would be forced out of business. If we receive stolen goods we are as guilty as the thief. There is something in the human spirit that loves the juicy morsel of gossip.

Some things are better left unsaid even though it may be true and accurate. You may feel that you are simply reporting the facts but what good is this doing? It would not serve any purpose to pass it on. It should die with you but you are dying to tell someone. Like money, it burns a hole in your pocket. You must tell someone. You call someone and say you have a "prayer request." We call this "spiritual gossip." "I don't want you to think I am gossiping but I would like you to pray about this. Mr. and Mrs. So and So are having marriage trouble." There are some things we pray about privately.

Are you a nosy person? Are you a person who cannot mind his own business (Romans 14:4, 10)? Christians do not have the right to run other people's lives. If we do, we play God. We try to lead the lives of other people. Some Christians bully other Christians.

The nosey person always starts out with attitude sins. This person is usually bitter, antagonistic,

vindictive, implacable, and operates with a guilt complex. He is so unhappy with himself that he tries to run the lives of other people. He wants to super impose his view of the world on other people. He wants to pour them into his pseudo mold. He does this by maligning, nit-picking and criticizing. He basic system of operation is retaliation and bullying.

1 Peter 4:16

"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."

Yet if anyone suffers

The "if" recognizes in the Greek those who suffer as Christians. God designs all suffering for the Christian for blessing. If we suffer for our sin God designs that for blessing because we are blessed when we are restored to fellowship. The purpose of discipline of the Christian is to bring him back to blessing (Hebrews 12:6).

God uniquely blesses us for suffering in time because there will be no suffering in eternity. God cannot show His unique love for us in trial there because there will be no trial there. He can only show blessing in suffering in time.

as a Christian

The "as" puts the Christian in strong contrast to the four terms used to designate criminals in the previous verse. We can suffer for our sin or we can suffer representing the name of Christ.

In the entire Bible the name "Christian" occurs only here and Acts 11:26 and 26:28. Literally, the name "Christian" means "Christ ones." We are those who belong to Christ.

"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian'" (Acts 26:28). Agrippa used this name as a term of reproach. Today "Christian" is a rather meaningless term. We call the United States or Canada "Christian" nations.

Principle

Christians are those who belong to Christ.

Application

Are you a Christian or just a Baptist, Presbyterian or Catholic? A Christian is not one who has been confirmed or baptized or joined a church. This is a popular misconception today. Christians are

people who have invited Jesus Christ into the personal experience of their heart and life. They do this by trusting in the finished work of Christ in suffering for their sin. When they do this He changes their viewpoint on life. He gives them different desires.

If I were to ask you "Are you a Christian?" what would you say? Yes or no? You might say, "I don't know." Suppose I said, "Are you a citizen of the United States, yes or no?" You know for sure whether you are or not. If I say, "Do you belong to Christ?" and you answer "Well, I don't know. I suppose I do." That is a good sign that you are not a Christian. A genuine Christian knows that he is a Christian (1 John 5:11-13).

let him not be ashamed

It is an honor to suffer for our testimony for Christ.

"According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

"Ashamed" is the feeling of fear that prevents us from doing something (2 Corinthians 10:8; Philippians 1:20; 1 John 2:28). This term is used of being ashamed before the Lord Jesus at His Judgment Seat. The Judgment Seat is where the Lord will evaluate the lives of Christians.

We can translate "Let him not be ashamed" as "Don't be embarrassed." This is a challenge toward poise. If we suffer there is no reason to fall apart or throw a tantrum. Some Christians live in panic palace. They are constantly upset and full of self-pity.

In this verse there is no shame if we suffer in a Christian manner rather than as a lawbreaker (1 Peter 4:15).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Principle

A strong Christian develops poise in the face of suffering.

Application

Does shame keep you from sharing your faith? If so, you have lost your poise as a Christian. Strong Christians share their faith. We can fly in the face of fear because our identity is wrapped up in Christ. Our grip of our position in Him is so powerful that nothing and no one intimidates us.

but let him glorify God

We glorify God when we use His provisions. Suppose a rich relative leaves you millions of dollars. He puts the money in a bank account for you and hands you a checkbook. You have not bothered to balance the account. You have not bothered to look at the account. Mature believers know what is in their spiritual account book. They know how to apply it to their life. When we use God's provision, we glorify Him for what He has given. We glorify Him by spending His vast resources (verses 11, 14).

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

in this matter

"In this matter" is literally "in the sphere of his name." Note that the word "name" is not in the New King James Version. The New American Standard Bible translates this phrase "but in that name let him glorify God." God gives all His provisions through Jesus and what He represents.

Principle

We glorify God by using His provisions for us in Christ.

Application

We glorify God in connection with the name of Christ. The idea of "name" is revelation. As we reveal who Christ is and recognize the reality of who He is and what He did, we glorify God. We glorify God the best when we recognize the person and work of Christ in our lives.

1 Peter 4:17

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins

with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

For the time has come

These are mighty solemn words for the household of faith. Judgment will begin with the family of God. This judgment is a judgment in time, not eternity. No Christian will face the Great White Throne judgment (John 5:24; Romans 8:1). However, a Christian will face discipline for stepping out of fellowship with God. This discipline takes place in time. We will not face this discipline in eternity.

"Time" means appointed time or the opportune point of time a thing should be done especially in view of divine discipline. If believers do not confess their sins then they face the chastening hand of God. So this is dealing with self-judgment, the ability of Christians to scrutinize their life in time (1 Corinthians 11:28-30).

The time "has come" for living in constant fellowship with God but we keep postponing it. We put it off and our life is just as shabby as it was five years ago. We do not regularly confess our sins. How long do you suppose God is going to put up with this? We reach a plateau in our spiritual life. We cease from confessing sin. We are no longer in tune with God.

Principle

God wants Christians to deal with their sins now.

Application

There was a time when we kept short accounts with God. Christianity was vibrant and alive to us. We shared our faith. Then someone soured us. Someone discouraged us and we lost heart. We stopped an ongoing fellowship with the Lord. We felt justified because we were not appreciated. Since we are not dealing with this now God may have to deal with it.

for judgment to begin at the house of God

"Judgment" here is the persecution Asia Minor Christians were about to undergo. Evidently part of God's design for allowing persecution was to bring Christians who stepped out of a walk with God back into fellowship (Hebrews 12:6-7).

The phrase "the house of God" refers to the church, or the family of God. God judges the church. This is judgment in time, not eternity.

God's judgment of the church is a purifying judgment.

Principle

God judges the church in time, not in eternity.

Application

When the church confesses its sins it is free to enter fellowship again. We have the judicial right to enter that fellowship because of the death of Christ. God is free to forgive because Jesus took the penalty to deal with sin judicially. God not only forgives us in confession but He cleanses us as well (1 John 1:7, 9). God the Father passed judgment on our sins when Christ was on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

Every sin that we have ever committed has a penalty attached to it. Jesus took that penalty. He took the full wrath of God for sin. That is why we do not have to pay for sin. For us to get back into fellowship, we do not pay penance but simply confess (acknowledge) that that sin took Jesus to the cross.

Confession means I acknowledge the judgment has already been passed on Christ and confession is my recognition of Christ's judgment for my sin. We recognize the judgment by simply confessing sin.

If we feel sorry for sins we punish ourselves. This detracts from the suffering of Christ (Galatians 2:21). We put ourselves in the place of suffering for sin. That is what we call "human works for restoration to fellowship." When Christ hung on the cross the Father accepted the judgment for our sins. Penance is a system of paying for sin. It is a subtle system for intruding on the finished work of Christ.

If we do not confess sin as Christians God will bring us back into fellowship in His own way. Discipline is not a matter of punishment. Jesus already took the punishment. Discipline is a family matter. It is not a question of whether we are in the family it is a matter of our status in the family.

Some people think that they have a special "in" with God. They try to figure out what God likes and then give it to Him. They ante in their 10% in order to get a girl friend. This is not Christianity. This is legalism and religion.

We deal with our sins the same way we did when we became Christians. By faith we accept the

finished work of Christ to forgive our sins. We need to realize that God is satisfied with the death of Christ for our sins (propitiation).

Most of us are spiritually flabby. We cater to our flesh. We do not like to buffet our body or to keep it under control (1 Corinthians 9:27). We like to give it free reign. It is human nature to be easy on ourselves. We do not deep short accounts with God. Why not begin today to walk with God by daily confessing your sin?

and if it begins with us first

The "if" of this phrase means God assumes the reality that judgment begins first with the church.

God always begins with His own people. Judgment always begins with God's people. God is in the business of raising children for eternity. He expects us to be a credit to Christ on earth. He does not want His children to bring reproach on the Bible. He expects us to be an example to those without Christ and an asset to the cause of the gospel.

Principle

God will sovereignly intervene into our lives to bring us back to Himself.

Application

If we stand in the way of people coming to Christ, God will do something about that. We may be obstacles to our relatives and neighbors becoming Christians. It may be that some people who know us reject the gospel because of us. They see the irregularities and inconsistencies in our lives. They see our talk outruns our walk and we have more lip than life.

what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

If there is no question that God disciplines the church then there is no question He will discipline those who reject Him.

The "end" is the final fate of those who do not know Christ. What is the final disposition of those who reject the gospel? The striking question is "What shall the end be?" The Bible answers this clearly -- they will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15). That is the end of non-Christians. What a future for those without Christ!!

"Do not obey" means to refuse to believe. These people deliberately disobey the gospel. The Greek indicates they habitually refuse to believe. When non-Christians see Christians out of fellowship, do they stop associating with the Christian? No. They deliberately reject the message of the Christian.

Principle

Those who turn negative volition to God, God will judge eternally.

Application

If you have never turned positive volition to God's message, God will sovereignly deal with you. God's only solution to the sin question is the death of Jesus for our sin. If we reject that message God has no other alternative but to cast us into the Lake of Fire.

1 Peter 4:18

"Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'"

Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved

This verse is an allusion to the Old Testament Greek rendering of Proverbs 11:31.

The "if" assumes reality in the Greek. It is true that Christians have difficulty in being saved. They have a difficult time coming to grips with grace. The gospel itself is not difficult but it is difficult to come to grips with salvation by grace. Faith in Christ is non-meritorious. Most people have a very difficult time dropping their works-orientation to salvation.

The "righteous one" is not a special class of spiritual Christians. The "righteous one" here is the one who has received imputed righteousness from God. Our eternal standing before God does not rest in righteousness of our own. We standing in a righteousness given to us by Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Saved people are right with God.

"Scarcely" means with difficulty, hardly.

"Righteous one" is a term for Christians. It is very difficult for Christians to become Christians. Saving sinners is no mean task. It took Jesus to the cross. The reason Jesus went to the cross because men are totally depraved. There is no way we can come to Christ by our own merit. We can barely

become Christians. It takes the act of God to save us.

The word "saved" means to receive salvation. We cannot earn salvation; it must be given to us.

Principle

Christians go to heaven only by the work of God Himself in sending Christ to die for our sins.

Application

It takes the work of God to save us. We go to heaven only by the work of Christ. We cannot save ourselves. No merit or human effort makes any impression upon God. Not one of us has any righteousness before God.

"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one'" (Romans 3:10-12).

To become a Christian we have to stop working for salvation and accept the work of Christ for our salvation.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Have you come to the place where you reject your own merit for salvation and rest solely on the payment Jesus made on the cross for your sins? Why not make that decision today?

Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'

The words "ungodly" and "sinner" refer to those without salvation. "Ungodly" means those without God. They are the non-God crowd. There is no God to them. Yet Christ died for no-God, secular people.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die" (Romans 5:6-7).

The second word for those without Christ is "sinner." A sinner is one who falls short of the mark, of God's standards (Romans 3:23). Jesus came into this world to save sinners as well.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

"Appear" signifies brought to light, become visible. The lost are in a dire situation. There will come a day when it will be obvious they were in negative volition to God. The judgment of the righteous is an ominous harbinger of the judgment of the lost. They exist in a state of damnation. Where shall they appear? They will make an appearance at the Great White Throne Judgment to be pronounced lost forever (Revelation 20:12-15).

"And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

If the righteous need disciplinary judgments, how much more will the judicially unrighteous need eternal judgment. Because they rejected God's message, there will be no question as to the merit of the judgment (Romans 3:10).

Principle

Those without Christ will appear before God to give an account for rejecting Christ as their Savior.

Application

God has a plan whereby the unrighteous can become judicially righteous.

"But now the righteousness of God [not our righteousness] apart from the law [apart from our works or merit] is

revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God [note emphasis on God's righteousness], through faith [faith is the only means whereby we can become Christians] in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference" (Romans 3:21-22).

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies [declares as right as God is right] the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness [God's righteousness], just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes [puts in] righteousness [God's righteousness] apart from works" (Romans 4:5-6).

"Therefore, having been justified [declared as right as God is right] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

We become judicially or positionally righteous the moment we receive the righteous Son of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The die is cast. If you die without Christ there is no hope for you. There is nothing in your future except eternal judgment. It is not material whether you believe that or not. The Bible clearly teaches this. Make your decision for Christ today.

1 Peter 4:19

"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

Therefore

The "therefore" indicates that this is a summary statement for Christians in suffering. This is the punch line of this section of 1 Peter. This is the application of all this teaching on trials. If Christians are not to retaliate what are they to do? Commit.

let those who suffer

Nothing that comes our way arrives by accident (1 Peter 2:20; 3:17). God processes everything in our lives. When Satan came to God to put duress on Job, God had to take down the "hedge" around

Job. God has a hedge around each of us. Nothing comes into our lives without going through that hedge. No disaster comes our way without God's permission. He must concur with any event that enters our lives.

according to the will of God

The words "according to" mean norm or standard. Our suffering must be according to the norm or standard of the will of God.

"Will" means purpose, plan or design. Everything that comes into our lives come by divine design. Nothing comes into our lives that God does not process by His will. If God wills suffering then so be it. It is better to suffer in the will of God than out of it. If God wills something for our lives then He will give us sustaining grace.

Principle

Nothing can happen to us without God concurring with it.

Application

The doctrine of God concurring with the events of our lives is a sadly neglected doctrine today. This doctrine is part of the providence of God. In God's providence He controls all events, all thoughts, all plans for his own glory.

