

OUR TRIALS

A Fresh Look At
1st & 2nd PETER



Travis Welch

A BIBLICAL STUDY

OUR TRIALS

(A Fresh Look at 1 & 2 Peter)

BY

Travis Welch

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What You Need To Know

1. All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God (Rom. 3:23)
2. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23a)
3. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23b)
4. Behold Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart (Rev. 3:20).

5. Will you agree with Him about you being a sinner and having a wage due of eternity in Hell? If you agree with Him, then open your heart's door and ask Him to come into your life, to forgive you, and make you into a new person. How do you invite Him in? By prayer, just bow your head and talk to Him. The next move is up to you.

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Forward

By John Fields

It is a pleasure to introduce this work by my friend and Brother in Christ, Travis. Now while Travis' and my interpretation of small portions of Scripture don't always agree, over the years I have still come to appreciate not only his passion for Scripture but also his gift to make biblical truths accessible to everyday believers. Travis approaches God's Word with a pastor's heart, a teacher's clarity, and an evident desire to help followers of Christ see the grand story of redemption unfolding throughout the pages of Scripture. This survey of First and Second Peter reflects those strengths, inviting readers into a thoughtful yet approachable exploration of the Apostle Peter's message.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this book is Travis's consideration of the possibility that Peter and Paul, nearing the ends of their earthly ministries, may have shared more than a common faith and mission. While Scripture does not describe a final collaboration between the two apostles, Travis presents a compelling theory that deserves thoughtful reflection. He notes the historical circumstances that placed both men in Rome during a period of escalating persecution and suggests that the similarities between Paul's letter to the Ephesians and Peter's first epistle may not be merely coincidental. Whether one ultimately agrees with the theory or not, it serves as a valuable lens through which to examine these inspired writings.

As readers progress through the book, they will notice the thematic connections Travis highlights between Ephesians and First Peter. Both letters emphasize the believer's identity in Christ, the unity of God's people, the call to holiness, the reality of spiritual warfare, and the hope that sustains Christians through suffering. Travis invites us to consider how these shared themes might reflect two apostles addressing different audiences while confronting many of the same challenges facing the early church. His observations encourage readers to study these texts side by side and to gain a richer appreciation for the harmony of the New Testament witness.

Most importantly, this book never loses sight of its ultimate purpose: pointing readers to Jesus Christ and encouraging faithful Christian living through the kenotic walk of Christ. Travis reminds us that biblical truth is not merely something to be studied but something to be lived daily. Whether you are new to the letters of Peter or have studied them for years, I believe you will find this book both insightful and encouraging. My hope is that, as you read, you will share Travis's enthusiasm for God's Word and discover anew the strength, hope, and perseverance that Peter so passionately proclaimed to believers facing trials in every generation, including ours.

Writer's Acknowledgements

This book, "Our Trials: A Fresh Look at 1&2 Peter," is a companion study to my first book, "Our Part: A Fresh Look at the Book of Ephesians," self-published in 2025 and available at 4disciples.org. Lord willing there will be a follow-up titled, "Our Discernment: A Fresh Look at 1,2,3 John. My goal is to combine the three volumes into one book titled, "The Triangle of Christian Piety."

All three books are taken from recordings of my teaching from 2022-2024. Most of my notes are from Dr. Bill Vinson classes I have taken through the years, plus recordings of him teaching at Decatur Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Dr. Vinson encouraged me to make audio recordings while I was teaching. He listened to all of the recordings as they were posted to 4disciples.org and gave welcomed feedback.

Dr Vinson died on July 18, 2025. His wife Kathy Vinson died September 22, 2025. Dr. Vinson read the first book a couple of months before his death. This is what he wrote me.

"I got your letter and book. My mouth just dropped open when I saw the printed book. It is terrific, Travis! I am thrilled at your efforts to follow the Lord's promptings outside of normal ministry. God's Hands are on you Travis. I am thrilled for the adventures ahead of you! The reader will be excited if they are the real deal. I know because I am excited." (Signed and dated May 17, 2025)

As you might imagine, I am the one beyond thrilled. This means a ton to me, and it motivates me to finish the project. All of Dr. Vinson's books are available for free at 4disciples.org. Please, take all you want, while you can.

This little book is far from perfect but that is what makes it so refreshing. There is no google referencing or artificial intelligence used in the writing or editing of this book. This is the product of prayer, class notes, a faithful mentor, and average human intelligence.

Please give me a little grace. Remember this was taken from recorded speech. Even after being edited it still sounds conversational. I also use a lot of repetition when teaching. Repetition is good for classroom teaching spread out over weeks, but not so much when printed.

I dedicate this work to the memory of Bill and Kathy Vinson. Bill was once director of undergraduate and lay studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. When he retired he was director of Seminary Extension in Nashville. No one has had more impact on my theology than Dr. Vinson. I intentionally retain all of the Bill Vinson elements I can in this book.

WARNING:
This Study Will Change Your Life

Introduction (1 Peter 1:1)

This is not intended to be an in depth study of 1&2 Peter. This book is more along the lines of a brief survey. We will read every verse, and I will make commentary, adding context and theology along the way. We will hit the high points, looking at the big picture of what God is telling us through the Apostle Peter. This general look into 1&2 Peter is going to be simple, fresh, and fun. Pay attention and enjoy. It might change your life.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” (1 Peter 1:1) Peter addressed this letter to Jewish Christians. All of these regions mentioned here are found in modern day Turkey. These are areas in which the apostle Paul had previously gone and started Gentile churches. This letter is written by Peter to Jewish Christians during a time of heavy persecution. Jewish Christians are being doubly persecuted, not only are they being persecuted by the Roman government, but they are also being persecuted by fellow Jews.

There is a theory I want to throw out for your consideration. The theory is that the book of Ephesians, written by the apostle Paul, and the book of First Peter have a common link. I would always read the book of Ephesians completely separate from the book of first Peter, for good reason. They are two separate books, and were written by two separate authors. But, when you begin to read both books you can see the commonality between them. It is easy to see once your eyes are opened to it. When preaching out of Ephesians I would often reference supporting verses from 1 Peter, and vice-versa, but somehow in my mind I always put distance between them. Someone once pointed out to me that both of these letters were written about the same time and have much the same subject matter.

Most commentators think Ephesians was written around 60 - 62 AD and 1 Peter is dated 62-64 AD. There is another event that takes place around this time. The burning of Rome happened on July 18, 64 AD. Christians were blamed for the burning of Rome. Christians were already under heavy persecution and became an easy scapegoat. In my mind Peter and Paul were both put to death, first Paul then Peter, as a result of increased persecution following the fire.

Christians were hated, especially Jewish Christians. They were being persecuted and were scattered into regions that typically did not have a Jewish population. They were going into those regions just trying to flee the persecution. Picture, if you will, a shallow pan of water. Now, imagine taking your hand and slapping that pan of water. What happens? The water will splatter and go in every direction. That illustration describes what is taking place right here. Violent persecution hits and Christians would disperse in every direction.

At some point the apostle Peter went to Rome, and he met with the apostle Paul while Paul was in prison. We know Paul was under house arrest. He wasn't free to go anywhere but other people were allowed to visit him. We have record of this in the Word of God where people would bring things to him. Look briefly at the last few verses of the entire letter.

“By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity, Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:12-14)

Notice he mentions Silvanus. Silvanus was a disciple of Paul. Peter used Silvanus to help write this letter and get it delivered. Peter also mentions Babylon. Old Testament Babylon was not in existence when Peter wrote this letter. Peter is using the word Babylon as a code word to reference Rome. Keep in mind there is heavy persecution going on in Rome. If you said anything bad about Rome they would hunt you down and kill you.

The word Babylon had significance to Jewish Christians because in the Old Testament it was Babylon who conquered Jerusalem and destroyed their temple. When Babylon conquered Jerusalem the Jews were dispersed throughout the Babylonian empire. A similar thing is taking place now, except now it's under Roman rule. When Jewish believers saw that word Babylon, they knew it was reference to Rome.

The apostle Paul is in Rome. He is in prison at the same time Peter is writing this letter from Rome. It is conceivable that Peter and Paul got together, both of them toward the end of their life. Paul would die first. Peter would die shortly thereafter. They look at the fledgling church during a time of persecution and they say to themselves, “we have got to do something.” So, they both set out to write these letters.

The apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter was given the task of writing to the Jewish Christians. Both Peter and Paul are basically hitting the same topics, at about the same time, but they have different audiences. We will now look at what God gives us through Peter, to strengthen us during Our Trials.

Chapter One (1 Peter 1:2-25)

Elect

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and to the sprinkling of the of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.” (1 Peter 1:2)

There are a couple of words here we need to think about. The first word is “elect.” Some people think the election spoken of here means those who will be saved. And if God does not select a person for salvation, then the person is damned. However, that is not what this is about right here. Even if you hold that doctrine you should be able to see that “elect” is reference to the Jews.

When Peter uses the word elect he is referring to Jews. When Jewish Christians received this letter and they see the word “elect,” they know it concerns them. It is another code word used by Peter. Jewish believers would see this and know Peter was addressing the letter to them. The Jews were God's chosen people. Of all the peoples of the earth the Jews were God's elect. They were chosen by God and God's plan of salvation is going to involve them. Christ came through the Jewish people. Of all the people groups of the world he chose the Jewish people, and it all began with Abraham.

No doubt God chooses, and when God chooses something there is always a narrowing. He will narrow it all the way down to one person. It all begins with Abraham. God chose Abraham. Of all the people on the planet, God narrowed it down to one individual, Abraham. But, he didn't do it just for Abraham's sake alone. God chose one person so that the whole world could be blessed. Whenever you see God choosing something there is a narrowing taking place. He will narrow it all the way down to one, with the purpose of blessing the multitude. Can you see that?

God told Abraham his seed would bless the world. Abraham's descendants were going to outnumber the stars of the sky. We have all been blessed through Abraham. Abraham had two sons. He had Ishmael and he had Isaac. Isaac was God's chosen vessel. It was through Isaac that the seed was going to pass, but even Ishmael was blessed.

Remember the story of how Ishmael was sent away with his mother Hagar. God told Abraham that he would make Ishmael a great nation and God did exactly that. He made Ishmael a great nation, but the seed was going to pass through Isaac not Ishmael. So, God narrowed it down once again. He narrowed it all the way down to Isaac, not just for Isaac's sake, but through Isaac God is going to bless the world.

From Isaac, God narrowed it down to Jacob. Jacob had a brother named Esau, but God told Isaac that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). God chose Jacob over Esau,

but God also blessed Esau. We can read from the Bible how blessed Esau was, but he was not chosen to carry the seed. The seed was going to pass through Jacob, then from Jacob comes the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve tribes of Israel is considered God's elect, but even then God narrows it further. God chose the tribe of Judah.

Jesus comes through the tribe of Judah. Then He narrows it all the way down to the cross. There is one way, and one way only to be saved and it is through a personal relationship with Jesus. We call it the narrow way for a reason. God narrows everything down to one so that the multitude might be saved. When we receive Christ we are now part of the elect by faith. Now, get out there and bless the world.

That is the proper view of election. Election has a purpose, not that a few might be saved, but that many might be saved. Let me add one more thing here. If anyone ends up in hell they will never be able to blame God. He is doing everything he can to keep people out of hell.

Sanctification

The second word I want to draw your attention to is, "Sanctification." You are probably familiar with words like justification, sanctification, and glorification. Let's say someone has an encounter with God, they hear the gospel, pick up a gospel tract, someone gives them a witness, or they hear a sermon. After the encounter, being convicted of our sins, we ask Christ to forgive us and invite him into our life. We are now saved. When a person comes into relationship with Christ it is called justification. Our personhood is now declared justified before God.

Once justified God launches us on our sanctification journey. We have new life in Christ and God has a path designed specifically for us. It is up to each individual person to get on God's path. It is not an automatic. This is where we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12) This is where we store up riches in heaven. (Matthew 6:19-21) This is where we deny ourselves, pick up the cross, and follow him. (Matthew 16:24) This is where we are being transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:2) God is in the process of changing us to be more like Christ. All of this takes place in the sanctification part of our salvation.

At some point we will die. Death brings us to glorification. There is more to the doctrine of salvation than just being saved. The doctrine of salvation includes justification, sanctification, and glorification. No one is saved by works as far as justification is concerned. We are saved by grace through faith, but we are saved unto good works. The works part of salvation comes during the sanctification process and will directly affect our glorification.

Here's the deal. We are not saved by our works but our works matter. The time is going to come when we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of what we have done in the flesh whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10) When the believer stands before the Lord it's not going to be whether we are saved or not. That judgment was taken care of the day we accepted Christ. When we stand before the Lord, in glory, the question is going to be, "what did you do with the salvation that I gave you?" I hope you realize that.

There are two aspects of sanctification for the believer. First we are justified. Once justified we are deemed holy. Sanctification means we have been set apart, holy, for God's use. Anything that belongs to God is holy. Once saved, a person is sanctified in the sense they are now going to heaven. But, sanctification is more than just going to heaven. Our personhood is considered holy, but that doesn't make our works holy.

Our works have to be brought up to who we are in Christ. So, the longer we follow him, the further we go, the more Christ like we become. This is basic Christian doctrine. This is true for everyone; both Jew and Gentile. But, there is something else going on here. Peter mentions in 1:2 that the Jews had another sanctification prior to their justification.

This does not mean Jews were saved before being justified. Sanctification means to be set apart for God's use. This goes back to the Jews being God's elect. It doesn't mean they are saved; Rather, they were sanctified in that they were set apart for God's use. The Gentiles did not have that, but the Jews did. The Jews are God's chosen people. They were set apart for God's use, and once they get saved they go through the same sanctification process everyone else does.

The Jews were supposed to be the ones who pointed the world to Christ. They had the commandments, they had the law, they had the prophets, they had the Old Testament. They had all the prophecies concerning the coming messiah. They were supposed to be the ones who pointed people to the Lord, but they failed in that respect. Instead of pointing people to God they got off into their own little private sect isolating themselves from the world. The church does much the same today. Look at how much we have been given and how little we actually do.

We also see the Trinity in verse two. There you see God the father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit. That is also basic Christianity. In the next two verses Peter speaks of our incorruptible undefiled inheritance. This is what awaits us at glorification. It is being preserved for us, by God the father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity is at work. The trinity is preserving the reward of heaven. If you are justified, you will go to heaven. Peter then talks about the mercies of God and the resurrection.

Lively Hope

“Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heaven for you,” (1:3-4)

Do you believe this? Do you believe that Christ came, that he died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and rose again on the third day? Do you believe he now sits at the right hand of the father interceding for us? *“If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our heart that God hath raised him from the dead, we shall be saved.” (Romans 10:9)*

The inheritance Peter mentions in 1:3-4 is a result of the priestly office of Jesus. Because of his resurrection, Jesus now sets as our high priest. He has that high priestly function. Not only is our immediate sins forgiven, but our future sins are forgiven as well. If Jesus would have just died and not raised, our immediate sins would have been forgiven one time. But, what about our future sins?

It would have been just like it was in the Old Testament. You take your spotless lamb to the temple to make a sacrifice for sin. Once the sacrifice is made you will no sooner get out the door than find yourself sinning again. You would have to turn around, get back in line, and make another sacrifice. But now, because Jesus rose from the dead, our future sins are being forgiven as well. We should live in an attitude of repentance. The Christian walk, our sanctification journey, ought to be a life spent seeking God. We should desire to please him and live for him. It is a path marked by a repentant lifestyle. *“if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)*

“An inheritance that fadeth not away,” is waiting for us in heaven. This hope is realized at the glorification part of salvation. Our hope is at the end. I hope to go to heaven, that is where my inheritance is. I hope to see Jesus. I hope to be with the Lord. I hope to be used by him. But it's a lively hope which means I can pull something from it into my current sanctification. If this is real to me I will be doing something about it. I am going to guard and protect my inheritance. I want to build up my inheritance by storing up riches in heaven. Not only is it out there in our glorification, but I can look across the chasm and draw upon it during the trials of my sanctification. *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5)* It is a looking forward kind of hope. Next, I want to talk about this word “faith.”