It is reassuring to know life is not capricious and God controls everything in our lives.

commit their souls to Him

"Commit" is an accounting term meaning to deposit. "Commit" carries the ideas of giving or handing over to another, transmitting. We give over our money to the bank. When we give our money to a bank, we put it in charge of keeping it for us. If we deposit our souls with God, He will undertake the superintendence of our souls. When we do this we are no longer in control, He is. Our soul operates on all systems go. Seven verses later he shows us how to do this -- "Cast all our care on the Lord" (5:7). We cannot solve all our problems ourselves. The word "commit" was used in Matthew 26:45 of the handing over of the Son of Man to the control of sinners. They arrested Him and took Him into custody. They placed Him under their authority and control.

"Then He came to His disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and

the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners'" (Matthew 25:45).

"Commit" is the very word Jesus used on the cross when He said, "I commit my spirit."

"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit'" (Luke 23:46).

"Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth" (Psalm 31:5).

Principle

It is God's desire that we deposit our trials to His care and charge.

Application

Put trials in perspective. God is working through them in His own divine design. Can you trust that? We need to know that God uses suffering to mature us.

Banks are well equipped to take care of our money. If we keep our money under the mattress, there is a good possibility that someone might steal it. The moment we take the money to the bank, our fears are over.

When we commit our souls to God, we grant Him the opportunity to do something with them. We hand over the control of our lives to Him.

in doing good

The term "doing good" means to benefit others. When we actively live out the Christian life, even under extreme duress, we benefit others. God uses our commitment to Him to bless others. He will do something good with our lives when we deposit them with Him.

By doing good, no matter the circumstance, we live to the challenge of Christ,

"But I say to you who hear: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you'" (Luke 6:27-28).

"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots" (Luke 23:24).

Remember Stephen's example,

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:59-60).

Principle

Good orientation to others implies the acceptance of God's sovereignty in our lives.

Application

It is easy to allow persecution to become an excuse for wrongdoing. It is easy to excuse deviance because of the difficulties of our lives. Often people enter apostasy out of rebellion against God because of trials that come their way. Confidence in God's plan for our lives, no matter what we may face, is a sign of mature understanding of God's working. Understanding the sovereignty of God in the midst of pain is the ultimate answer for "why" things happen to us.

as to a faithful Creator

We can trust God to be true and reliable (1 John 1:9). We can place our full confidence in Him because He is worthy of our belief and trust. God is dependable and reliable.

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No" (2 Corinthians 1:18).

"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Hebrews 11:11).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"Faithful Creator" points to His promises and character. God will fulfill his promises without fail. Men make promises they cannot keep because they are neither dependable nor able to carry them out. As our Creator, God is responsible to maintain what He created. He is dependable. We can "bank" on him!

Principle

We can commit ourselves to God because He is faithful.

Application

We can trust God to do right in the end. We can give the destiny of our lives to God for safekeeping. If we can trust Him with our eternal life, why cannot we trust Him with our temporal life? God will not fail us if we trust Him. If we can trust men with responsibility, how much more God?

Our souls are "in good hands." Child of God, if you suffer today, if your body is racked with pain, if you are discouraged, depressed and distressed, if you are at the extremity of your situation, put your soul in God's hands. He is a good banker. He will take care of His own. He will sustain you and enable you. He will see you through.

1 Peter 5:1

"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed."

We now come to a new section of 1 Peter dealing with the issues of leadership and "followership." Leadership covers the first four verses. Verses five through eleven take up "followership." With verse one Peter begins a section on how believers

are to live in the Christian community. First, he deals with how the leaders are to operate in the church.

The elders

We often interpret the word "elders" too technically as officials in the local church. The basic meaning of the word "elder" is simply leadership. A biblical leader is a spiritually mature believer who has the ability to plan, strategize, recruit other leaders and develop them. In some cases elder implies an official title but in many cases it simply means a leader (1 Timothy 5:17,19; Titus 1:5).

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

A great many Christians do not acknowledge the idea that anyone is over them in the Lord. They do not accept spiritual authority. They are spiritual anarchists. That is why some Christians need "admonishing."

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." ... "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." ... "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you" (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24).

The word "elder" refers to maturity and character of leadership (Titus 1:5-9). In 1 Timothy and Titus we find 24 qualifications needed for elders to lead the church of God.

who are among you

God never leaves a community of believers without leadership.

Principle

The spiritual health of a local church depends on the authority of leadership in that church.

Application

When a church is in a state of anarchy, that church is trouble. It will eventually stop winning and discipling people for Christ.

The primary indication of a healthy church is a pastor who can be a catalyst for evangelism and discipleship. Congregations that experience this kind of leadership are the first to recognize the value of balanced authority. However, the pastor earns this authority by love from the congregation.

This kind of leadership is not authoritarianism or totalitarianism as we will see in this passage (5:3). The body of believers must recognize this leadership by the leader earning this right to lead.

There is an illusion that the congregation can exercise some kind of corporate leadership. People with this idea oppose strong pastoral leadership on the principle of a perceived democratic assumption. God never asserts that assumption in the Bible, however. It seems undemocratic to these people [without biblical support] that a pastor should have authority.

Strong congregationalists do not allow their pastors to think creatively, build constructs for ministry, or establish goals and strategies without their permission. In this system, there is no room for strong, inspiring or centralized leadership. Whether we like it or not, centralized leadership is the key to church growth. A pastor who tries to lead a church without this system will face great frustration. His energies will drain away as he tries to go uphill against the system.

It is amazing that though people understand leadership in business, their minds shut down to the principle of good leadership when they go to church. The board of directors of a corporation, if they are wise, does not attempt to lead the organization. They leave the planning and the execution of the plan to full-time executives. Yet, in churches it is often the board that tries to plan and execute plans. No wonder many churches are dead in the water! The role of the board is to approve basic policy and protect the assumptions and doctrine of the church.

Does this mean that the pastor is a dictator? No, the church hires him and the church can fire him. He reports to the board and the board reserves the right to overrule his plans. His plan will not be effective if the congregation does not support his proposals by action. Also, a pastor is an

"under-shepherd." His real authority is from the ultimate Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A wise leader will pull lay leadership to himself and push authority back to his lay people to carry out the vision and plans of the church. In other words, it is both biblical and practical to accept the authority of the leaders of the local church.

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

I exhort

"Exhort" means to encourage or exhort. Most pastors need both encouragement and exhortation. "Exhort" is the probable meaning here. The pastors in Asia Minor needed exhortation follow some issues of leadership found in vv. 2-4 due to the duress they were facing from Rome.

I who am a fellow elder

Peter views himself as a "fellow elder." He does not pull rank with his fellow elders. In 1:1 and 2 Peter 2:1 he identifies himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." An apostle holds authority above an elder. Apostleship is the ultimate authority for the church. For example, only an apostle has the right to write Scripture.

Peter establishes his authority as a leader by calling himself an "elder" and a "witness" to the sufferings of Christ. He did not usurp authority as the ultimate elder.

and a witness of the sufferings of Christ

"Witness" means to testify. "Witness" does not refer to the act of seeing but to the act of testifying to what one has seen. Peter was an eyewitness to the suffering of Christ (2:21; 4:1). Peter personally saw Jesus bound and led away for judgment. He followed Jesus into the courtyard. No doubt he saw Jesus crucified. Peter personally witnessed and testified to the passion of Christ. He spent the rest of his life telling others about his wonderful Savior.

and also a partaker of the glory

"The glory" is the Second Advent of Christ. This will be the day of Jesus' great triumph over the world. He will be King Jesus, King of the world.

Note that Peter combines the sufferings and the glory of Christ in 1:11. The sufferings of Christ is the first advent and the glory of Christ is the Second Advent (Romans 8:16-19). Our glory lies ahead. Peter makes this same point in 4:13 that those who share in Christ's suffering will share in his glory.

that will be

The words "will be" mean to be about to. Peter talks about the "about to be revealed glory." Peter wants to share issues of the Second Advent.

The word "will be" means to be inevitable, with respect to future developments.

"But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:12).

The Second Advent is an inevitable event. revealed

"Revealed" means to uncover, to take out of hiding. "Revealed" refers to the future second coming in glory of the Lord Jesus,

"Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:30).

Principle

The ultimate glory of the Christian still lies ahead.

Application

All Christians will "partake" of the glory of the Second Advent. This will be a day of great rejoicing. All the pain we face now will be over. We will see Jesus in all of his glory. What a day that will be!!

1 Peter 5:2

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly."

Shepherd

Shepherd means to tend, cherish, herd, tend, (lead to) pasture with the implication of providing for the sheep. This word carries the ideas of lead, rule, guide. The shepherd rules with the idea of guiding and helping the sheep. A shepherd protects, rules, governs, fosters protection, cares for and nurtures.

Jesus was a Shepherd (Matthew 2:6). Those who act as spiritual shepherds under him tend their flocks as under-shepherds (John 21:16; Acts 20:28).

"Shepherd" covers more than just feeding the flock. It includes all that involves tending. Everything that a shepherd does the pastor does. This entails discipline of sheep who go astray, authority, restoration, material assistance and feeding. This is the spiritual care of God's children. So shepherding involves all that falls to the shepherd's lot to do for the sheep.

"Shepherd" is translated "rule" in the book of Revelation.

"He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:27).

"She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne" (Revelation 12:5).

"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 9:15).

The noun form of "shepherd" is "pastor." Pastor means shepherd.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

the flock of God which is among you,

The "flock of God" is the church. Sheep are defenseless and liable to stray. Nero is about to send his legions so pastors must go on a crash program to protect their flocks. Pastors must use both ends of their staff [rod]. They need to care and they need to discipline. The crook has two ends:

1) the hook end pulls sheep out of holes, 2) the pointed end pokes sheep in the right direction and away from danger or false doctrine.

Although the church is God's flock, God does not feed them directly. He uses pastors to do that. The flock needs more than food; pastors must tend them.

Principle

A pastor's role includes both toughness and tenderness.

Application

God has one paramount, primary and indispensable directive to the pastor: "Feed the flock of God." If the pastor is not feeding his people then he is not doing the will of God.

With some sheep, the pastor needs to be tender. They are mature believers who understand the importance of inculcating the Word into their lives. They have great reverence for the Word. They appropriate the Word to their experience.

On the other hand, some sheep have hard heads. They operate on negative volition toward the Word. They need discipline. Some sheep need more correction than sweetness because of their negativity toward the Word. If they become negative, the pastor with integrity will challenge them.

A leader does not have to have a certain type of personality. In other words, personality is not an issue in leadership. People make a major mistake when they choose a pastor based on personality, or qualities that they personally admire. Suppose someone admires the quiet type and someone else admires the noisy type. This choice is simply a matter of preference. There is no biblical standard in this process of choosing a pastor. If a congregation chooses the mouse, they will use him as a bean-bag kicking him around until they get tired of him. In the New Testament, it was the leaders who did the kicking!!

Under conditions of catastrophe, pastors must assert their authority more than they would in normal circumstances. Many pastors fear this. They are not willing to sacrifice their image of a "nice" person for the sake of their church. They are more concerned about acceptance by people than honoring their Lord.

Part of pastoring is feeding the sheep. Sheep cannot grow unless they ingest food. This is the

source of their spiritual energy. Many sheep get indigestion from the Word because they have been feeding on poison. They cannot absorb good food because of their diet. False doctrine is toxic to spiritual health. Spiritual nutrition is preventive medicine.

serving as overseers,

"Overseer" comes from two Greek words: over and see. An overseer is one who has responsibility for the care of someone, implying an official responsibility within a congregation probably referring to the pastor. He ministers to and is responsible for the care of the local church.

"I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me" (Matthew 25:43).

This word carries such ideas as review, inspect and examine. The pastor looks over his congregation for inspection. An "overseer" looks after and cares for the congregation's direction. An overseer is a leader who has a responsibility to care for the church. His task is oversight.

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work" (1 Timothy 3:1).

"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

We get our word Episcopal from the word "overseer." The pastor is to exercise oversight for his church. Every pastor must discharge this duty. This word conveys an injunction for polity for the local church. "Overseers" implies authority. No pastor can pastor without authority. Three negative clauses that follow qualify how he is to use his authority.

An overseer is a church leader who is in charge of God's work and should be without fault,

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money" (Titus 1:7).

Principle

Pastors must take the initiative of leading their churches.

Application

Pastors must take the oversight of their churches. It is not enough to defer to the board for this.

Sheep get sick when not sheared regularly. If the shepherd does not cut off their wool then they will not be healthy. Sometimes the shepherd nicks sheep in the process of shearing. After being sheared, they look thin and some even bleed. If a novice shears the sheep, it can be a particularly bloody affair. The pastor needs to remember that the sheep belong to the "Chief Shepherd," who is the "Chief Pastor."

No pastor should assume authority unless he has a sense of responsibility and fairness. A pastor can shear sheep many times but can only skin them once. Some people love authority because it stimulates their power lust.

Some sheep do not want any supervision. They are spiritual anarchists. They are a law unto themselves. They do not permit anyone to have authority over them.

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

No pastor should preach the Word out of fear or favor of people. He is not in the business of a popularity contest.

Three negatives follow as qualifications to shepherding. Each negative is followed by a positive contrast by using the word "but."

not by compulsion

Some people are in the pastorate out of obligation rather than from a heart's desire to do the will of God. The person who serves the sheep of God under coercion is a resentful person. This shepherd will never serve his sheep properly. A true shepherd serves, not because he must, but because he wants to make an impact on their lives. No one should draft a pastor into the ministry. The pastor should volunteer without anyone needing to urge him. To him the ministry is no burden.

"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Some of the pastors in Asia Minor felt it was a good career move to go into the pastorate. They went into ministry to benefit their image in the community.

The pastor who must be shanghaied into the job while he drags his feet is not in God's will. In the army the widespread scuttlebutt is, "Don't volunteer for anything." The Christian army has many generals of these types. They volunteer for and initiate very little.

but willingly

"Willingly" means without compulsion, deliberately, intentionally, voluntarily. This person leads his congregation without being forced or pressured into leadership. He leads his congregation of his own free will. No one imposes this desire on him. Leadership is in his heart.

"But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary" (Philemon 14).

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Corinthians 9:16-17).

Ministry requires deliberate intention. Pastors must be purpose-driven. He serves not because he must but because he wants to make an impact for Christ. Therefore, leadership is no grim and unpleasant duty to him.

according to [the norm or standard] of God

The New King James Version does not translate this phrase.