Faith

The definition of faith is found in Hebrews Chapter 11, the faith chapter. The definition of faith is, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)* So, let's talk about that for a moment. *“The evidence of things not seen,”* those are sure things. You have not seen Christ. You were not present at the resurrection.

You did not see the crucifixion. You were not alive at the time of Jesus. These are things we read about in the Word of God. We are reading eyewitness accounts written by divinely inspired writers. Believing the witness is like receiving the evidence. We see the evidence and believe it.

We have not seen the Lord ourselves, but we know He is real, because we have seen the evidence. The Word of God is proof. The Word of God is evidence. When we believe God and trust Jesus for our salvation, that is evidence. When we see other people being saved, that is evidence. When we hear someone giving testimony for the Lord, that is evidence. When we see someone living for Jesus, that is evidence.

Now, there is strong evidence and there is weak evidence. For instance, consider the martyrs. When you see people being killed for their faith, that is strong evidence. Christians are being persecuted, suffering, and dying as Peter writes this letter. That is very powerful evidence. Imagine watching Christians being fed to the lions and not recant their faith.

Sometimes you will hear people say things like, “if God does this for me then I will believe” or, “if God gives me a sign then I will believe.” Jesus tells us, “*A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah,*” (Matthew 16:4) The sign of Jonas is reference to the resurrection. We are not going to receive another sign. That's not how it works. We don't receive a sign and then believe. We believe the evidence and then God proves it.

Let's talk about “the substance of things hoped for.” What we hope for is out in the future. What we hope for is in heaven. What we hope for is glorification. There is substance in the things hoped for. Something of that substance can now be brought into our current situation. I can draw upon the substance while living through the trials and tribulations of my sanctification journey.

If all I do is look at my circumstances, and focus on my troubles, I will fail. I will sink, just like Peter when he took his eyes off Jesus in the midst of the storm. When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the storms he sank. The Lord had to reach down and pull him up. The same thing happens in our sanctification journey. It can get really hard. We have to be able to look across the chasm. We must peer into that glorification hope, and the reward that lies in front of us, and draw from that.

As we go through our trials and tribulations we can face hardship and still have faith, still have hope, trusting in the Lord with a smile on our face. We can go through these things and count it all joy. There is a peace that passes all understanding, and it happens when we reach out and pull something from the substance into our here and now. Therefore, faith is both believing and receiving. You believe the evidence and receive the substance.

Trials

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:” (1:6) If we bring the substance of things hoped for into our current situation, we can greatly rejoice. Our sufferings are only for a season (2 Corinthians 4:17). *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:” (1:7)*

The main theme of Peter’s letter has to do with trials. Our faith must be tested. It’s not worth anything unless it is tried. Sometimes we try to get by on the faith of others. For instance, we raise our children in the faith, and for a time they depend on their parent’s faith. But, before it can become their faith it must go through the fire. As parents, we hate to see our kids go through their trials, but we had to go through ours. To this day our faith is still being tested. All of the trials and tribulations we go through are precious to God. They are more precious than Gold. Tested faith pays dividends. Tested faith is the most valuable thing any Christian can have.

The time will come when God will ask you, “How did you fare in your trials?” You do not want to stand before the Lord and say, “I avoided all my trials.” That is not the right answer. If you managed to avoid your trials you have failed God. Due to our relationship with Jesus, troubles are going to come. When a Christian stands before the Lord, he is not going to ask about our salvation. The question becomes, “Were you living it?” How about your works? What were you doing? How did you spend your time? How about your trials?

I would probably say something stupid like, “I was a pastor.” “Are you serious!” the Lord will say. “How about tribulation and trials?” My response would make things worse, “outside of a few cantankerous church members, I kept my head down to avoid trials and tribulations.” I waited until my trials passed and only stuck my head out when it was safe. This would be considered failure on my part. I would be an embarrassment to the Lord.

“Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (1:8-9)

Peter is addressing the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1) This is about what we store up at the end. The end is where it will matter the most. Yet, we can draw upon “the things hoped for” to face our trials in the present. Think about this for a moment. We have not seen God, but we believe, and we love him. I am reminded of doubting Thomas. (John 20:24-29) Thomas refused to believe until he saw with his own eyes the Lord’s pierced hands and side. Eight days later the Lord accommodates Thomas. The Lord invites Thomas to touch his hands and side. Thomas fell to his knees, and he confessed, “my Lord and my God.” (John 20:28)

Then Jesus said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 29 29) Thomas was blessed, but I think we are blessed more than he was. For us, we believe the witness. We believe the evidence then God proves it. We can now rejoice in the substance with unspeakable joy, full of glory.

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:10-11)

The Old Testament prophets had the word of God in them, and they suffered because of that Word. Now the same prophets look down, and they marvel at everything they were told. They were prophesying the coming of the Christ. Christ means the anointed one. They prophesied that Christ would come and he would suffer. They prophesied all those things concerning the Messiah, but they didn't know who it was going to be. They didn't know when the Messiah was going to come. They prophesied everything concerning Christ, even his suffering. They prophesied about the glory that follows suffering. Now these same prophets see clearly how it all played out and how they were able to share in His suffering. They can't believe how they were even a part of it, but they were.

"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1:12)

We now come into this knowledge through the preaching of the gospel that was handed down through the apostles. It is amazing to think how clueless the angels were when it came to the new man concept. The Apostle Paul tells us the same thing in Ephesians chapter 3. The prophets prophesied all things concerning the Messiah, but Paul said the mystery of the new man was first revealed to him. Both Jew and Gentile get saved the same way, through the preaching of the gospel, forming one new man.

Angels

Paul mentioned in his letter how the angels never saw this coming. Now, Peter mentions the same thing, and how angels desire to look into it. My mentor, Dr. Vinson, would illustrate this by creating a visual in our mind. It's like angels looking down into a barrel. Angels, going about their business, every once in a while stop to look down. It would be like looking down into a barrel, or a long tunnel. They look down, see us, and are amazed. Angels actually study us.

The Bible speaks of human encounters with angels, often unaware. They are messengers, often sent to guard and protect. We can't see angels, unless God makes them visible to us, but we can see the evidence of Angels. These angels were not privy to the foreknowledge of God concerning salvation and his church. They look at us and they marvel at what they see. They study us and learn much concerning God and His Kingdom.

Truth

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust of your ignorance:” (1:13-14)

This is along the lines of John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” It's not enough just to say you love Jesus. Come on now! Gird up your mind! Be sober! Hope to the end! Love him as an obedient child! This all plays out during the sanctification part of salvation. Paul said the same thing in Ephesians. The Apostle Paul referred to it as putting on the armor of God.

Paul said, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” (Ephesians 6:14) He also mentions the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul says it this way, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15) Peter is more impulsive and action oriented. He reduces it all down to, “Be Sober.” Peter is much more direct, but they are both addressing the same thing. I am telling you there is linkage between Peter and Paul in their letters. They are concerned about the broken minded stupid stuff they see going on around them, even in the church.

Think of all the broken minded stuff we have going on around us. We are living in a day when someone, born a boy, can now identify as a girl, and vice versa. That is not being sober minded; Rather, that is broken mindedness. That is just one example, out of thousands. We take things that are forbidden, completely contrary and incompatible with the Word of God, and normalize it.

Holiness

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, be holy for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Holiness is a part of sanctification. Anything God owns is holy. When a person believes in Jesus, and invites him into their life, they are now holy. Anything God possesses is considered holy. So, a saved person is holy as far as personhood is concerned; But, that does not make our works holy. The purpose of sanctification is to bring our behavior up to

match who we are in Christ, reducing the hypocrisy. I am trying to drive this into your memory, so you never forget.

Holiness means, to be sanctified set apart for God's use. Sanctification means to be set apart for God's use, same thing. Every saved person is a holy person, and every saved person is a sanctified person with the promise of a reward at the end. But, what we do during the sanctification process is going to have a direct effect on what those rewards are going to be. At salvation our personhood is justified. Our personhood is deemed holy, but our works are not. There is a whole lot more to being saved than just being justified. In the doctrine of salvation there is justification, sanctification, and glorification. I intentionally repeat myself because I want you to see it. I believe it to be a lost doctrine, or a misrepresented doctrine, in the church today.

When we die we enter glorification. We have promises concerning our glorification: "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Jesus also said, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Revelation 22:12)

No one is saved by good works, but works are important and count for something. I hear people say, "my identity is in Jesus, not what I do." I am here to tell you, it is both. "You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16-20) "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) If our identity is in Jesus, we should act like it.

When he says, "be ye holy for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16) We had better pay attention to our behavior. There are places I can't go. There are activities I should not participate in. There are things I must avoid, things I should not read, look at, or listen to.

I was at a men's breakfast at a church in Kansas one time. The weekend prior to me being there a casino opened in the next town over. These guys were all excited about it. Many of them had already made a visit, some the night before. Only one person was brave enough to question if Christians should gamble? Everyone jumped in with their ignorant opinions. The majority thought it was perfectly fine. They turn to their pastor for clarity. The pastor said, "There is no clear instruction in Scripture concerning gambling." "There is no specific verse that says you should not enter into a casino." I'm sure he sensed a trap. I then felt compelled to jump in. All I said was, "I think it has to do with holiness." "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1:16) The conversation instantly came to an end right there.

Works

"And if ye call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye

were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your father's; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundations of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”(1 Peter 1:17-21)

It clearly says, “God is no respecter of persons.” Whether it’s a saved person going to heaven, or a lost person going to hell, it doesn’t matter. God is no respecter of persons. What God respects is a man's work. Works are the only thing God respects. If a Christian is doing a bad work, it is still a bad work. We will be held accountable for our bad works. He is not a respecter of our person. He is only a respecter of our works. So, “pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”

This takes us back to the first couple of verses where it talked about being sojourners. You may not be in Jerusalem anymore, but you still have a ministry. The work of ministry continues no matter the journey. We are to continue in ministry, in the fear of God, wherever the journey takes us.

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (1 Peter 1:22-25)

This is how we come to faith. We believe. The unfeigned love spoken of here is agape. It is sacrificial. Our works and ministry are to be sacrificial. I want to wrap this chapter up by pondering the definition of faith again. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) I want you to spend some time meditating on the evidence of things not seen. You don't see the Lord, you see evidence. You don't see angels, or demons, you don't see the warfare raging over your head right now, but it's there. If you look, you can see the evidence, and it is very real. Now, I want you to spend time thinking about the substance of things hoped for. I will give you an example. You probably had reservations about reading this book. You might have tried talking yourself out of it. Maybe you looked at this book and curled your nose up at it. I mean, it doesn't look very appealing. But, somehow you overcame all of that. There are spiritual battles raging over our heads most people are oblivious to. There is a battle raging over your head right now just because you are reading this book. You might not like the content, but you made it through chapter one. And, you are glad you did because it ministered something profound to you. It ministers because we are able to pull something from the substance. Whether you realize it or not, I just gave you more evidence to believe. Continue reading.

Chapter Two (1 Peter 2:1-17)

Sins of the Mind

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” (1 Peter 2:1-3)

Peter is talking about the sins of the mind. Notice these sins are a little different than what we would expect. He is not talking about the Ten Commandment type of sins. In the last chapter he was telling us to gird up the loins of our mind. He expects us to be sober and to gird up our mind with truth. In Ephesians the Apostle Paul took us through the whole armor of God. Paul put it this way, “walk circumspectly understanding what the will of God is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17) Peter says, “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end.” (1 Peter 1:12) Where Paul said, “take off the old and put on the new,” Peter tells us to lay things aside. These words come from God. In order to hear them we must lay everything else aside.

Peter compares these believers to newborn babes. The people he is writing to have not been Christian very long. They are young in the faith. But, they are growing up fast because they live in a time of heavy persecution. Due to the severe trials and tribulations they face every day, the Word of God has immediate application.

They taste the Word and the Word is sweet to them. They know the Lord is gracious. This discovery, of the Word being sweet, is supported throughout the Bible. “Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.” (Psalm 34:8) Peter’s audience knows the goodness of God. God has proved himself to them through tribulation.

This harkens back to the Old Testament prophets. The prophets would eat the Word, get excited, internalize it, but once the gravity of the matter hit their stomach it would make them sick. *“Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.” (Ezekiel 3:1-3)* Immediately following, he would find out how incredibly difficult his calling was.

The Apostle John makes the same discovery. *“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of*

the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (Revelation 10:8-10)

The “milk of the word” is simply knowing the Word. But, in the case of these young believers, the Word is being proved to them immediately. They go from milk to meat quickly. If the milk of the word is simply knowing it, then the meat of the word is doing it. Jesus even said, “..my meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work.” (John 4:34) These guys are graduating from milk to meat fast. They might be young in the faith, but the word of God is being proved to them. It is exciting when we are being used by God until the trials hit and we realize how difficult it is.

The first few verses of this chapter taste sweet. Peter is not addressing carnal sins. These persecuted Christians already have that stuff down. Instead, he speaks about another level of sin. Peter is addressing the sins of the mind. These are sins Christians participate in all of the time. They are in the church. Peter says we must lay these things aside when we put on the new man.

Malice

The first thing he brings up is malice. Malice is having evil intent. We must put away evil intentions and have pure intentions. Malice is something everyone is capable of. Some Christians think everything revolves around them. People with hidden agendas try to manipulate everything to their selfish ends. There are people within the church who will intentionally harm you and smile as they do it. Malice is rampant in the church, but it must be laid aside. Stop with the selfish manipulation and hidden agendas. Instead, have good intentions, esteem others better than yourself, be sober, and hope to the end.

Guile

The next word is guile. Guile is a deception where someone uses bait in an effort to hook you. They dangle something in front of us trying to lure us away, toward something they hold and control. They try to hook people in an effort to get their way. Imagine going through trials and tribulation with this kind of nonsense going on. A person would be better off by themselves.

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is the next word Peter brings up. We are well aware of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is often described as saying one thing but doing the opposite. Hypocrisy is easy to spot. It's the first thing lost people notice about Christians. We are accused by the world of being hypocrites because it is glaringly obvious. It was one of the excuses I used before I came to know the Lord. I would see what Christians were doing, and I would think to myself, “everything is a hustle, everything is a lie, they don't really believe what they say.”

Hypocrisy is like wearing a mask. You pretend to be a good person, but you have evil intentions. Or, we have a foot on both sides. We have one foot in the world and the other foot in the church. When we hang around our Christian friends we play the part and look like one of them. But, when out with non-believers, we fit right in with them as well.

Envy

Envy is next. This is another sin of the mind. An envious person thinks they should not be deprived of anything. Jealousy can be part of it or a need for attention. Envy involves both materialism and greed. It's a serious problem among believers. We are supposed to be content with the things we have but today's Christians seldom are.

A Christian who struggles with envy is never satisfied. We will ask God for something and as soon as we get it we want more. We will always be looking for the next big thing. We ask God for a job. He will give us one and as soon as we get started we are already asking for a different job, something with less hours and a bigger paycheck. We automatically assume the bigger paycheck has to be God's will.

We ask for a place to live. God will give us a place to live. Keep in mind, Jesus had no place to lay his head, yet he is gracious to give us a place to live. Isn't that amazing! But, no sooner do we get a place to live than we are already looking across the street. We start looking toward the other side of town for a better home. It seems like whatever we have is never enough. An envious person will never be satisfied.