The pastor needs to operate on the same standard of leadership that God does. He should have the same spirit as God as in leading his flock. Eagerness of the fleshly leadership will not do. He leads his church as God would have him pastor the church.

Principle

No pastor should do his pastoring as a job.

Application

No pastor should lead because it is his job. He does not lead because he has to do it. He does not

do it because he someone forces him into it. He eagerly and enthusiastically assumes the initiative for the direction of his flock.

No pastor should serve as pastor unless God has called him. No one should pressure someone to go into the pastorate. The mother who wants her son to be a preacher probably does not realize the pressure nor the capacity for leadership that is necessary for the pastorate.

The pastor forced into serving will not be an effective leader. If he leads by obligation, he will not be creative and will not have vision. He will not see the potential for his ministry. An unwilling servant who operates by imposition will not be effective.

Any pastor who has a pure heart accepts the pastorate with some reluctance. He knows his own unworthiness for such a high office. He knows his inadequacy for such a role. However, he also knows that God is sufficient to enable him to serve as pastor.

not for dishonest gain

Some people in ministry are in it for the money. Greed is their motivation for ministry. "Dishonest gain" is any personal gain sought in a selfish way. No pastor should commercialize his ministry. God does not want us to put a price tag on our ministry.

"Dishonest gain" occurs only five times in the New Testament.

"Not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous" (1 Timothy 3:3).

"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money" (1 Timothy 3:8).

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money" (Titus 1:7).

"Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain" (Titus 1:11).

It is interesting that all five uses of this term refer to Christian leadership. The pastor who is eager for a large salary prostitutes the ministry to low purposes. He commercializes his ministry by selling benefits.

Lest we ever interpret this to mean that we should not pay pastors adequately, there is another side to this story. The Bible not only allows for pastors to receive pay but it insists that they have the right of remuneration.

"If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?

Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:11-14).

but eagerly

There are two words for "willing" in this verse: "willingly" and "eagerly." The latter term is a strong word implying far more desire.

"Eagerly" means predisposed, a readiness of mind coming from two words: before and mind. This pastor's mind is predisposed beforehand to lead. He prepares his mind beforehand to take the initiative to lead. There is a mental condition of readiness and willingness to lead. He gladly initiates executive action because he anticipates the needs of his congregation. The true pastor carries within himself the predisposition to lead.

"Eagerly" means that this pastor is so predisposed to ministry that he is eager to do what he does. He is ready and willing to serve Jesus Christ.

"So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

A true pastor desires to give, not get. He selflessly and sacrificially cares for his flock.

Principle

The pastor should lead and feed the flock, not fleece it.

Application

The pastor who seeks personal gain from the ministry is not a purpose-driven pastor. He is

self-driven. A pastor who serves from the motivation of greed is out of the will of God.

A predisposed mind is a spontaneous mind. His heart orientation is to preach. As well, he should orient his heart toward leadership.

1 Peter 5:3

"Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

nor as being lords over

We come now to the third negative phrase that qualifies the leadership of a pastor -- pastors should not become dictators over their congregations.

The phrase "being lords over" means become master, gain dominion over, subdue with the implication of lording it over. God does not give the pastor the right to rule or reign over their congregations. A pastor has the right to rule as we saw in previous studies but he does not have the right to lord his authority over his congregation, as a king would reign over an empire. The pastor is not to be in the business of wielding power and subduing his congregation by superior force.

"Being lords over" conveys the idea of a domineering pastor who takes advantage of weak people (cf. Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42; Acts 19:16). The pastor is not to exercise lordship over his congregation.

The words "lord over" imply ruling to one's own advantage in Mark 10:42 (Gentile rulers)

"And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors'' (Luke 22:25).

Ezekiel warns of this kind of leader: "You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:4-5). Some leaders tyrannize their people by coercive means (Matthew 20:25-26; 2 Corinthians 1:24).

The people of a church are God's flock and God's heritage. The pastor should treat them accordingly. The pastor is simply the under-shepherd who cares for the flock of another.

"Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy;

for by faith you stand" (2 Corinthians 1:24).

A pastor who becomes a tyrant steps outside his God-ordained authority. Diotrephes loved power. He operated with a high hand.

"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (3 John 1:9-10).

There is a proper exercised authority and a proper honor of that authority.

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Principle

God does not want the pastor to bully his flock.

Application

A pastor should not dominate his people. No pastor should abuse his authority. God wants him to be fair in his leadership of his flock. The issue here is whether the pastor is unjust and unfair in use of his authority. Does he use his authority out of a lust for power? No pastor should use his authority to express vindictiveness.

Every pastor faces two extremes, either he:

1) lets congregation run over him 2) or, he bullies the congregation.

No pastor should fear his authority. He should "rule" because God wants him to rule. However, there is great danger in power as we have seen by so many who have abused that power.

those entrusted to you,

The word "entrusted" is literally "a lot,"

"And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

The secular Greek used this word for an allotment of land assigned to a citizen by civic authorities. God portions a certain group of people to the pastor. This "lot" is the sphere of his pastoral care.

The Greek word means something allotted to the pastor. It is something specially assigned to him. God specially assigns congregations to pastors. The congregation is his sphere of service. He never earns or deserves this "lot." God gives each congregation to each pastor out of his grace. No pastor deserves his congregation. God is the source of the allotting process. God gives it by his grace.

God especially allotted Israel to himself. God assigns them to his own will and choice.

"Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance [same word], whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm" (Deuteronomy 9:29).

Principle

Each pastor obtains his congregation by God's grace.

Application

God assigns the congregation as the responsibility of the pastor to take care of them. The congregation is not his but God's. His responsibility is to care for them as a steward. He does not have the prerogative to lord it over those who are God's people. God has the privilege of Lordship.

The congregation is not his, but his to manage. The pastor is the under-shepherd. The true shepherd is the Chief Shepherd, the Chief Pastor (1 Peter 5:4). The under-shepherd must give account to the Chief Shepherd. The under-pastor must give account to the Chief Pastor. The under-shepherd is simply a steward, a manager of someone else's property.

No pastor should be pontifical or dictatorial. He dare not strut or swagger. A pastor should guard against taking on an air of infallibility.

but being examples to the flock

An "example" was a visible impression of a stroke. Therefore, it is a mark (i.e. an impression left by a blow). The New

Testament uses this word for the mark of the nails in Jesus hands after the crucifixion,

"The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'" (John 20:25).

An "example" then is a copy, image, pattern, the effect of a blow, the print or impress of a seal general form or character, the type or model of a thing.

In the context of a relationship between leaders and followers, Christian leaders are to serve as models for people to follow. They are to be modeled or patterned, much like an "example." Christian leaders follow as well. They follow their Archetype, for they are of the same kind, class, and type as He is. Jesus is the model and pattern for Christian leaders.

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:17).

"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen" (Acts 7:44).

"Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17).

"So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe" (1Thessalonians 1:7).

"Not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us" (2 Thessalonians 3:9).

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Christian leaders are not to drive God's people, but to lead them by their examples of mature Christian character.

Principle

A pastor motivates from within, and by his example.

Application

As no one can drive a pastor into leadership by coercion from without, no one can drive the congregation by external pressure either.

The greatest power of a leader is his own integrity and capacity. The reason he cannot lord it over his people is simply because he is not Lord. Even the Lord did not coerce his people. He motivated them through integrity and love. Leaders are most effective when they demonstrate how to face trial and testing. Complainers shut their mouths to such testimony. This is a big order for a pastor.

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

"Imitate" is the Greek word *mimic*. "Be mimics of me." We can often learn more from what we see than by what we hear. We have a wonderful Lord and he proves himself over and again.

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

"In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8).

A biblical leader is not a boss who commands, dominates, manipulates and coerces his people. He does not operate by leverage but by service,

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them [same Greek word as in our passage], and their great ones exercise

authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant" (Mark 10:42-43).

1 Peter 5:4

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

and when the Chief Shepherd appears,

The New Testament uses the title "Chief Shepherd" only of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the Head Shepherd, the Chief Pastor. The Head Shepherd directs the activities of other shepherds [pastors]. The word "chief" carries the idea of preeminence.

The primary meaning of "appears" is to make visible, clear, manifest, known. The essential meaning is to uncover, lay bare or reveal. The word "appears" refers to the manifestation of the Lord Jesus at the Second Advent. Then he will show all the glory that He truly possesses. The word "manifestation" is stronger than the word "appear." A person may appear without true disclosure of his true character. Jesus will come in full divulgence of His character.

"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20).

"Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you" (2 Corinthians 7:12).

"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Principle

When Jesus comes, He will fully disclose everything and reward true faithfulness.

Application

The Chief Pastor is coming back (1:7). When He comes, He will bring rewards with Him -- crowns (Revelation 22:12). When the Chief Pastor shows Himself, He will expose everything. If a pastor did not take the leadership (vv.2-3) anarchy resulted. He was not faithful to the flock. If everyone is the leading, no one is a leader.

There are special rewards for leadership. Christian leaders will receive special rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We do not realize our rewards for leading in this life. It is difficult to serve sometimes when no one recognizes our contribution. Some Christian leaders serve in obscurity with little human recognition.

But Jesus will personally reward these leaders. The Chief Pastor will personally reward the under-pastors. No human organization will give the final applause.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Jesus will reward leaders with an unfading crown of glory. At that final day the Lord will say, "I want you to reign with me. You did a fine job leading on earth in time, now in eternity I want you to reign with me forever." That will be our reward.

Pastors need to keep in mind that they are not the Chief Pastor. If a pastor begins to think that he is the Chief Pastor, he starts to play God. The ultimate Shepherd and Bishop of our souls is the Lord Jesus (2:25).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

you will receive

"You will" implies the future. At some future point, the leadership of the local church will receive a "crown." The "crown of glory" is a crown specially designed for pastoral leadership. There is a special reward for faithfulness to a congregation.

The word "receive" means to bear, carry (Luke 7:37). It comes to mean in this verse to bear for oneself, hence to receive. The idea is "Your faithfulness to your congregation will bring to yourself the fadeless crown of glory."

Sometimes "receive" means requital. We will receive back again at the Judgment Seat of Christ what we have done in time for Christ. Jesus will repay us for what we do for him.

"But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality" (Colossians 3:25).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Principle

The Chief Pastor is coming back to reward the under-pastors.

Application

One day, pastors will stand before the Chief Pastor to receive the crown of glory for faithfulness to their congregations that will not fade away. This is a major incentive to serve our congregation faithfully. The simple question he will ask is, "Was I faithful to my flock?"

This passage promises reward to pastors who faithfully serve their congregations. Are you going to receive a "full reward" for giving everything you could to your congregation? (2

John 1:8). Will you receive a half reward? A quarter reward? No reward?

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

the crown of glory

Pastors will receive an unfading crown of glory for faithfulness to their congregations. A crown of victory was awarded after the Greek athletic games-usually a crown of woven ivy or oak leaves.

There are also crowns for other Christians and for other reasons:

for witnessing, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, Philippians 4:1 for faithfulness, 2 Timothy 4:8 for enduring trials, James 1:12 for discipline, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

that does not fade away

"Fades not" primarily signifies something that does not lose its initial pristine character. This word was used of the amaranth flower, a flower that does not fade but retains its brightness and wonderful character. So too the pastor's crown for faithfulness to his congregation will never fade away. God will make sure that his work is remembered into eternity.

This phrase "does not fade away" appears in the first chapter of our inheritance of heaven,

"To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

Principle

God rewards pastors eternally for faithfulness to their congregation.

Application

Is your ambition as a pastor to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ with a crown of glory on your head? Will you stand there bareheaded?

"I finished first but I did not get a first place prize, nor even second place." It is not a matter of merely finishing the race but it is an issue of how well we ran the race. If we foul another runner on the far turn, Jesus will see it and disqualify us from a victor's wreath.

In heaven, we will cast our crowns before the Lord. When God gives the signal to throw our crowns down, will we have a crown to throw? We work for them here, we receive them hereafter.

"The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created'" (Revelation 4:10-11).

There are crowns to be won and races to be won. This is not fictional but factual. Every pastor will finish the race but who desires to finish fourth? No one. We must run to get a medal. We will get a medal if we put in a splendid performance. If we are going to turn in a stellar performance, we had better get in shape. If there is anything pastors seem to resist today, it is discipline. We do not want to train; it is too much work. The reason some people play right end on the bench is their lack of discipline.

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to

others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Some pastors are happy just to make the squad. Do you want to be on the field and involved in the game? To warm the bench is anything but gratifying. Why is it that so many of God's leaders seem content to ride the bench? They would rather sit there wrapped in a blanket and watch someone else play the game and score the points. Every once in a while they get a little excited and stand up and cheer. Then the blanket falls off feeling a draft, they are concerned only about recovering their blanket.

When we come to the end of life's short day there will be no further opportunities to live for Christ in time. You had your chance. You had your opportunity. Did you take advantage of it?

1 Peter 5:5

"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for

'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'"

In the first four verses, Peter addresses his remarks to the leadership of the local church. Now he addresses his remarks to the congregation. There are two different crowds in the opening verses of 1 Peter 5:

1) those that rule over (5:1-4) and 2) the "younger" -- all the saints, the rank and file Christians (5:5f).

Turning to the function of the congregation, Peter now makes the point that a congregation cannot function properly without a recognition of authority. This passage is dedicated to those of you who do not believe that the church should have authority in their lives. God sets up principles of authority in all aspects of our lives. In fact, there is little difference between the church and a military organization, a business organization or a successful athletic team in this respect. Before you can have a dynamic church, it must understand authority (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7,17).

Likewise you3 younger people

"Likewise" connects the previous section (5:1-4) with this section. Peter challenges another category of people to responsibility.

Peter sets the words "younger people" in parallelism to "elders" of the first verse with the word "likewise." By paralleling the words "younger people" to the "elders" of verse one, we understand that "younger" refers to the congregation. As "elders" does not primarily mean older in age but higher in authority, so "younger" does not mean younger in age but lower in authority. "Younger" deals with rank, not age in this context.

While the first four verses talk about leadership, these verses consider people who follow. The Greek word "younger" carries nuances of fresh or new. "Younger" here probably means new converts or those newly under authority of elders. So then, these are people under the authority of the leaders of the congregation.

Principle

People in any congregation are under the authority of their leaders.