Evil Speaking

The last thing Peter mentions is evil speaking. The early church must have had a real problem with this because it comes up often. Evil speaking can include a lot of things. There is too much gossiping, lying, slander, backbiting, backstabbing, petty stuff going on in the church. It has to stop. We don't have time for this mess. Whisper campaigns spread discontentment like a cancer until everyone is infected.

Peter tells us to put all of this aside. Malice, guile, hypocrisy, and envy should have no place in our life. Believers must put these things aside and put on the mind of Christ. Gird up your minds with truth, be sober, understand what the will of God is. These warnings are impossible to hear if we don't think they apply to us.

Living Stones

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, and holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (2:4-5)

Peter is comparing the building of our spiritual house to the building of the temple, and these Jews would have understood that. However, Peter is not talking about a building

made with hands. It is reference of how Jesus now lives in the heart of every believer. For the Jews the temple was very important to them. They loved the temple. It was at the center of everything in their lives. The temple had become an idol of sorts. They loved the temple more than God. Even today there are Christians who love the church more than Jesus.

These Jewish Christians would have totally understood the House of God analogy. As believers we are His Spiritual House. Jesus is the living stone. He is the life giving stone. Life comes from Jesus to us.

Read verse 5 again, “ye also as lively stones, are built up into a spiritual house.” Jesus is the living, life giving stone. Once saved we become living stones and a holy priesthood. A priesthood that offers up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Prophet, Priest, King

I need to talk to you about the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. Jesus holds all three offices. Jesus is prophet, priest, and king. He is the only one who holds all three offices. In the Old Testament, these are three separate offices held by three separate individuals. There was the office of priest, the office of prophet, and the office of king. Not one person served all three offices. A priest didn't do what the prophet or king did. And, the prophet did not do the king's job or the priest's job. Everyone stayed in their own lane. Likewise, the king didn't do what the prophet or the priest did. Each one had their own responsibility.

There are instances in the Old Testament where this was violated, and it resulted in serious consequences. In 1 Samuel 13, King Saul would not wait for Samuel to return to make the sacrifice. Saul would take it upon himself to make the sacrifice. God was so displeased by this act He rejected Saul's kingship. The distinction between the three offices is a serious matter with God.

Prophet

The prophetic office came about when the people no longer wanted God as their King. They wanted a human king so they could be like the other nations (1 Samuel 8). The people take their request to Samuel. Samuel takes their request to God. They are not rejecting Samuel; rather, they are rejecting God. God tells Samuel to listen to the people and give them a king, but the day will come when they will regret the king they have chosen. We live with the consequence of their decision to this very day.

The prophet was the corrective agent God used to keep the king in check. It is the prophet's job to go to the king with the Word of God. Jesus is prophet, priest, and king. He served all three offices. When we come to Christ, and become part of God's spiritual house, we then have the function of prophet, priest, and king. We don't hold the offices, but we have the function.

The prophet stands before the people and says, “thus sayeth the Lord,” or “this is what the Word of God says.” In fact, the church is supposed to have a prophetic function to our government leaders. We have lost that. The church has lost its prophetic voice.

The orientation of the prophet is to stand before the people. God is behind you as you are facing the people, and then you speak His Word to the people. Get the picture in your mind. God is behind us, the people are in front of us, and we speak the Word of God to people in the power of God.

Priest

The priestly function is different. The priest faces God, and the people are behind him. The priest petitions God and intercedes on behalf of the people. I think of Joel 2:17 when he mentions “weeping between the porch and the altar.” Knowing of the judgments to come, where are the priests? Where is the weeping between the porch and the altar today? It is nonexistent.

We are supposed to be interceding, and making sacrifice, on behalf of the people. “Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.” We are expected to petition God even for our enemies. We don't have to curse our enemies; our enemies are cursed already. We bless our enemies. We are supposed to be pleading on behalf of our enemies.

Just start pleading with God. “God, save us!” “Before it's too late, Awaken your church!” There is something sacrificial about that. Every time we intercede for somebody, that is carrying out our priestly function. Every time we cry out to God on behalf of our children, our family, it is a spiritual sacrifice. We sacrifice time. We sacrifice resources. We will sacrifice everything. There are spiritual sacrifices being made.

I have heard people say, “they've got to make their own sacrifices.” Well maybe, All I know is that I am part of a spiritual house. I am called to intercede and make spiritual sacrifices for others. Most of whom don't have enough sense to make spiritual sacrifice for themselves. That is the orientation of the priest and every born again believer has a priestly function.

King

Before we move on I need to briefly address the kingly function. I don't want to leave that off. The kingly function has to do with being good stewards of what God gives us. “...to whom much is given much is required...” (Luke 12:48) We must be wise and be good stewards of everything God has entrusted us with.

Cornerstone

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scriptures, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling,

and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they are appointed.” (2:6-8)

Peter is continuing this thought about us being lively stones in a spiritual house. The cornerstone is Jesus. He is elect and He is precious. We have talked about election in the previous lesson. Salvation only comes through Jesus. Election began with Abraham. God elected Abraham. Starting with Abraham God is going to bless the whole world. From Abraham, the seed was passed through Issac. From Issac it was passed down to Jacob. The descendants of Jacob are called the tribes of Israel, who are God’s chosen people. Jesus comes from the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the elect of God and precious. Precious, because He is God’s only begotten Son. Jesus is elect and we become part of the elect by faith.

There is only one way to salvation, one way only, and it is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To those who are disobedient this is the stone disallowed, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. People will stumble all over this. Jesus is the stone the builders rejected but He is also the foundation in which everything is built upon.

Stone of Stumbling / Rock of Offence

We are told there is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. These are two different things. I am going to quote some verses that will help us understand. *“Jesus sayeth unto them, Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” (Matthew 21:42-43)* That is a warning to the Jews. *“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. (Matthew 21:44)*

Jesus is the rock of offense. The stone of stumbling is the Word of God. There are things we stumble over all the time. I had it described to me once as being like a parking lot pylon, or one of those parking lot curbs we pull our cars up too. They have these rocks out there you can pull up and park. Well, I have stumbled over those things. I think we have all probably stumbled over something like that before. When we stumble over something we might regain our footing, but we will make a mental note not to stumble again. Once we know the stumbling blocks are there we will pick up our feet and step over them. If we continue to trip over the same thing we will end up seriously hurt. That’s how it is with the stone of stumbling.

The rock of offence is something different. The rock of offence is like a huge mountain. You don't stumble over it. If the Word of God is the stumbling stone, the rock of offense would be judgment. I'm not talking about losing our salvation. I'm talking about our accountability for what is in the Word. We are held accountable for what is in the Bible. It doesn't matter if we read it or not. Even when we refuse to believe it, we are still held

accountable. We can go our whole life and never read it but still be held accountable for it. I would think if we are held accountable we should at least try to figure it out.

Belief Scale

I am troubled by some things in the Bible. I believe it but that doesn't mean I like it. Every person has a belief scale. Let's say our belief scale is +10 to -10. There is high belief and then there is low belief, even negative belief. There are some things we have no problem believing. I can look at the promises of God. Oh yeah, I claim those promises. How about the virgin birth? Oh yeah, I believe in the virgin birth. I am a 10 on that one. Do you believe in the Trinity? Absolutely, I believe the Trinity. It's way up there on my belief scale. How about the inerrant word of God? Yes! Put me down as a 10 on that one. I have strong beliefs when it comes to the Word of God. Then I start running into things I might not like. We all run into things we struggle with. Without even realizing it, we will think, "I don't know if I am going to believe that or not."

Some people put no stock in the promises of God or will diminish their value. The gifts of the spirit tend to fall on an up and down scale for most believers. Some people don't believe in miracles. They look at the miracles as something that only happened during Apostolic times. Every one of us have our own little belief scale.

The word of God says homosexuality is an abomination. When we get to that stone people stumble all over the place. People will trip, get up, and start saying, "what are you talking about?" "I have a homosexual son." "I love my homosexual son." "He was born that way." That's what it looks like when we approach the Word with negative belief.

Then we will double down on our negative belief and say something like: "The Bible also says you are not supposed to eat shellfish." Have you ever heard that? You might also hear, "It also says you're not supposed to cut your hair." We often approach the Word of God with negative belief when it comes to things we don't want to hear. However, the Word of God is not going to change. This is just one example, but there are many more.

If you keep stumbling over the same rock, you and others will get hurt. There are consequences and they play out in a variety of different ways. The rock of offense is going to fall, and when it falls it will crush you. There are consequences not only in this life but in the life to come. This is true even for Christians. I am not saying a Christian can lose their salvation; but, we could end up with diminished rewards due to our refusal to believe the Word of God.

So, every Christian has a belief scale. There are some things you strongly believe. Other things, not so much. There are some things we might wrongly believe. Guess what? There is consequence to that as well.

Lively Hope

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (2:9-10)

Keep in mind Peter is speaking to Jewish Christians. Jews are God’s chosen people but that doesn’t mean they are saved. They get saved just like everybody else, through a personal relationship with Christ. Once saved, we are deemed holy, and God starts the whole sanctification process. Only in Jesus are we a chosen generation. We are now a royal priesthood. It’s no longer about the temple made with hands. We don’t go through the temple. We don’t go through a church. We don’t go through any individual. We are now a holy nation. We are a peculiar people.

Peculiar in this sense. When people look at us they think, how can they believe that stuff? We are out of sync with the world and all of its political correctness. It is peculiar when anyone comes out of darkness and steps into his marvelous light. The most important decision anyone ever makes is when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Following Jesus might be hard but I promise you will never regret it.

Now, live for him. You made the decision to repent and believe in Jesus for eternal life. As you begin your sanctification journey, strive to get on God’s path. Whatever he puts before you, just receive it. It doesn’t matter how difficult it gets because it ends up being glorious.

In verse ten Peter reminds them, “in times past you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.” “You had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Peter is looking at things from a Jewish perspective, speaking to Jewish Christians. He reminds them, even though they are God’s chosen people, they were not saved. Only now are they the real people of God and have obtained mercy in Christ.

Pilgrims

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may be it your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” (2:11-12)

We are sojourners and pilgrims. This takes us back to the first verse of chapter one. They are strangers in the foreign lands of modern day Turkey. They are no longer in Jerusalem, and he is warning them to abstain from fleshly lust. They are being subjected to all manner of lustful things. The whole Roman experience was built around the gratification of lust. Just think about all of the sexual perversions and bloodlust sports of Roman society. These Jewish Christians are now in danger of being absorbed into the world around them. Peter is warning them, don’t fall into the traps, abstain from fleshly lust. We are supposed to be in the world, but not of the world.

Sadly, even today, the church has become so much like the world you almost can't tell us apart. Peter is warning these Christians not to become as the world around them. Don't give in to your lust. The opportunity to do so is everywhere. This is seldom discussed in church anymore at any personal level. When the subject of lust comes up it is treated like a joke. People will laugh a nervous kind of laugh because it is uncomfortable. If you don't think it is true, try it. You will be mocked with worldly responses.

Just don't live like the pagans live. That way when they try to accuse you of something, your good works will glorify God. Peter tells them to continue in their good works. This reminds me of something Jesus said in John 10:30-32. *"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."* (John 10:31-32) Make no mistake, people will speak evil of you and slander you just like they did Jesus. Just let your good works speak for themselves. It will be to our good, God's glory, and their shame when Jesus returns.

In early church history Christians were accused of being atheist. Once declared an atheist they would be tossed into the arenas to be eaten by wild animals. Being accused of being atheist sounds kind of strange to us but they called them atheists because Christians refused to bow down to all other gods. When the Romans conquered a place they allowed the people to keep their gods. When the Romans conquered Jerusalem they allowed the Jews to keep their Judaism. All of these religions bled into their Pagan society. They had a hodgepodge mixed up kind of religion. They had multiple gods. Even the emperor was considered to be a God. As a believer in Jesus Christ, we have no other gods. Therefore, Christians were deemed to be atheists. It was an offence punishable by death.

Christians were often accused of being cannibals. Romans heard of the Christian observance of the Lord's Supper and called it cannibalism. Christians are all the time being accused of something, crazy stuff. So, our works matter because they are a positive witness of the truth. All to the Glory of God.

Good Citizens

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of the evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (2:13-17)

Honestly, I don't know if we are doing any of this. The main point is we are supposed to be good citizens. Christians are to obey man's laws, where they line up with the Word of God. Government is ordained by God. According to Romans 13 the purpose of government is to promote good and suppress evil. Those in government are supposed to be the deacons of God (Romans 13:4). Our government officials are also supposed to be worship leaders (Romans 13:6). Those things are long gone, but as Christians we still recognize the authority of government.

Here is the danger. We are told in Romans chapter one we are entering a time of total apostasy. We are being given over to uncleanness, vile affections, and a reprobate mind. Reprobate means we lose discernment. We no longer can discern between good and evil anymore. We call that which is evil, good, and we call that which is good, evil. Apostasy is in everything, even the church. We have not hit total apostasy yet, but we are heading in that direction.

When reprobation is complete, all of the laws passed to promote good and suppress evil will be used against us. When good becomes evil and evil becomes good we become the hunted. Christians become the bad guys. That is what happened in Roman society. However, as Christians we strive to live at peace with all men, obey the laws, and be good citizens where we can.

I have heard Christians say things like, "I'm not going to pay my taxes because it goes to support abortion." Well, you still better pay your taxes. But, if government came along and told you to participate by having an abortion or performing an abortion, then you would have to disobey.

I think of the story in Acts when Peter and John were arrested for preaching. They were threatened and commanded not to teach in the name of Jesus. The disciples told those in authority to do whatever they had to do but as for them, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20). In the end, always obey God over men.

We need to be submissive to the authorities placed over us. Always stay under God's authority. If government is performing its function by promoting good and suppressing evil, then we can stay under it and live at peace. But, all too often, government will step out from God. Then the believer must decide, do I shift over to stay under government, or do I stay under God? As believers we stay under God's authority but doing so opens us up to persecution at the hands of government. Worse yet, the religious establishment can also step outside of God. When that happens, we can suffer persecution at the hands of the church.

Chapter Three (1 Peter 2:18- 3:22)

Bitterness

This lesson begins at 1 Peter 2:18 and we will finish at the end of chapter three. Before we get there I have a couple of passages I want us to read. The first one is Exodus 15:22-25.

“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.” The word “Marah” means bitter. “And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,” (Exodus 15:22-25)

This is an interesting story. After they had come through the Red Sea, the people had gone three days without water. After three days the Lord led them to water, but they could not drink the water because the water was bitter. What is going on here? God made them go three days without water only to bring them to a place of bitter water. Why? The reason is because they themselves had become bitter.

The people murmured against Moses. Moses petitions the Lord, and the Lord tells him to take a tree and toss it into the water. When the tree was tossed into the water, the water was made sweet. Most commentators think this is a picture of what happens when we bring Jesus into our situation. It instantly becomes sweeter. God had to take the people to a place of bitter water to show them something of themselves.

The next passage I want to share is Hebrews 12:14-15. *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness spring up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;” (Hebrews 12:14-15)*

There is a warning here. If we allow any root of bitterness to enter into us we become defiled. Have you ever heard the term, “bitter disappointments?” Sometimes if things don't go our way, or it gets hard, we walk away disappointed. We have to be careful not to become bitter. If we allow any root of bitterness into our life we become defiled and disqualified from doing ministry. God cannot use us if we allow a bitter spirit into our life. Keep that in mind as we look at 1 Peter.

Good Employees

The previous lesson ended at 2:17 where we talked about our relationship with government. As Christians we need to be good citizens. We transition now to a Christian's relationship with their employer, or others who might be in authority.