Application

Excuses that reject the authority of leadership in the church are not valid with the Lord. These excuses include: "I could not get along with the leadership of the church," "I did not like the pastor," "I did not feel appreciated by the leadership."

Many of us do not get involved in the local church because we reject the idea of someone in authority over us. However, authority is essential for advancing the gospel. Leaders establish the goals for advancing the gospel. Members of the congregation must accept those goals to move the church forward. We must get involved. Just because we can't do everything, it does not mean that we can't do something.

submit yourselves to your elders.

"Submit" means to subordinate. The grammar also indicates that "submit" means to "allow" yourselves [passive voice] to be subordinate to the leaders of the local church. Evidently, there were people in Asia Minor churches who did not submit themselves to the authority of their leaders. Peter's solution to the problem is decisive submission [aorist imperative] to authority. God wants those in subordination to obey the leadership of the church.

Peter had already prescribed that Christians as a whole to submit to government (2:13-14), that

slaves submit to their masters (2:18) and wives submit to their husbands (3:1). No organization can function without authority. No organization can have two equal heads or leaders without causing severe problems. Conflict always comes at the point of crucial decisions. An army cannot have two Major Generals commanding the same division. If the church has two heads, confusion will result.

Principle

The church cannot function properly without authority.

Application

People who cannot submit to the leadership of the local church, find themselves miserable and pondering a church split. Submission to "elders" makes for a well run church.

Self-discipline is the basis of authority. Discipline is necessary for every area of life. The most consistent athletes are self-disciplined.

It is amazing how many people think that the church should operate without authority. "No one has a right to have authority over me in the local church" they say people revolt against authority in the local church because they are not self-disciplined in the first place and do not recognize the intrinsic value of authority.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another

Both members of the congregation and leaders are to submit to one another. Can you yield to someone else? Can you concede to someone else's argument? The Lord Jesus was among other things, a servant,

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"Saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'" (Luke 22:42).

Principle

God expects Christians to give in to one another.

Application

Often we expect people to cater to us but are not willing to cater to them. But when we submit to someone else, we want to be a blessing to them.

We will go out of our way to help them. We do not expect them to cater to us.

When we operate in this way, we seldom get hurt because we do not expect anything in return. Do you get hurt easily? Perhaps you expect too much from other people and too little from yourself. If you decide to be a blessing to others, God will honor your commitment.

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10).

When you offer your smile and friendship to others but they do not return the favor, recall that a servant demands nothing in return. Therefore, rejection should not bother you and you are protected from hurt.

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” (Romans 12:16).

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

and be clothed

"Be clothed" is not the ordinary expression for clothing oneself. This is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament. It comes from two words: in and tie with a knot, roll band or towel. It means to "engird yourselves." "Clothed" means to tie clothing to oneself with a broad belt. The clothing here is humility. Dress yourself with humility. Gird yourself with humility.

One purpose of a girdle is to control fat from bouncing around and to bring fat under control. Here, we are to bring our minds under control. Humility needs to be bound to oneself because humility does not come to us naturally.

Eventually "clothed" means to coordinate your clothing. "Dress in a coordinated manner." If a person does this, they turn out to be a human

being! This is not talking simply about coordinating our clothes but coordinating our lives with humility. If we dress with our shirt-tails out, we do not coordinate our clothing. God is not talking about tucking in our shirts but gathering humility into our thinking.

Metaphorically, "clothed" may mean to make humility our essential characteristic. Humility, therefore, is to be a decisive mark of Christian conduct.

with humility

Humility means to have lowliness of mind. God wants us to obey God-ordained leadership in the local church. Peace in the church comes from low-mindedness toward God first, then toward each other. This is especially true for the suffering church. God wants the church to regard the coming sufferings as from His sovereign will. We should follow in the footsteps of Him who endured suffering (Hebrews 12:1-12). Leadership can orient the church toward this thinking.

"Humility" is primarily that which is low, and does not rise far from the ground, lowly, humble. A humble person is unpretentious.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29).

"Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

This is contrary to our fleshly thinking. We want to be number one but the humble mind recognizes others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3, 8; Colossians 3:12) and God first.

for God resists

The word "resists" is a military term. Secular Greek used "resists" of an army drawn up for battle. God will assemble his resources against the proud believer. God will set himself as an adversary and block the proud process.

"Resists" means to set against, to stand against. The word comes from the same root as the word "submit." In other words, "resist" is a play on the word "submit." "Submit" means to fall in line under. "Resists" means God gets in rank against

proud people. God resists those who reject the authority of the leadership of the local church.

Paul uses this word "resists" of Peter, the author of this epistle,

"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11).

the proud

"Proud" comes from two words: above and to appear. The word "proud" means to show above, appear over. He appears above others (Luke 1:51; Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2; James 4:6). He is arrogant, disdainful and proud. He is overweening and ostentatiously proud.

This person loves to play king of the mountain gaining the ascendancy over other people. He does not recognize that what he has, he has from God. Because of his pride, he does not accept the authority of the leadership of the local church. He is anti-establishment in his sentiment.

The proud person is someone who shows himself above others. He views himself as pre-eminent. He feels he is above others.

This person is haughty (Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2). God sets the haughty in opposition to the humble,

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'" (James 4:6).

Principle

God will block proud people who do not submit to the authority of the local church.

Application

The proud person is the person who cannot accept authority in the local church. God resists those who resist the authority of the local church. If you line up against the pastor, God will line up against you!

God withstands and opposes the proud. He sets himself against the arrogance of people who do not accept authority in the local church.

Pride is the first on a list of things God hates:

"These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises

wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19).

But gives grace to the humble

The negative side of this verse is "God resists the proud." The positive side is he "gives grace to the humble." Lack of humility may explain why we do not have enough grace. We are not humble, so we do not get grace.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

God gives grace to the humble because the humble person recognizes that everything depends who God is and what He does. The word "gives" means that God keeps on giving grace to the humble person, the person who has no illusions about himself and understands that what he has, he has from God.

Grace is unmerited blessing, God's provision for us that we do not deserve. A humble person is a good receiver. He willingly confesses his need to receive something from God.

"Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility" (Proverbs 18:12).

Before we can receive honor, we must come to the point of humility. If we never come to the point of humility, we will never come to the point of honor. Samuel speaking to Saul said,

"So Samuel said, 'When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?'" (1 Samuel 15:17).

Saul magnified himself in his own eyes and we magnify ourselves in our eyes. We generally have an inflated, exaggerated estimation of our ability. Because others do not share that same exaggerated estimation of ourselves, we feel dejected. Our feelings are hurt and we say, "People do not appreciate me." This is a special occupational hazard with preachers. It goes with the job.

We will get no cooperation from God when it comes to pride. Most of us struggle with pride all

our lives. Invariably we are proud about things we have no business being proud about: pride of race, pride of face, pride of grace. The Devil has much to do with pride:

"Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

In this context, God gives grace to the congregation who submits to its leadership. If a congregation has no illusions about itself, God will bless it. If we focus our eyes on leadership, we will fall flat on our faces. What do you expect of your pastor? Do you expect him to be someone who never makes a mistake? That is what many people expect. They want a preacher who never sins. Pride resists and rejects the authority of the leadership of the local church. The "humble" person is the person who looks to the grace of God's provisions.

Pride = God resists Humble = God recognizes

Principle

God gives grace to people who recognize their need for God.

Application

Some people have the idea that being humble is the equivalent of being someone's doormat. But denying humility is not pretending to be blind to our strong points. There is no humility in disowning that we can do certain things. Similarly, it is not pride to believe that we can do certain things with excellence. Humility has to do with knowing the source of our strength.

If someone says, "Hey, that was a great sermon," what is the pastor supposed to say, "Yea, that was a great sermon!!" No leader has ever gone without some compliments in his life. It is somewhat phony to say, "Give God the credit, brother!" This may be sincere but rude. However, the worst thing that can happen you is to believe it. When a leader starts believing his clippings, he is in danger of God resisting him. The humble believer has no illusion about himself and no illusions about anyone else except the Lord.

A humble person does not demand respect from others. This person does not need special attention. Maturity comes, not by hammering ourselves, but by recognizing God's grace in our lives. God is the giver of the good. He demolishes our pride.

God possesses indescribable intelligence. He is all-knowing. He has never had to learn anything because he has always known everything. That is why God is never surprised, astounded or shocked. No one has ever put God in a bind. This God never asks us to do anything unreasonable. God's commands are his enablement.

1 Peter 5:6

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

Therefore

This verse serves as a climax to the challenge to both the leaders and followers of verses one through five. Humility is common to the function of both roles.

humble yourselves

The word "humble" primarily signifies low-lying. Allow God to lower your level of autonomy. Often God uses suffering to birth humility in us.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

"Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

The Greek indicates that we are to allow ourselves to be humbled by God [passive voice]. Humility here means to recognize God's grace. God brings situations into our lives so that we understand that we are finite, not infinite. We are not God. We are at the mercy of His design for us. In His providence, he places events and people into our lives so that we concede our need for Him.

Do you want the grace of God in your life? Humble yourselves.

"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Principle

Humility is recognizing God's grace and providential care for our lives.

Application

God will not humble us. Humility is our responsibility. When God directs that we humble ourselves and we then turn around and ask God to humble us, we insult God. If God does humble us, it will not be a pleasant experience (2 Corinthians 12:21).

Humility is not self-effacement. It is not standing round shouldered. Do not confuse humility with asceticism. A humble person can use the first person singular "I." Humility is an attitude toward God that gives Him the credit for who we are and what we do.

under the mighty hand of God

The word "mighty" refers to manifested power. When God manifests His power by providential movement on our lives, we need to identify what He is doing with us.

The Greek word refers to ruling power or the ability to rule. We get the words "autocratic" and "democratic" from this term [kratos]. Autocratic rule is self-rule. Democratic rule is rule of the people.

"The mighty hand of God" refers to God's hand upon our destiny. God's hand is an anthropomorphic (physical manifestation of God) idiom for God's providence over our lives. Believers need to have a humble attitude about God's destiny upon our lives (Genesis 50:20). There never will be a problem too great for the plan of God.

God's "hand" refers to his providence. We see something of the mighty hand of God in earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes. Large flattened sections of great cities give evidence of God's hand. However, this passage is not primarily referring to this kind of power. "Hand" here refers to God's providence in our personal lives. He divinely orchestrates every trial that comes our way.

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Who is accountable for the events of our lives? Autonomy from God rebels against God's sovereignty.

It is not enough to subject ourselves to fellow Christians (5:5), we need to subject ourselves to God's sovereign plan for our lives.

"Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him" (Deuteronomy 4:34).

"Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand" (Nehemiah 1:10).

Principle

God's providential hand is upon every believer for His eternal purpose.

Application

Do you resent challenging situations God places in your life? God's omnipotent "hand" should make us humble. The God who put the stars in their place and rotates the sun on its course, is the God to whom we submit the situations of our lives. He has an eternal plan to everything that he does. God's hand gets heavy at times as He allows trial to come our way. He waits for some auspicious occasion to let us know that he is still God. Often we go out of the situation like a whipped dog with our tails dragging behind us. But we must remember that it is when we refuse to humble ourselves, that God humiliates us.

that He may exalt you

"Exalt" means to lift up. The lifting here is the lifting of revival. God will cause us to rise spiritually. We are placed on an exalted, higher spiritual plane when we humble ourselves before Him.

"Exalt" means promote. God will promote us in His plan. This promotion is not to be confused with human recognition. God promotes those who recognize His sovereignty over their lives. Humility is accepting the providence of God.

Most of us believe that recognition by a crowd of people is success. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The praise of, Madison Avenue is meaningless in God's eyes. Rather God elevates us on the basis of His character--those who humbly recognize His power and sovereignty.

To those who are suffering, it is encouraging to know God will exalt them one day. Humbling ourselves in order to be exalted is a spiritual paradox. But if you want to go up, you must go down.

"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

in due time

"Due time" means primarily due measure, due proportion. The New Testament uses "due time" to signify a season, a period possessing certain characteristics.

This word for time does not mean time as chronology but time as marked by certain features (1 Thessalonians 5:1). "Time" here deals with quality of time while the other major word for time (chronos) refers to quantity of time.

"In due time" is in God's time. God will exalt us in His own good time. When we humble ourselves under His hand, He will engage His help for us.

Principle

God promotes those who recognize His sovereignty over their lives.

Application

God does not promote us for producing so many brownie points with Him. He promotes us when we humble ourselves under His mighty hand when He sends trials our way.

If you do not know Christ, in just the right timing God sent His Son to die for your sins.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romanvs 5:6).

God's timing for our salvation centers around our recognition that we violate a holy God. Jesus died for the "ungodly." Jesus died for those without God. Will you now embrace the death of Christ for your sins?

1 Peter 5:7

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Casting

This verse is a quote from Psalm 55:22.

This is one of the most popular verses in the Bible, yet we often take this verse out of its context. Note that the word "casting" is a participle making it dependent upon the previous statement in verse six. "Casting" is not a command but the means of how we humble ourselves (5:6). We humble ourselves by casting our anxieties on God. God's care comes when we humble ourselves and depend on His grace.

"Casting" means to throw upon and thus to deposit with. Secular Greek used "casting" for a man who carried a heavy burden and threw it upon a camel's back. "Casting" carries the idea of throw. It means to roll upon. God wants us to roll our burdens upon Him. God wants us to have a target to which we direct our anxiety. That target is God Himself.

The New Testament uses "casting" only two times, here and

"Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him" (Luke 19:35).

We cannot separate God's care from God's sovereign plan for us. God's plan for Asia Minor Christians is suffering. They need to humble themselves to God's plan for that suffering and to His grace to provide for them in suffering.

Principle

We are humble when we depend on God's grace for our lives.

Application

God does not design the situations of our life to break us but to make us. We are to move from trusting in our own resources and trusting in our strategies for life, to resting in God and His resources. God is willing and able to carry the heaviest burden for us.

When you are under pressure from worry, stop, take a breath and relax in God's grace.

"Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation! Selah" (Psalm 68:19).

all

The word "all" here does not mean "every" burden but the whole of our burdens. The emphasis in this passage is not on casting each individual anxiety, but on casting the whole of one's life on the Lord. He does not say "Cast the big burdens and keep the little ones."