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." (1 Peter 2:18) The word being used for servant is "oiketai". It is more along the line of domestic servant. Sometimes people will read this and think the word being used is "dulos" or slave. However, not in this case. The best we can compare it with would be our relationship to our bosses. As Christians, not only are we supposed to be good citizens, but we are supposed to be good employees as well. This verse tells us to be "subject to our masters." But, here's the thing, not only are we to be subject to the good masters, but also the harsh masters. This is hard.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God." (1 Peter 2:19-20)

This is hard for us to comprehend, especially in this country as citizens of the United States. There are certain laws and protections that employees have. Employees have some recourse if they are mistreated. We can voice our grievances. They may not always be heard; but, there are certain legal protections employees have over their employers. Employees can sue their bosses in this country. That is unheard of in other countries.

If we have a cruel boss, and if it gets bad enough, in theory we can always quit. However, that may not always be true. Some people can't quit because something is holding them there. God might be holding us there, maybe family needs hold us there. I imagine most everyone has experienced a bad boss, maybe even a cruel boss. Some bosses can be mean and make life miserable for you. In this country there are some protections from those who might mistreat us.

Workers in a communist country don't have those protections. They go where they are told to go. They do what they are told to do. Everyone is subject to the ruling authority with little to no recourse when abused. Many are stuck with no way out. Now, here is the hard part. We still must be good employees and trust God. He will deal with those in authority.

Somehow we must be able to sweeten the waters. Some bosses can make life miserable. They might hate you and inflict harm upon you. I'm not saying anyone should tolerate abuse. Escape if you can; but, what happens if we can't escape or we feel trapped? We still can't allow ourselves to become bitter. The way we avoid becoming bitter is by bringing God into our situation.

Sweeten the Water

"For even hereunto were ye called:" remember that word "called." *"because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us in an example, that we should follow his steps." (2:21)* What can

we do in these circumstances? The only way we can sweeten this is by inviting Jesus in. He gives us an example to follow. What did Christ do in this situation? Follow his example.

Jesus, *“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye are healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”* (2:22-25) No one has suffered cruelties more than Jesus. Christ was tortured. The greatest injustice of all time was perpetrated upon Jesus. We are given Him as our example. It is easy to see how we can become bitter if we don't put Christ in the middle of our situation. I want to go back to 2:21 for a moment. It says, “for even here unto were ye called.” Think about that! It is part of our calling.

I want to share a verse everyone is familiar with. Romans 8:28 is a promise of God. Look at it and meditate on it for a while. *“And we know that all things work together for the good to them that love God, to them who called according to his purposes.”* (Romans 8:28) Can you hear that? Not only does looking to Jesus as our example sweeten the water but believing the promises of God sweetens the water as well.

If you love Jesus, good will ultimately come. It might be hard to see now, but you have to trust and believe it is true. Somehow, my trials will work out to God's glory and for my good. This is a promise to all those who love Jesus and are called according to his purpose. This takes us back to something we learned in 1 Peter 1:7-8. We talked about how precious the trials of our faith is. We explored the definition of faith. We talked about our love for Jesus whom we have not seen. He has not abandoned us. We live our life with a sense of calling. It can get extremely difficult. Hold on to the promises. Don't allow any root of bitterness to creep in.

Back to our original thought about being good citizens and good employees; There is something distinctively different about the believer in every environment. The difference is the presence of Christ in our life. In a society that hates Jesus life can become very difficult. People will hate us for no other reason but that we love Jesus. We must learn how to sweeten the bitter waters.

The Home

At the first of chapter three Peter turns his attention to the family environment. *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;”* (1 Peter 3:1) There is something about a Christian's home life that is different from everybody else's. Just like we are supposed to be good citizens and good employees, we should also be a good spouse to our mate. There is something distinctively different about the Christians home life. It doesn't mean our homes are perfect. It won't be. But, it should be different. One of the areas of difference is wives being subject to their own husbands.

Just like an employee is subject to their employer, a wife is in subjection to her own husband. This is true even if you have a bad husband. I am not saying a wife must tolerate abuse. By all means every woman must get out of every abusive situation. But, this is one of the hardest things any wife is going to do. It is hard enough if you have a believing husband. It would be doubly hard if your husband is not a believer.

We find Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 6:14 about being unequally yoked. Paul addresses the marriage relationship further in Ephesians chapter five. This is tough stuff even for Christian women who find themselves married to Christian men. Being subject to your husband is difficult. If you are not careful you will become bitter. If we allow a bitter spirit into our marriage, everything will be wrecked. Just don't become bitter. You may not agree with everything going on but find a way to sweeten the water. We sweeten the water by bringing Jesus into our circumstances. Remember God's promises. "All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes." Somehow this is going to work for good, no matter how difficult it gets.

This is hard even for my wife. My wife has to struggle with this. My wife has to sweeten the bitter waters. I joke by saying, "my wife has a good husband, she has me." I will be the first to admit I can be difficult to live with. Well, if it's hard for her, just think how hard it is in an unequally yoked situation. There is hope that the unbelieving spouse might be won to the Lord by the wife's attitude and behavior, but it is not guaranteed.

Outward Adorning

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plating the hair, and the wearing of gold, and the putting on of apparel; But let it be of the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ordination of the meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." (1 Peter 3:3-6)

Briefly Peter talks about the outward adorning, but the real issue is what's on the inside. This is not saying women cannot put on makeup, or jewelry, or style their hair. Sometimes you will hear people use these verses in that way but that is not using the verses properly. Peter is not talking about the outward appearance; Rather, he is addressing issues of the heart. He brings up things like meekness and having a quiet spirit. It has to do with our attitude. It has to do with our behavior. True beauty comes from a meek and quiet spirit. Now, being meek and quiet is not a weakness, but a strength. Jesus himself is described as meek and lowly. (Matthew 11:29) This is one of Jesus' greatest attributes. It is the equivalent of putting your head down and rushing headlong into battle. Be in submission to the Lord, and be confident that all things will work together for good.

Peter compares it to the women of old. Women like Sarah who obeyed her husband Abraham. Sarah is not an example of a weak woman. She is a strong woman. This is what true meekness looks like. Then Peter gives instruction to the husbands.

Husbands

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7)

This is interesting. The way we treat our wife will affect our prayers. If we mistreat or abuse our wife our prayers are hindered. Fat chance of anything good working out for the husband who abuses his wife. Once again I see linkage between the book of Ephesians and 1 Peter. The Apostle Paul gave instructions in Ephesians for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Jesus died for the church. The Apostle Peter tells the husbands to dwell with them according to knowledge, and give honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.

Weaker does not mean the wife is inferior to the husband. The way I look at this is, the wife has her strengths, and she has her weaknesses. Every person has strengths and weaknesses. My wife has weaknesses. It is up to me, as the husband, to come alongside her and compensate for her weaknesses. There are some things she is not able to do. She is not equipped for it. I must come along and help her in those things. But I assure you, I have my weaknesses as well. My weaknesses might even be greater than hers. Therefore, I depend on her to look out for me, guard my back, and keep me safe, in the same way I guard and protect her.

One Mind

“Finally, be ye all of one mind,” (3:8) This is everybody now. This is the servants, the masters, the wives, the husbands. This includes everybody. It doesn't matter if you are married, single, or divorced. Peter says, “Finally, be of one mind.” I am thinking of the Philippians 2:5 passage where it says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” The mind of Christ involves self-denial and sacrifice. That is the mind we are supposed to have.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: (3:8) Pitiful means to be tender hearted toward one another. The whole idea is to keep the water sweet, don't become bitter. Put Jesus in the middle of everything, knowing that everything works together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes.

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are called, that ye should inherit a blessing. (3:9) This is just reverse of human nature. Rendering evil for evil is human nature. There are some people who will repay your good with evil. That would be considered animalistic. Maybe you have heard the saying, “don't bite the hand that feeds you.” Well, evil people will. They will repay your good with evil. Be warned, evil people kill when given half the chance.