"All" indicates that Christians face both a variety and significant amount and variety of "anxiety:" personal, family, employment, future, friends.

Principle

We need to come to the place where we realize that God is completely sufficient for any problem that may come into our lives.

Application

Before we can experience God's sufficiency, we need to realize our insufficiency to live the Christian life.

We should give the whole of our lives to God. God wants us to give Him the big burdens and the little burdens. We should deposit with Him not only spiritual but material burdens and we do this not only part of the time but all of the time.

What anxiety are you carrying just now, child of God? What is your heartache? What grief do you bear today? What disappointment? What hurt feeling? Whatever the burden, cast it upon the Lord. God does not want you to carry that burden.

God does not want us to cast only certain kinds of anxiety upon Him; He wants us to cast everything upon Him. Give it all to Him.

your care

"Care" is a compound of three words: split, the, mind. "Care" then, splits the mind and the splitting of the mind results in anxiety. Anxiety may be said to divide the mind: "Will the bad happen or will the good happen to me?" If we allow ourselves to think in different directions at the same time, we lose focus and concentration. Anxiety draws us in different directions leaving us in a kind of suspension. This state distracts us from God.

Anxiety is a fearful anguish coupled with uncertainty. It is our anticipation of misfortune as if God and His resources for us do not exist. Anxiety distracts us from the resources of God. We enter into a state of turmoil, we cannot

recognize the providence of God in our lives (v. 6).

The New Testament uses "anxiety" both in a good sense meaning "godly concern," and in a bad sense meaning "worry, anxiety." Paul exercised the good sense of "care" in his concern for the churches that he founded,

"Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Martha expresses the bad sense of the word "care" when Jesus came for a visit,

"Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42).

Martha allowed her household duties to distract her from a more important priority. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus to listen to the Word. Martha allowed lesser concerns to get in the way of greater concerns. She majored on minors and minored on majors.

Paul challenges the Philippians to free themselves from anxiety by prayer,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Principle

God is willing and able to carry our heaviest burden.

Application

Anxiety is the anguish resulting from the uncertainty of possible misfortune and disaster. Anxiety can distract us from spiritual priorities that and prevent a dynamic walk with God. None of us can escape the cares of life but we can free ourselves from anxiety. Troubles can surround us and yet not distress us if we put our anxieties in God's hands.

Remember, anxiety incapacitates us and makes us less able to face our problems.

God places problems in our lives not to break us but to make us. Anxiety rises from unbelief and unwillingness to accept God's sovereignty upon one's life.

Anxiety is also a violation of humility (5:6). People who have confidence in God do not have anxiety. If God is sovereign and if God cares for us, no affliction can be of any ultimate consequence (Romans 8:31).

“So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done’” (Acts 21:14).

Anxiety can make us old before our time. We can worry ourselves into decline,

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34).

Worry does not make a person more able to face a problem; it makes him less able.

“Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

upon Him,

The Christian is to cast his anxieties "upon Him" -- the Lord. This means no heartache, difficulty or problem is too difficult for the plan of God. No sin is too great for the plan of God.

Principle

God is willing and able to carry any care we may face.

Application

Unbelief is an exalting of self against God. We depend on self rather than God. But why worry if

we are His concern? God is infinitely more concerned about our welfare than we are.

A child, who asks his parents every day, "Can I be sure that you will take care of me?" ruins his own well-being and breaks his parents' hearts. The trusting child goes about his play undisturbed and assured of his mother's love.

1 Peter 5:7e

for

We can translate this phrase literally as "Because it is a care to Him for you," or, "Because you are His concern."

What is the basis for the casting of our anxieties on the Lord? It is simply that God cares for us. The word "for" means "because." This idea is very important because we must first understand who God is and that He cares for us, before we can cast our anxieties.

He cares

"Cares" in this clause is different from the word "care" in the first clause. This word does not mean anxiety but watchful care.

"But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'" (Mark 4:38).

God sustains us because He cares. We need to come to acknowledge that God cares for us and that no opposition against us can be of any ultimate consequence (Romans 8:31).

God does not share our burdens but He bears them, all of them. Our problems do not get the Lord down because He is omnipotent. God is all-potent, all-powerful.

Principle

God is our caretaker!

Application

Anxiety contradicts true humility. Thousands have come to know Christ as their sin-bearer but few know him as their burden-bearer. Unbelief is exaltation of self against God. If we depend upon ourselves and do not trust God with our problems, we rely upon our capacity not God's.

But God cares more about our welfare than we ever could. Moreover, He has an infinitely greater capacity to care for us. Rejection of this principle, is pride. Pride is at the foundation of most of our anxiety. We feel it is humiliating to cast

everything upon someone else. Jesus argued that self-reliance is the reason we fill our lives with anxiety (Matthew 6:25-34).

Remember whenever God says or does anything, there is a reason behind it. God possesses indescribable intelligence. He has never had to learn anything since He has always known everything. Is your god smaller than that? The God of the Bible is not only omniscient (knows everything), but He is also omnipotent (all-powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere present). There is a big difference between human resources and divine resources.

God is never surprised, astounded or shocked. God is never in a bind. God is never on the horns of a dilemma. When He says you are to cast, there is a reason. God never asks anything of us that is unreasonable. God's commandments are his enablement.

You have probably heard someone speak of a so-called carefree person, "That guy doesn't have a care in the world." But is that true? Not on your life! We all have things we are concerned about to one degree or another. Even if we do not wring our hands with worry, we all have concerns.

Some years ago Vance Havner told a story of an ailing old lady beset with troubles -- real and imaginary. Finally, people told her, "We've done all for you that we can. You will just have to trust God for your problem." She replied, "Oh, dear, has it come to that?" Havner said, "It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that."

for you

God has our well-being at heart. He takes a personal interest in everything about us.

The Greek indicates that God's care for us is constant. His faithfulness is unending. His mercy is new every morning (Lamentations 3:21-23). No matter how fickle life may be, God's faithfulness is new every morning.

Principle

God has us at heart.

Application

The One who upholds the very universe cares for you. Your burdens matter to Him. He has a deep interest in you. He is concerned about your family. He is interested in your next house

payment. He is concerned about everything you do.

God will give you an ear. He has plenty of time for you. "I could never lose interest in you. I died for you. I have too much invested in you to lose interest in you. My work in you will not be completed until you are in glory."

We often get the impression from our doctor that he is not that interested in us; he is too busy. The office is full and he wants to knock-off at five o'clock if he can. He runs his patients in and out like an assembly line. He just wants to get rid of us. We feel we are just a number -- just another patient. He does not really care about us personally. After all, it is not his arm that hurts. It is not his gall bladder that has a problem.

Similarly, the Devil will insinuate, "The Lord is not interested in you. You don't amount to anything as far as He is concerned. You are a no one. He is not concerned about you. He is too busy to bother with you."

"But I am poor and needed; yet the Lord thinks upon me" (Psalm 40:17).

I suppose this is what concerns God's people the most. We would like to have people take an interest in us. This is what bugs some teens. No one seems to be interested in them. Children sometimes get the impression that their parents aren't interested in them: "My parents are only interested in my oatmeal and underwear. I am here, and there is not much they can do about it. I am inconvenient to them and I get on their nerves. They don't really care about me."

If children grow up with that attitude, they often do something to get attention. They will steal a car or fail in school. They may do a little shoplifting. "I'm here. I'm a person. See me." Everyone likes to be noticed. You are a human being, a person, and an individual. No one likes to be ignored. Our God cares for us, if no one else does.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30).

Though we cannot cast our anxiety over to God in the sense of being liberated from problems; we can shift the weight of them to Him. There may be some instances when we say, "Why bother the Lord with them? I ought to be able to work out this problem. After all, I'm a mature adult." Yet,

you have had that problem five years now. You are not doing much with it. Cast that care on the Lord no matter how insignificant it may appear.

However, if you insist on carrying your own burdens and solving your own problems, He will leave you to your own devices. You will worry yourself to death.

1 Peter 5:8

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Two commands in this verse warn the believer of a mortal enemy. The Christian life is like jungle war. Every Christian is facing spiritual guerilla warfare. Peter tells us who our enemy is--the Devil.

Be sober

"Sober" literally signifies to abstain from wine. The New Testament uses "sober" metaphorically of spiritual alertness or watchfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7).

A drunken person has neither a clear mind nor any control over motor activities. When are Christians most likely to lose control? When we are spiritually out of shape.

Sober people are balanced in disposition, thought and action. They are not flighty or carried away by their own notions or others' notions. They are mentally self-controlled and understand the situations they will face in life.

Principle

The Christian should have poise and self-control in any situation they face.

Application

Christians, be wary, Satan is at work. In spiritual war, he never goes on leave. He is always on the prowl.

Christians who possess poise have stability for the changing circumstances of life. This stability comes from their ability to apply truth to any situation of life (vv. 9-10). If we take truth into our minds without applying it, this is not balance or poise.

The believer should be self-possessed under all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:6; 2 Timothy

4:5). Athletes who seek to be at the top of their game, refrain from doing things other people would take for granted. Self-control makes for discipline. As well, Christians are to be dispassionate in adversity. They control their thought processes and thus not experience the danger of irrational thinking. Nothing perturbs their mind. They do not indulge in excess but use restraint in behavior.

Some college students face a final exam in two hours. Will they allow fear of taking the exam to neutralize their ability to remember what they studied? If they have the ability to maintain poise by applying passages that pertain to fear (2 Timothy 1:7), fear will not subvert their studies.

be vigilant

"Vigilant" carries the idea of to watch, stay awake. Here it means to keep spiritually alert (Acts 20:31; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 10).

Secular Greek used this term to describe people carefully crossing a river while stepping on slippery stones. If they did not pay strict attention to their steps, they would end up in the water. So the idea of vigilance is to stay alert and cautious (Mark 13:37; 14:34-40). The Christian who does not give strict attention to Satanic attack is in for trouble.

"Vigilant" was used as a military term--stand guard, be vigilant in a military situation. Like a Green Beret on patrol, the Christian should watch out for a guerrilla attack from the Devil. There are no front lines in his strategy to defeat us. The enemy could come from anywhere. Spiritually, this means to orient to the plan of God (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; 26:41; Revelation 3:2; 16:15).

Principle

To win spiritual battles, we must stand guard against our enemy, the Devil.

Application

We tend to drop our guard occasionally in our spiritual lives. Good soldiers stand at their post, scanning the horizon for any sign of the enemy.

Christians do not live in an era of peace. They are at war. Too many of us think that we live at peace with our enemy, the Devil himself. He engages us in war whether we want to fight or not. We need to engage the enemy in spiritual warfare. We

should understand the spiritual mine fields the Devil lays for us.

The Christian is in a power struggle with the enemy. Usually the army with the greatest power wins. The Gulf war was an overwhelming and decisive mounting of force against Iraq. The Christians have at their command an overwhelming source of power. Fleshly, human power will not do in this war. The rules of engagement for this war are found in chapter 6 of Ephesians.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:10-18).

because your adversary the devil

The word "devil" is not a proper name but a functional title. It comes from two words through and to throw. This conveys the idea to strike through. Therefore, "devil" comes to mean to thrust through, as thrusting a sword through the body of someone. The Devil is one who traduces, calumniates, slanders, accuses and defames.

The word "devil" also means adversary. The idea "adversary" meant an opponent in a lawsuit (Matthew 5:25; Luke 12:58; 18:3). The idea then is to accept a complaint against someone for a legal review. The Devil--who is actively and continuously hostile toward us legally accuses us before God.

The Devil would place cancerous thoughts in the minds of people about us. If he can make us

disillusioned by these personal attacks on us, he might draw us into apostasy.

The word "Devil" occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament. The word does not occur in the Old Testament; it is strictly a New Testament word. The Devil is in the Old Testament but under a different name.

Principle

Christian need to grasp their legal rights before God.

Application

We can laugh at the Devil and not take him seriously. However, he takes us very seriously. The Devil is just as real as Jesus Christ is. If you do not believe in the Devil, it is because you probably do not believe in Jesus Christ. The Devil is not like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. He is a real person.

The Devil launches litigation against our souls. He accuses us before God Himself. As our antagonist, the Devil maligns, slanders and falsely accuses us. Occasionally he mentions our name in a very unfavorable light to God. He accuses us and slanders us (Revelation 12:9,10). However, the Devil is a disbarred accuser. Every time he mentions our name before God the Lord Jesus steps forward and appeals to His blood (Hebrews 2:14,15; 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2). Justification means we are legally right before God forever. Case dismissed.

We have three enemies: the world, the flesh and the Devil (1 Corinthians 16:9). The world is our external foe, the flesh is our internal foe and the Devil is our infernal foe. God expects us to come off the field of battle victorious over all three foes (1 John 5:4). Do not become broken and old before your time. These three foes will take their pound of flesh if we allow them.

1 Peter 5:8

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

walks about

"Walks about" means goes about as a course of life. The Devil's course of life is to destroy the

dynamics of every Christian life. He ranges far and wide in search of prey.

The Devil stalked Job,

"And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it'" (Job 1:7).

"And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it'" (Job 2:2).

Principle

The Devil's range can reach into our lives.

Application

The Devil uses stealth. He stalks every Christian. He is now on the loose. He is on the prowl looking to trap you in his devices.

The Devil always seeks opportunities to undermine our Christian walk. He is constantly on the prowl. He is not omnipresent for he can only be in one place at a time. However, he has a massive infrastructure of emissaries (demons) who do his bidding. They seek to seduce every one of us.

The Devil says, "I am looking for the spiritually naive. I'm patrolling the earth for simple souls who think that I am not real." The idea that the Devil walks about in a red union suit, having a forked tail and cloven hoofs and carries a pitch fork is a religious fairy tale. He camouflages himself with this idea.

like a roaring lion

The word "like" introduces an analogy. Peter draws an analogy between the Devil and a lion. The Devil is like a lion that stalks his prey. The Christian life is like a jungle war.

Peter presents the Devil as a roaring lion. This lion produces a howling or roaring sound. The lion uses his roar to frighten his game. By his roar, he immobilizes his victims. His roar is a weapon. What the Devil cannot accomplish through allurements he tries to achieve through dread.

Lions usually range near six hundred pounds, standing four feet high. They run at twenty feet per bound and at about a hundred yards in five

seconds. They are totally unpredictable. They will attack for no apparent reason. They have extremely powerful voices.

Principle

Fear will blunt an aggressive Christian life.

Application

A roaring lion intimidates by his roar. The Devil intimidates by fear. He casts fear into weak Christians because that will intimidate them from a life of faith. As a lion in the wild chases a herd of gazelles and runs down the weak of the herd, so the Devil usually catches weak Christians first because he freezes them in fear. Fear incapacitates us from moving ahead with our Christian walk,

"He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

But why should the Devil intimidate Christians when he has already been defeated?

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down'" (Revelation 12:9-10).

seeking whom he may devour

The Devil "seeks." That is what the Lord Jesus came to do,

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"Devour" comes from two words to drink and down coming to mean to gulp or swallow down. "Devour" means to cause something to pass through the mouth and into the stomach--to gulp down.

The Devil not only wants to nibble on Christians, he seeks to devour them completely. He wants to consume them completely. He wants to devour Christians by destroying their faith so completely that they wholly cease from walking dynamically with God. He wants to ruin their testimony. The Bible presents the Devil as a ferocious beast of prey.

Principle

The Devil seeks to destroy our testimony totally.

Application

The Devil wants to swallow Christians whole. He is interested in their total destruction.

"Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Jesus came seeking sinners; now the Devil seeks saints. He looks for Christians with their guard down. He could not keep Christians from becoming Christians, now he wants to make them ineffective Christians. He will do everything in his diabolical power to render them ineffective. He wants an impotent Christian and an impotent church. He will slander, hinder and handicap you. He will do everything in his power to keep you from sharing Christ with a non-Christian. He lost you but now he seeks to make sure that no one around you will come to Christ.

The Devil is not interested in nibbling on us, he seeks to gulp us down. He looks for those who play into his clutches. He lurks in the spiritual bushes waiting for the Christian to come along. Do you have a spiritual mine detector? If we do not stay on the path, he will have a booby trap waiting to deform us for life.

"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

The Devil seeks to destroy the testimony of the Christian and to delude the non-Christian (Colossians 2:8). He wants to blind them to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age [the Devil] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

1 Peter 5:9

"Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

Resist him

The "him" here is the Devil (v.8).

"Resist" means withstand (James 4:7). This word comes from two Greek words: against and to stand. The Christian is to stand against the assault of the Devil. This is a term of defense, not offense. The Christian must build fortifications against the Devil. The Christian is at war. We should establish bulwarks of faith against our enemy.

We resist by obeying the commands of verse eight. We would do well to remember that we cannot fight the Devil in ourselves.

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

People who believe that the Devil is red believe a religious fairy tale. James chapter 4 makes it plain that the Devil is yellow!! The Devil is not afraid of us but of our faith. By depending on the Lord the weakest Christian can not only check the Devil but he can vanquish him.

Principle

The Christian must set for himself a fortress of his faith against the Devil.

Application

It is amazing that God gave Christians the power to resist the greatest creature ever made. Satan was the most powerful and wise creature God ever created.

The Devil is not omnipresent. His well-trained troops (demons) disperse throughout the world seeking to sway people for his cause. His power is through the dispersion of these troops throughout the world. Therefore, his power is very extensive but not endless. The Devil is mighty but not invincible. Some people act as if the Devil is almighty. This is a sad mistake because it defers to him too much.

The Christian cannot take the offence against the Devil but he can stand his ground in the faith. In the face of Satanic attack, he can appropriate God's Word to the situation.

Why does the Devil have us on the run? We should have him on the run by our faith. He says "Boo" to some people and they collapse right on the spot.

steadfast

"Steadfast" means to make firm and solid. It is a military term meaning hold your order or keep a solid front. Secular Greek used "steadfast" for a close phalanx. The Greek phalanx was a body of heavily-armed infantry soldiers who formed ranks and files close and deep. The word carries the idea of solidity in mass and body. Soldiers had to maintain their ranks and formation or the enemy would attack them from the side or from behind.

The Greek infantry divided into two main branches: the hoplitai and psiloi. The hoplitai were heavily armed troops arranged in phalanx. They were a body of 4,000 men drawn up in lines from eight to twenty-five deep. The psiloi were lightly armed troops, who carried out the skirmishing duties of the army, harassed the enemy, and hung around the flanks and rear of the phalanx with the cavalry in time of battle.

Principle

The Christian should not break and run but hold his ground in the faith as a mighty phalanx of faith.

Application

Steadfast comes to mean unbending. Christians should not bend their faith. They should deepen and strengthen their faith. Christians are to maintain their ranks in their faith. If they keep formation even though they undergo attack, together they will do something that they could not do alone.

Christians should not break and run. They should hold their ground. Their solid front and phalanx is the Word of God applied to their experiences.

in the faith

Satan aimed at the faith of the Asia Minor believers. He sought to destroy their faith by making them disillusioned by suffering. Peter now says that their faith will sustain them against the assault of disillusionment.

Making a phalanx of our faith means that we make the whole body of truth found in the Word

of God be our phalanx to orient to suffering. We stand, but we stand in the faith.

"For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Colossians 2:5).

The word "faith" here means the whole realm of truth as taught in Scriptures. The basis of the believer's resistance to the Devil is the Word of God. Application of the principles of the Word to experience is the foundation for dealing with the Devil.

We resist the Devil in the faith, not in the flesh.

"If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Colossians 1:23).

"For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:5-7).

Principle

We fight disillusionment by the whole body of truth found in the Word of God.

Application

The purpose of trial is not to weaken our faith but to strengthen it. One of two things will happen in suffering: we will either collapse or develop character.

God has a prescribed means for defeating the Devil - the Word of God. Three times the Lord defeated the Devil on the mount of temptation by saying "It is written." The Savior quoted three verses to the Devil and that sent him scurrying.

Be resolute in your faith for Satan wants to destroy your faith. He wants to draw us into apostasy. He does this by making us disillusioned by suffering. Be grounded in your faith. The way to win the war with Satan is with our faith in the principles of God's Word (Ephesians 6:16).

The Christian must maintain his ranks with his faith or he will be vulnerable to attack from the Devil. He needs to be solid as granite in his faith. He should stand in formation even though he is under attack by his enemy, the Devil. He continues to function even under fire because he has, in the Word of God, the resources to fight.

knowing

The word "knowing" is a key word in many passages of Scripture.

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance" (Romans 5:3).

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:6).

"So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20).

The tense in the word "knowing" carries the idea of truth settled in the soul that can be called into use when necessary. "Knowing" gives us something to use under pressure.

"I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

Before we can apply truth, we must know truth. Again, before we can apply truth we must form truth into a principle for life. We must know something about how God wants us to deal with the problems of life.

Christians need to know something before they can use what they know. If we do not know the

Word before suffering comes, we will not be able to use it in the time of duress. We cannot say if a wild rhinoceros is charging down on us, "Just a minute, Mr. Rhinoceros, I do not have my gun loaded. Wait while I load it."

Principle

Christians must study the Word and extract its principles for living before suffering comes his way.

Application

A Christian must get the principles of the Word in their mind in so that they can apply it to whatever they may face. The only effectual gun is a loaded gun. Keep the gun of your mind loaded with the principles of the Word. How would you like to go to war in the Gulf with no ammunition in your gun?

We load our gun in prosperity, not in adversity.

that the same sufferings

No Christian suffers alone. Suffering is the universal mark of all true Christians.

are experienced

"Experienced" means to endure. No matter how long suffering may last, the believer is to endure through it all.

The real test in golf is not in keeping out of the rough but in getting out of the rough after we get in.

by your brotherhood in the world

Fellow Christians in other places in the world go through the same things we do.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Misery likes company. When we realize that the Devil puts all of God's people through similar circumstances, we gain courage.

Principle

God does not ask us to suffer any more than He asks of other believers anywhere else in the world.

Application

Realizing that other Christians suffer in other places of the world, encourages us to move on in the faith. This also unites us in the same experiences.

We can handle anything that life may bring us if we know the principles of the Word.

A gem develops into a gem under great pressure and friction.

A smooth sea never made a skilful sailor. A believer stagnates in still waters.

1 Peter 5:10

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ

Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

We now come to the conclusion of 1 Peter (vv.10-14). This is one of the great benedictions of the Bible. Note other great benedictions:

Numbers 6:24-26; Romans 15:5,6, 13; 16:25,27; Ephesians 3:20,21; 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13; 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17; 3:12,13; 1 Timothy 1:17; Jude 24,25; Revelation 1:5,6.

But may the God of all grace

Peter concludes his epistle with a prayer. This is a prayer in honor of God's grace.

We now come to one of God's great names -- "the God of all grace." In 2 Corinthians 1:3 God is called "the God of all comfort." "All" carries the idea of comprehensiveness and universality. God's grace is comprehensive and universal for any need of any believer at any time. This means that God has a plan for every situation that you face in life. Every problem you encounter God has a solution for it. He has an asset that you need.

God has cornered the market on grace. God has all kinds of grace for any situation we may face. God has cornered the market on grace and comfort. God is the God of all grace both as far as the quality of it and as far as the quantity of it.

"The God of" means God is the source of all grace.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'" (James 4:6).

In 1 Peter, God's grace is God's provision for suffering. God provides for any contingency we may face.

Principle

God's grace is comprehensive and universal for any need of any believer at any time.

Application

Should a catastrophe come upon you, what resource would you draw upon? Would you draw upon yourself?

We are often not aware of our needs. We think we need one thing whereas we need something else. Sometimes we think God must heal us when what we really need is the grace of God to sustain us without being healed (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Healing is not always our highest good. Sometimes the highest good is God's glory that sustains us in our suffering. We glorify God by making known to others how He sustained us in our predicament.

God is all-sufficient for any contingency that may come our way. God has grace sufficient for any occasion or need (2 Corinthians 1:3; 12:9).

Do you view yourself as respectable? Sooner or later, we all have to come to the place where we recognize that we all fail the Lord. Think of all the sins you have committed just over the last few months. Do you think you have earned or deserved the right of deliverance? Yet, God is the God of all grace. He knows every sin we have committed or ever will commit.

Christians can go right into Heavenly Headquarters for their grace. They go to the manufacturer. They need no middleperson. There is no black market on grace. We have the right to go right to the producer of grace. God's grace is

adequate for us no matter what our dilemma or pain. The manufacturer will give us grace if we ask Him (Hebrews 4:16).

God provides grace for the non-Christian. God offers people salvation through Christ with no strings attached.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8).

Will you accept God's offer of grace today? Will you believe Jesus paid on the cross all of the suffering you need to pay for your sins?

who called us

"Called" is more than an invitation. "Called" carries the idea of an effectual call. This is a divine call that the one called hears and obeys. God summons us to himself. In the process, he will not abandon us. He calls us to praise Him.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Peter 2:9).

Suffering is in God's eternal plan. Suffering is no cosmic accident. In eternity past, God planned a certain amount of suffering for your life.

"For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:20-21).

Principle

It is part of God's eternal plan for us that we should suffer for His glory.

Application

God calls us for His purpose. What did He have in mind? He could have done better but He selected you and me to be conformed into the image of His Son. As far as God is concerned, it is as good as done already. Nothing can thwart that purpose of God. The purpose of God's call is to make us just like His Son,

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:28-29).

From eternity, God called us to salvation:

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:23-25).

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1).

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10).

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

Suffering is part of God's plan to witness to His glory,

"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a

teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:9-12).

to His eternal glory

"To" means with a view to--God has a purpose in His call. God's purpose is that we will be with Him eternally. He desires our fellowship. Suffering is temporary (v. 9) because God has an eternal plan.

"That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

"Glory" is another name for heaven. Christians are headed for Glory.

"To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

"Eternal" means endless, endless time. There will be no cessation or end to our share in the glory of God.

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' ... 'And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:41).

Eternal punishment lasts as long as eternal life.

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Some people try to air condition hell. We cannot reduce the duration of time in hell that God establishes for the lost without diminishing God's Word.

"Eternal glory" brings out the full-range and objective of our suffering. This puts suffering in perspective. The world is full of suffering and the world is also full of triumph over suffering.

Principle

God calls believers to a life that transcends suffering.

Application

This prayer first reminds believers God calls them into a life that transcends the suffering of this life. It acknowledges suffering is real but puts it in eternal perspective.

When you face disaster, put it in the context of God's eternal call for your life. We handle disaster by understanding God's plan. To fear, fret or fall apart will do no good.

by Christ Jesus

Our destiny is completely associated with Christ. God always links our destiny to Jesus Christ. It is always "by" him. God does everything for the believer "in Christ Jesus" (Romans 5:1,2,9,11).

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:9-11).

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25)

Principle

Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Application

We cannot get to heaven by believing in God. Everything God does is by Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). He is the most divisive person who ever lived, as He should be, if He claims to be who He is.

The one thing that religionists and secularists hate to hear is that Jesus Christ is the only way, mutually exclusively the only way. They claim that is narrow and bigoted. We say this is Bible truth. They say this is intolerance; we say it is the gospel. God does nothing any other way other than by Jesus Christ.

If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Savior, there is no hope for you. You must come face-to-face with God's Son and fall at the foot of the cross for forgiveness for your sins. You will never face your sins again in either time or eternity, if you do this. Jesus bought and paid for your sins. He eliminated, obliterated and put them away forever. Will you come to trust the death of Christ to forgive your sins today?

This is not nice religious sticky stuff. Many of us think if we gain enough brownie points with God, then He will place us in heaven. No, this passage contradicts that. Junk all your religion. Come to the cross.

after you have suffered

God does not exempt Christians from suffering. We expect this in God's economy. God designs all suffering to bless the believer.

Peter asks Asian Minor Christians to consider their suffering before it comes. View suffering from principle first. Then view it from experience secondly. The Boy Scout motto is "Be prepared." God wants us to prepare ourselves for disaster. Face your suffering before it comes.

Christians who understand God's plan in suffering orient to a perspective that transcends the immediate suffering they face.

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

"If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

The same furnace that liquefies gold hardens clay.

a while

Note the contrast with God's "eternal glory." Our suffering is only for a little "while," but our life with God is eternal. The principle is to keep the eternal perspective in view when you enter suffering.

Suffering is only for a "while." It is not interminable. Eternal perspective is important when we enter trial. Sometimes it feels like our trials continue without cessation. However, God measures our suffering with eternal precision. He places boundaries and limits to the suffering we must face. In His sovereignty, He understands what each of us needs to grow spiritually.

Principle

Keep the eternal perspective in view when you enter deep suffering.

Application

God designs periods of prosperity and periods of suffering. Therefore, God's design for suffering in our lives is not forever. God puts a limit to our suffering.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Suffering sometimes seems like it goes on for eternity but God places a limit to it.

No Christian is exempt from suffering. No Christian is immune to disease. The Christian grows by suffering. God brings suffering into our lives to draw us closer to Himself. When we keep this in view, we orient to God's eternal perspective on suffering.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

There is a great deal of suffering that God's people go through that no one knows anything

about. There are mental anguishes, domestic problems and parenting problems they just cannot share with just anyone.

Few people may know the burden someone near you may carry. That is where you come in. You can assume someone is having trouble. You can then give him or her an encouraging word. The African-American spiritual goes like this, "No one knows the trouble I've seen," that is, no one but Jesus. It is wonderful to know He knows our problems. However, it is also nice to know a Christian cares as well.

perfect

Note the sequence of thought here: "But may the God of all grace...make you perfect." God's grace makes us perfect.

Now we come to a series of four architectural metaphors. These metaphors suggest our survival kit for suffering.

The word "perfect" means to render fit, complete. "Perfect" comes from two words to fit and down. It carries the meanings of mend, repair, complete, equip, prepare and put in order. The idea is that God will restore us to our former condition.

Secular Greek used "perfect" for setting a fractured bone. The Bible uses it for mending a net (Mark 1:19). The predominant idea in the word "perfect" is adjustment. God will put the broken parts into right relationship. He will put us into right relation with Himself. God will mend people who come to Him as the God of grace. He will take the broken pieces of your life and mend them for His eternal glory.

"Perfect" always carries the idea of supplying that which is missing. God will mend that which is broken. God will mend lives broken in sin. God will put us in joint, adjust us to His plan for suffering.

Galatians 6:1 translates this word as "restore." God will put us in right order. He will arrange our lives so that they are put in their proper place in His economy.

"Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thessalonians 3:10). God will complete what is lacking in your faith through other believers.

God will outfit or equip us for any situation. The hothouse produces puny plants that fade in a day. The mountains produce trees that withstand

violent winds. God puts adversity in our lives to develop godly character that will be able to endure anything that may come our way.

Principle

God can, and will, perfect you if you let Him unscramble your life.

Application

When God perfects us, He orients us to suffering. He mends our lives. He puts them back together again.

You have spiritual scars and bruises, and you need someone to stitch you up! God can do that. He will take your problem and your burden. When He mends your life, you will not find any scars.

Who can unscramble a scrambled egg? The God of "all" grace can. He will take all the broken pieces of your life and put them back together again. God is in the business of putting Humpty Dumpty back together again.

Right at this time, you may be going through deep waters. It may feel like you are about to drown. Some people say, "I can't take it any more. It is too great for me to bear." Only God knows how much hurt there is in some families. There is misunderstanding, bitterness, hostility and resentment. Such an atmosphere deforms the viewpoint of children. When they sense this hatred, they develop disillusionment toward God.

Is your family broken into pieces? God will put you back together again. God will do this even for Christians who have radically stepped out of fellowship with Him. God can restore harmony between husbands and wives. God is able to join them perfectly together again.

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

There is an onus upon God to restore us,

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to

whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

There is an onus upon us to make ourselves complete,

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

establish

"Establish" means to fix, make fast, to set (from a prop). "Establish" then means to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of being more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief (Acts 14:22; 15:32, 41). The New Testament uses "establish" of stabilizing (i.e., the confirmation) persons. God will prop up the believer's convictions. He will make firm the faith of the tottering believer.

"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32).

In the previous verse (5:9), Peter uses the word "steadfast" for dealing with the Devil with a strong faith system. Paul desired to visit Rome that the saints might be "established" in their faith,

"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established" (Romans 1:11).

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith--to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen" (Romans 16:25-27).

Paul commanded the Corinthians to stand strong in their faith,

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Timothy sought to strengthen the faith of the believers at Thessalonica,

"Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this" (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3).

One of the works of God is to confirm the hearts of the saints,

"Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:10-13).

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

James exhorts Christians to "establish" their hearts in the light of the coming of Christ,

"You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:8).

The character of this confirmation may be learned from its use in

"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Principle

There is an onus both upon God and upon us to strengthen our faith.

Application

God will not allow us to waver in our faith if we develop our faith. He will fix us firm and make us stable in what we believe. God will Himself make us steady if we have positive volition toward His work on our faith system.

God will put the Christian upon a solid foundation of faith. Christian faith is not transitory or temporary but solid as granite when we allow God to develop it. Athletes who discipline themselves with rigorous training develop toughness of fiber and staying power. Believers who seriously expand their faith will develop a tough certitude that is full of confidence and stability.

strengthen

"Strengthen" means to cause someone to be or to become more able or capable with the implication of a contrast with weakness. Literally, "strengthen" means filled with strength. God will impart spiritual might and thus make us stable during trial.

God will make us more able to do something and strengthen us for the task. The future tense constitutes a divine promise. The previous term "establish" and this term "strengthen" are similar in meaning and serve to intensify the idea that God makes us able to face the trials of life.

Principle

In disaster, God wants us to have a firm, unwavering defense against suffering.

Application

The same wind will strengthen a strong flame but blow out a weak flame. The wind will fan a strong flame into a great blaze.

Know how sublime a thing it is to suffer and be strong, "(Longfellow)" see also Ephesians 6:10.

No one truly knows how strong their faith is until it has been put to trial. The furnace of adversity will reveal the strength of our faith.

"If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

We need God-given strength. God is able to provide that strength.

"He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:29-31).

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

God will give us spiritual stamina. He will strengthen us in times of temptation. In no area do we go down to defeat as we do in our home life. Most of our failures are right at home. It is such a humiliating thing to be defeated right in the place where we live the longest.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy" (Colossians 1:11).

"But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!" (2 Timothy 4:17-18).

Sometimes these defeats take place at work but we are most frequently off-guard at home. The way we treat our loved ones at home is more of a true indication of our spirituality than the way we treat fellow Christians at church. Our family knows whether we are a phony or not. They know whether we fake it or not.

The story is told of a man who prayed, "Lord, fill me, fill me." He prayed the same prayer almost every week and the congregation got tired of it. One night he prayed this same prayer and his wife burst right into his prayer and said, "Lord, don't pay any attention to him. He leaks!" The place to practice Christianity is at home.

Are you icily polite with your loved ones? You are nice with each other for appearances' sake. You appear to be devoted to your mate but you rankle each other endlessly. Within your person, there is a hostility that borders on hatred.

and settle you

"Settle" means to lay a foundation (Luke 21:14).

"And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:25).

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17).

"If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Colossians 1:23).

God will settle you down as on a foundation. He will fasten you to the ground and fix you as a substructure. He will settle your heart. He is the underpinning to your heart.

Principle

God is in the business of settling our hearts down.

Application

God will fasten us in the ground or fix us as on a spiritual foundation. We ground or establish our faith in the bedrock of trust in God during affliction. It is there we discover the great truth of God's grace in our greatest trials.

God can settle you and put you into the realm of stability. God can make you reliable and consistent even under great duress. Having done this, you will not go off on one extreme or another. You will last. You may not be sensational. Some of us are like jackrabbits. We bound ahead but then we go asleep along the road like the rabbit in the fable. Others of us are

like the turtle that keeps plodding along. We never know where the spiritual jackrabbit is going. True, sometimes they make great leaps and break all records but they fall asleep holding their record book.

The Lord Jesus will calm your spirit. Do you have a bad temper? He will cool it down. He will quiet your spirit.

1 Peter 5:11

"To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

To Him be the glory

The first epistle of Peter ends in a doxology. Since God is the God of all grace, He deserves glory. Since God sustains us during trial, we should laud His glory for His intervention into our lives.

"To Him" indicates that Christianity is personal. "To" makes it plain Peter ascribes special praise to a person he holds in deference. His praise is clearly directed to God, the One who turns suffering into blessing.

and the dominion

The word "dominion" is a special term for power. It conveys the idea of force, strength, might, and especially manifested power. "Dominion" is a deed manifesting great power, implying some supernatural force.

"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Luke 1:51).

This power is the power to rule or control. This is a term of sovereignty. God also rules the circumstances and situations of your life (cf. Romans 11:36). He possesses ruling power in your life. The root of this word derives from "creator."

"Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:16).

God has sovereignty over death.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the

power of death, that is, the devil"
(Hebrews 2:14).

God has dominion over our ministries.

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11).

God has sovereignty over our salvation.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24, 25)

Jude also praises God's majesty and power.

The sovereign King makes believers kings.

"And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen"
(Revelation 1:6).

In eternity, there will be praise to God's power.

"And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

'Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!'" (Revelation 5:13).

Peter praises the Lord for His ruling power. He had just finished talking about what the power of God could do in individual lives (v.10). God has the power to strengthen Christians in suffering by His sovereign actions.

forever and ever.

Christians will spend eternity celebrating the glory and power of God.

Amen

The word "amen" means so be it. Peter concludes his epistle with an affirmation of his belief in the glory and sovereignty of God for all situations. Peter says in effect, "I believe in the glory and ruling power of God for any situation in life."

1 Peter 5:12

"By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand."

By Silvanus

"Silvanus" was also called Silas. Silvanus was probably a Latin name for Silas. Luke in Acts prefers the name Silas.

Silvanus was a prophet from the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22, 32). That church dispatched him along with Paul and Barnabas to take the decree from the Jerusalem conference to the church in Antioch. Silvanus' background as a servant was similar to Barnabas and John Mark.

At Antioch, Paul and Barnabas quarreled over Mark (Acts 15:36-41), a relative of Barnabas. They divided over him. Paul refused to take Mark on his next mission because of Mark's earlier desertion. Paul chose Silvanus to accompany him on his missionary expedition to Asia Minor and ultimately to Macedonia and Achaia. Barnabas chose Mark to go with him (Acts 15:41-18:5). An opportunity of a lifetime came to Silvanus because he was available for God to use him.

Setting out from Antioch, Paul made his way through Syria and Cilicia to the towns of southern Galatia (Derbe and Lystra) where he took Timothy as a companion (Acts 16:1-3). From there he passed through Phrygia to northern Galatia (Pessinus, Ancyra, and Tavium) and founded new churches.

Prevented from proceeding to Bithynia, he moved on from Galatia into Mysia and Troy. Here Luke joined (Acts 16:10-17) the team. Silas accompanied Paul through Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Thessalonica.

When Paul left for Athens, Silas stayed at Berea and then joined Paul at Corinth (Acts 16-18). Silas was an important figure in the churches in Macedonia. Acts 18:18 suggests that he may have remained in Macedonia when Paul left. His early connections with the church in Jerusalem were helpful in giving added theological legitimacy to the Paul's missionary enterprises. Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-38) and a Jew. This was a help to Paul as well.

Paul mentions Silas in his introductions to some of his epistles (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2

Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:19). Except in 2 Corinthians 1:19, Paul mentions him in reference to the writing of these epistles. He was a secretary to Paul and both secretary and courier for Peter. He is not named again until the reference to him here in 1 Peter.

The fact that Silvanus worked closely with both Paul and Peter shows the theological closeness of Paul and Peter. Although their theology is close, the way of expressing that theology is very different. There are some people today who try to make us believe that Paul and Peter were at odds. This gives a lie to that assertion. There was no schism in the early church between Paul and Peter. There was a clear cordial alliance between them.

Silvanus probably penned the epistle of 1 Peter. Peter may have penned the conclusion by his own hand. It was a general practice of writers of Scripture to use amanuenses (secretaries) to write their epistles (Galatians 6:11-18; 1 Corinthians 16:21-23; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18). Silvanus was also the person who carried this epistle to the countries listed in 1:1.

Silvanus now stands in similar relationship to Peter that he did to Paul. After ministering with Paul as a secretary, he now joins Peter. Paul was probably in prison by now. He was conversant with and known to the churches to whom this epistle is addressed (1:1). They knew what kind of man he was. They knew his character.

The Scripture records no syllable that Silas ever said. This affirms the importance of subordinate work. One little chip in a computer can cause the computer to stop operating. There is an importance to little things. Little things are indispensable. More glory shows up on the monitor. No doubt, some people will receive more glory in Christian work than others will. Glory, however, is not how God measures things. God places value on faithfulness to the role He gives us.

Principle

God uses unknown, unsung believers for His glory.

Application

Who has thought much of this man Silvanus? The two greatest missionaries of the first century were Paul and Peter. Both of these mighty missionaries depended on Silvanus. Neither Paul nor Peter

could have done what they did without Silvanus. He was their right-hand man.

Silvanus was available for God's use. It did not matter whether he played the second man. He played second fiddle to both Paul and Peter. He did not seek glory for himself but only for his Lord. That is why he could serve the way he did.

Paul and Peter were the "stars" of the first century community. God left to the lot of Silvanus to be a satellite to move around the greater orbs. If God calls you to this lot, will you be willing to accept it?

May God give us many more servants like Silvanus.

"Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:17-20).

A principle in the nation Israel was that some were to "stand by the stuff." "As his part is that goes down into battle, so shall his part be that carries by the stuff; they shall part alike." Stand by the stuff in your service for the Lord!!

our faithful brother

There is a definite article in the Greek before the word "faithful" making it obvious that Silvanus was well known for faithfulness. People knew him for his fidelity. Silvanus was trustworthy and dependable. He is a person who inspires trust and faith. We will grow faster in our faith if we trust our leaders.

Peter did not say that Silvanus was a genius, a wise philosopher or an eloquent preacher. He said simply that he was faithful. He may have been ordinary but he was faithful. Everything else is of little consequence to Peter. Silvanus' faithfulness was a manifestation of his faith. No one pushed him to serve. His faith inflamed him to serve.

Timothy was also a faithful person.

"For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my

ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17).

Tychicus was a faithful minister.

"But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you" (Ephesians 6:21).

Onesimus was a faithful minister.

"With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here" (Colossians 4:9).

Epaphras was a faithful minister.

"As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit" (Colossians 1:7-8).

Paul was faithful in his ministry.

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Timothy 1:12).

Principle

Faithfulness is a primary quality for ministry.

Application

No ministry can go very far without dependable people. Can your leaders count upon you to be faithful to your service? Can they depend on you?

"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities'" (Luke 19:17).

God wants us to remain faithful even during suffering to the point of death.

"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Paul said that when it comes to women, he is "trustworthy." This is his claim for people listening to what he says.

"Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 7:25).

The Lord gave Paul grace to be "trustworthy" in his dealing with women. He was careful about how he related to women. He was faithful and so had the right to be heard with respect. His right to continue in ministry was, in part, therefore due to his trustworthiness with women. God commissioned Paul because he was worthy of confidence in him about this matter.

Those in Christian ministry need to be faithful in delivering their ministry and they need to be faithful to the integrity of their ministry. Can people place full confidence in both what you do and what you are?

Do you persistently do your task even though no one notices? Do you sit with hands in your pockets because no one pays attention to you? Faithfulness does not depend on someone noticing us. "Well, I taught Sunday School but no one took any notice of it so I quit." Faithfulness transcends recognition.

All the work that we do will ultimately become unnoticed in any case. Our glory will not last. Nobody will know us thirty years after we are dead. What does human recognition amount to then? It will matter little then whether someone gave us a pat on the back. Surely, our reason for service rises above recognition if we live to the glory of God! You do no work that Jesus does not see.

as I consider him

Peter gave extensive thought to the kind of man Silvanus was. He was someone Peter could trust. No doubt Silvanus was better educated than Peter. Peter was a fisherman but Silvanus was a scholar. Silvanus wrote polished Greek. Yet, he willingly submitted himself to Peter's leadership and faithfully served under him.

This man was a close associate of both Peter and Paul. They were the two greatest missionaries of the first century. Silvanus was, therefore, a common factor in the most impacting missionary enterprises of the world! The two mighty apostles found a man upon whom they could depend.

Principle

God divinely designs a second-place role for some people.

Application

The church can never do without the kind of people like Silvanus. He was content to take second place. He willingly served in the background so long as the work of Christ advanced. Both Paul and Peter overshadowed him. He accepted the role of a penman of these two great apostles. He was faithful in that role. Every era of Christianity needs this kind of person.

Are you someone others can count on?

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

You do not have to be brilliant to be faithful. God does not say, "Well done, you famous servant." Silvanus did not say, "Peter, you ask me to be a mailman? No way. That is beneath my dignity. Don't you realize who I am? I am a polished Greek scholar." No, Silvanus carried the mail because he was faithful.

What is beneath your dignity? Show me someone who is willing to do anything for the Lord. I will show you someone God will use.

I have written to you briefly,

Peter wrote First Peter by using an amanuensis (a secretary who penned the epistle -- Silvanus).

Verses 12-14 are the postscript to the epistle, the PS. He probably wrote the PS in his own hand.

exhorting and testifying

Peter shows why he wrote to the Asia Minor Christians (Turkey today). He wanted to do two things: 1) exhort and 2) testify.

"Exhorting" means to encourage or appeal. Peter exhorted the believers throughout this epistle to live under "the true grace of God."

"Testifying" means to bear witness. To give a testimony is to give the strongest assurance that the purpose of this letter was to reveal the true grace of God.

All of Peter's exhorting and testifying in First Peter revolved around "the true grace of God." Every command and every testimony must center on grace.

that this is the true grace of God

The "true grace of God" is the operating principle of the entire epistle of First Peter. The child of God can withstand persecution if he or she stands in the grace of God (1:13; 4:10; 5:10).

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

1 Co 15: 10 "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

"For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you" (2 Corinthians 1:12).

"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:1).

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

There must be a false grace if there is a true grace. The Devil imitates everything God does. Sometimes imitation grace looks as good as the real thing. This is how the Devil deceives people. He sells them a bill of goods.

Some people turn the grace of God into lewdness. They give a spin to the idea of grace that is contrary to God's view of grace. Grace is evidently vulnerable to some using it as an excuse for sin (Jude 4).

Principle

Grace is the operating principle for all suffering and Christian living.

Application

Are we conscious that it is Jesus who bestows upon us the power to live the Christian life? We have a right to live in God's power not because of who and what we are but because of who and what Jesus is and did.

God delivers us by his sovereign unadulterated grace. He asks no work, no merit or effort on our part. He does not save us or empower us by Christ plus anything but by Christ plus nothing. It is not Christ plus our religion or Christ plus anything. It is Christ plus nothing that equals salvation.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Jesus does it all. He suffered all that needs to be suffered for our sins. No effort of our own can save or sustain us. Whether it is becoming a Christian or growing as a Christian, it is by grace (2 Peter 3:18).

in which you stand

If the Christian is to be strong, he needs to stand in grace. Grace is both a gift and a responsibility. Grace is the provision God gives for the Christian life.

It is not enough to have the grace of God, we must stand in the grace of God (5:9). We need to dig our heels into grace. If we operate under the illusion that we have something to offer God in ourselves, we lose our orientation to grace. The tendency to fall back upon our own merit and worth is a persistent evil. The Devil constantly tries to persuade us to take pride in ourselves and our accomplishments.

"Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord

Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

"Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

Principle

The operating principle for the Christian life is grace.

Application

We not only need grace to live the Christian life, but we need to stand on grace to be an effective Christian. It is one thing to accept God's grace occasionally. It is another thing to make grace the central operating principle for our lives.

The Christian stands eternally in grace. This grace is unalterable because of Christ.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

When the child of God is disciplined by Him, it is an issue of grace, not punishment. Discipline is remedial, not punitive. It is God's process of educating believers. As a faithful Father, He refuses to let us get away with sin. He will not let us get away with something that will hurt us. When a believer recognizes this, he moves toward stable Christian living based on grace.

1 Peter 5:13

"She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son."

She who is in Babylon

"She" may refer to a congregation with whom Peter is staying.

"Babylon" the city was almost non-existent in the time of Peter. It was located in what is now Iraq today, in the Mesopotamian valley. There is no evidence that Peter ever went to Babylon. He was,

however, in Rome in the final years of his life. Silvanus and Mark were both colleagues whose ministry was nearer to the city of Rome.

"Babylon" may be a code name for the city of Rome. If Babylon does refer to Rome, Peter might have used this code name to protect the Asia Minor Christians from persecution. Rome became a catalyst for persecution of Christians throughout the world.

John Mark also sent his greetings to the churches in Asia Minor. Paul located John Mark in Rome in an earlier concern (Colossians 4:10). This also gives evidence that Babylon is Rome.

elect together with you

"Elect" is a double compound word made up of three words: with, out of and elect. "Elect" is a compound word meaning to being selected together with. "Elect" means called out together with others. An elect person is a person chosen together with someone else. God is the one who does the choosing.

This is a corporate word. We are part of one big family of God and our home is not of this world. Our home is heaven. God elected people from various parts of the Roman Empire to be His church (1:2). They would possess salvation and a relationship to God.

greet you

Churches should care for one another. They should love and pray for one another. Does your church have fellowship with other churches? Do you do things together?

Principle

Christians everywhere are joined by the bond of Christ.

Application

Wherever Christians may live, they have a bond in Christ. Churches which are great distances apart should have affinity for one another. Although distance separates them, they are one in Christ. We need to look over the fences of our narrow viewpoints and embrace other believers for the cause of Christ.

We are united by God's common election. Continents may be separated by oceans, but they are parts of the same globe. In fact, under the ocean, continents blend into one.

and so does Mark

Now for a study of the life of Mark.

The "Mark" of this verse is the Mark who wrote the gospel of Mark. The New Testament mentions Mark in five books. We meet him first in Acts 12,

"So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12).

The church at Antioch (300 miles north of Jerusalem) sent relief by Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts 11) because of a wide spread famine in Judea. In Acts 12, the gospel team was in Jerusalem. Terrible events transpired while they were there. Herod executed James the apostle with a sword.

When Herod saw that this pleased his constituency (this is all that a politician needs), he threw Peter in jail. Herod wanted to execute Peter after Passover. The night before Herod was to execute Peter, the church was in an all night prayer meeting praying for Peter. When Peter knocked at the door, the people praying did not believe that God answered their prayers!

Principle

God answers even faithless prayer.

Application

We often enter prayer not believing that God will answer our prayer. God answers even faithless prayer.

We need to develop a mechanism that will help us recognize when God does answer prayer. My method for doing this is to write down my prayers. When God answers the prayer, I write "answered" beside the request.

Whatever method you chose, you need to strengthen your faith by seeing how God answers prayer in your life.

When Paul and Barnabas finished their relief ministry to the saints, they returned to Antioch (another 300-mile trip to the north).

"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:25).

We learn from Colossians that John Mark's mother was the sister of Barnabas. Thus, John Mark was the nephew of Barnabas. Barnabas invited John Mark to go with them on a missionary enterprise for they could use him in the ministry at Antioch. Mark then accompanied his Uncle Barnabas and also Paul to Antioch.

The Holy Spirit then called Barnabas and Paul to a missionary expedition further into the Roman Empire. The local church at Antioch sent them out on this mission (Acts 13:1-4). They took John Mark with them.

"And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John [Mark] as their assistant" (Acts 13:5).

John Mark was their "assistant." In today's terms, you might say that he did the odd chores. He set up the P.A. system, drove the car and organized their meetings. He did the legwork.

Principle

The work of God needs people to do the legwork.

Application

Every ministry needs this kind of person. Thank God for each of them. These are the people who do much for the kingdom of God. However, we hear very little about them. They work behind the scenes. If it were not for them, much kingdom work would not get done. Things went along quite well but before long, John Mark deserted the team.

"Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13).

John Mark went home. Some would say that he was a mama's boy--that he found the work of God getting difficult and quit when the ministry got tough.

The Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:2). He said nothing about Mark. Who invited Mark? His uncle. Many people go into ministry because some person asked them to do it. "My mother always wanted me in ministry, they say." Yet these people often do not last in Christian work because they have not sought the will of God.

So, John Mark went home. The gospel team continued their ministry without John. Again, in

today's terms, they drove their own car and did their own organizing.

Principle

God must lead us into ministry, not people.

Application

If God does not lead you into ministry, you will become cynical, critical, negative and bitter. By the same token, if God does lead you into ministry, you will have a great love for people, including your detractors. And you will understand that your critics keep you from pride.

If we allow people to put pressure on us to go into the ministry, we make a big mistake. We must make sure that it is God who leads us, not other people.

Six years elapse between Mark's desertion and Acts 15:36,

"Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing'" (Acts 15:36).

The gospel team decided to do some follow up work on those who received Christ on the previous mission. Barnabas wanted to take his nephew with them even though he was a failure the first time.

"Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark" (Acts 15:37).

Mark lives down in Jerusalem with his mother.

"But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work" (Acts 15:38).

Paul reasoned that if Mark quit once, he would quit twice. But Barnabas felt differently about that. He wanted to give Mark another chance. "After all, he is young. He failed the first time out, but we need to give him grace. Maybe he will make good this time," Barnabas might have reasoned. But Paul resisted, "He is not going with me. You can't depend on him."

"Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace

of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:39-41).

The gospel team broke up over a personnel dispute. Each went his own way. They were never to minister together again.

Years slipped by and Paul was imprisoned in Rome. From his cell, he wrote Colossians. In the last chapter, Paul acknowledges that Mark made good.

"Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)" (Colossians 4:10).

Principle

We want to finish well.

Application

When it comes to Christian work, it does not matter as much how poorly you begin, what really counts is how well you finish. The score at half time is not nearly important as the score at the end of the game.

Paul wrote Philemon at the same time and place as Colossians (when he referred to Mark 4:10). At the end of Philemon Paul says,

"Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers" (Philemon 1:23-24).

Here Paul calls Mark his "fellow laborer." Mark was in prison with Paul in Rome. Paul was not ashamed to identify with Mark at this point. In fact, Paul views Mark as someone who works shoulder to shoulder with him under the duress of imprisonment.

We find the final verse about Mark in 2 Timothy 4:11,

"Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

"Useful" means profitable. Mark is profitable to Paul for the work of ministry! What a change in Paul's thinking! Mark came through with flying colors towards the end of his ministry. Barnabas' confidence in Mark paid off. I wonder if Paul ever

had misgivings about not giving Mark another chance for ministry.

It says something of both Paul and Mark that they could reconcile their differences. They were men of character who would not let differences of the past hinder future ministry together.

Principle

God is the God of second chances.

Application

How many people go into the ministry and do not make it the first time? They are of sensitive spirit and people easily hurt them. Criticism rains down on them and they become so discouraged that they soon leave the ministry. Then God gives them a second chance. In their second chance at ministry, God uses them together in a marvelous way. Jonah was a failure the first time out but God gave him a second chance. God is the God of second chances.

Can you resist holding a grudge against someone who hurt you in the past? Can you let past injuries be forgotten?

my son

John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas but he was of no relation to Peter.

Mark was Peter's disciple. He was his son in the faith. Peter may have led Mark to Christ. Paul led Timothy to Christ and referred to him as "my dearly beloved son" and "my son in the faith." Both of these great missionaries placed a priority on discipling others.

Principle

All of us should have someone whom we are in the process of discipling.

Application

Is there someone in your life that you disciple?

1 Peter 5:14

"Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen."

Greet one another

"Greet" carries the idea of to welcome, or salute. When we greet others, we extend to them courtesy. In the first century, greetings of courtesy

were important to honor other Christians. When we greet one another, we draw them to ourselves. We welcome others into our lives. Romans 16 uses this term 21 times.

Five epistles close with "greet one another with a kiss of love [Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians and 1 Peter]." Giving deference to other Christian was obviously a great value in to the early church.

Principle

Peter commands Christians to make a point of expressing love to each other to give them respect.

Application

Do you make a point to express love to other Christians? Respect is foundational to love. Love is foundational to respect.

each other in our culture. I, for one, am glad the custom has changed!

Peace to you all

Peter pronounces a blessing upon believers in Asia Minor. "Peace" generally carries the idea of prosperity of soul.

This epistle began with an affirmation of peace (1:2) and now it closes with an affirmation of peace. We never get away from our need of grace and peace.

who are in Christ Jesus

"In Christ Jesus" narrows the crowd down. There is a special peace given to those who hold the same status that Jesus holds before God. This is also the audience to whom Paul wrote,

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Amen

"Amen" means so be it, or, I believe this. Peter believes in His message. The grace of God will carry them through any suffering they might face (5:10).

I hope that God blessed your hearts in the study of 1 Peter.