It is human nature to repay evil with evil. When someone does evil toward us, we immediately start thinking of ways to get even. It is eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. God is

just the opposite. He tells us not to repay evil with evil; rather, pay back evil with good. We are supposed to bless our enemies. (Matthew 5:44) We don't have to curse our enemies. Our enemies are cursed already. When someone does evil toward us, we are supposed to repay it with good and bless them. That is just the way the Lord is. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) This is tough stuff. It is much easier to just become bitter.

Eschew Evil

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it.: (1 Peter 3:10-11) If you love your life, and you want a life worth living, hold your tongue. Just stop saying bad things. When someone says bad things to us, we have got to turn it around. We must use our tongue in the pursuit of good.

To "eschew evil" means to say "no" to evil. When Satan comes along and tries to whisper bad thoughts into our mind, say "NO" to those thoughts. Say "NO" to any destructive or suicidal kind of thoughts. Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy but Jesus comes that we might have life and life abundant. It should be our desire to see even our enemies saved. So, speak life, even over our enemies.

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." (3:12) This is a promise of God we can set claim too. It is one of those, "all things work together for good" type of verses. The Lord sees, He hears, He knows. The Lord is already actively working on our behalf, and we have to trust and believe that. *"And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (3:13)* Amen!

The devil is always trying to embitter us. Satan wants us to become bitter toward God. I have seen pastors who start out with a sense of calling. They love the Lord, they love people, and they are hammering away. They are actually doing a good job, but after a while the abuses start to mount up. The very people we are sent to love and lead can level brutal attacks against us, and against our family. If you are in ministry you know exactly what I am talking about. Being stabbed in the back and lied about takes its toll. It is easy to become bitter, even for pastors.

I know many pastors who are no longer in ministry and they were good pastors. They just couldn't get it turned around. Some of the ministry I do these days is toward other pastors. When they tell me some of the things they are going through, I often hear bitterness creeping in. I have to warn them, and remind myself, to sweeten the water and not become bitter. This is hard. There are just people who will reject you and actively work against you, often behind your back. Sometimes it can get very personal and it can get very ugly. I advise them not to take things personal even when they get personal. Strive to follow that which is good. The Lord is against them who do evil.

"But and if you suffer for righteous sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord in your hearts: and be ready always to give an

answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” (3:14-15) This is how we sweeten the waters. “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.” (3:16-17)

Here is something to keep in mind when you come to a place of bitter water. It is most often the Lord who brings us to this place. Just like the story we read in Exodus at the start of this chapter (Exodus 15:22-25). God brought them three days in the wilderness to a place of bitter waters. He did it so they could see something of themselves. If nothing else, it is God's permissive will when we experience difficulties. When being tempted, God wants us to succeed and not fail. God himself might have brought us to a bitter place because there is something he wants us to experience, there is something he wants us to see.

Terror

I want us to revisit a thought up there at 1 Peter 3:14. It says, “if you suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.” The main point is, don't live in terror. Do not let people terrorize you. There are two different types of terror. One is when people afflict terror on you. It happens when people come at you viciously. They will be ugly and mean to you. They will spew all manner of venom at you. They will hate you and slander you. Their teeth come out, and they will rip you to shreds. Peter tells us not to be afraid of their terror. He says this at a time when evil roams the streets.

There is also a second kind of terror. It is when people are terrified by world events. No doubt, the consequences of evil and God's judgment, play out on the land. There are judgments being poured out, even now. We find ourselves in a land with all kinds of things taking place, things like war, natural disasters, and pandemics. If we are not careful we can fall victim to the terror.

There have been moments in my life when I was overcome with fear. I could feel it rising up inside of me. When I sense it happening I must take captive every thought. I have to trust God, grab hold of myself, my emotions, and keep them in check. We cannot let anyone or anything terrorize us. When the pressures mount remember verse 3:15, “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”

Baptism

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just and for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit:” (1 Peter 3:18) That is just good solid theology. This is one of the reasons why Peter is writing this letter in the first place. He wants to shore up the believer's faith in difficult times. “By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison. Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein

few, that his eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.” (3: 19-22)

I want us to consider the meaning of baptism here. Peter is comparing the flood of Noah to baptism. In that story, Noah is a preacher of righteousness. He preached repentance as he was building the ark. It is speculated it took Noah between 50 to 100 years to build the ark. He preached and had 0 converts in that 100 years. When the waters came it meant death to those who rejected God. So, the waters represent death, but at the same time it is life for those in the ark.

In believers' baptism, by immersion, the person being baptized will be asked about their salvation experience. They will give testimony of their salvation experience, by faith alone, in Christ alone. The one doing the baptizing will say, “based on your profession of faith I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” When you see the believer go under the water that depicts death. They are going under the water and being raised to the newness of life. The old man has been put to death, now walk in the newness of life. Peter is making the same comparison to Noah and the waters. Just like Noah's family was saved by being in the ark, we are saved by being in Christ.

The one thing people sometimes trip over is when Peter seems to indicate baptism saves. There are some people who think there is no salvation apart from baptism. Listen, that is not how these verses are to be understood. It has already been established that salvation is only by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. As far as justification is concerned, no amount of works can save us. There is much more to being saved than just being saved. Not only is there justification, but also sanctification, and glorification. Baptism does not come into play in our justification, but it does come into play during our sanctification. We are not saved by works. We are saved by grace through faith and not of works lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9) However, we are saved unto good works.

The very first work we are called to do is follow the Lord in believers' baptism. It marks the beginning of our sanctification journey. Baptism is a very passive work. We don't have to do anything. We just submit ourselves to it. I know people who refuse to be scripturally baptized. That is absolutely crazy. If we struggle at this point there is no way we are going to make it when things really get hard. God calls us to do things a whole lot harder than baptism. If you are stumbling at this point, you are in trouble, because it's not going to get any easier, it will only get harder.

Baptism is not salvific as far as our justification is concerned. No one is saved by any work, not even baptism. The way the word “save” is being used here is in reference to our sanctification. It is the process where we are becoming more like Christ. It depicts submission, the end of us living our own life.

Chapter Four (1 Peter 4:1-19)

Kenosis

Chapter four is the heart of Peter's letter. This is going to be more difficult to hear. We will have to apply ourselves a little more in order to understand what Peter is saying. I want us to begin in Philippians chapter 2 as an introduction to this chapter. The Apostle Paul says something in Philippians 2 that connects with 1 Peter 4. It has to do with the mind of Christ.

"if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind." (Philippians 2:1-2) Paul is telling his listeners to make him proud. He wants them to be of one mind. Who's mind is he talking about? Is it Paul's mind? Not at all! Paul wants believers to take on the mind of Christ.

"let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3) We are supposed to esteem others better than ourselves. We live in such a highly psychologized time this might sound strange to us. Today the emphasis is on self-esteem. Self-esteem is not a biblical concept. Rather, we are told to esteem others better than ourselves. *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* (2:4) These are great words. From here he launches off into a description of the mind of Christ.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)

The Apostle Paul tells us to emulate the mind of Christ. Christ mind is not one of self-exultation. It's not about climbing up but going down. His mind is one of self-denial and sacrifice. Look at it again, take notice of the downward progression. "Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Jesus Christ is God. He always has been and always will be God. Jesus has never ceased to be God. Never lose sight of that.

There is a theological word associated with this passage. The word is "kenosis." These verses describe Jesus emptying himself. It is very sacrificial. Some people will take these verses and the word "kenosis" to an extreme. They will erroneously say Jesus ceased to be God. That view is heretical. However, the word "kenosis" is a good theological word. It has just been hijacked and ascribed a false meaning. Jesus always has been, and He always

will be God, nothing will ever change that. He is the God-Man. Jesus is 100% God, and he is 100% man. What comes in the next verses describes his self-denial.

“Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Now, watch the downward progression. “But made himself of no reputation.” Can you see what He just did right there? “He made himself no reputation.” It is going down, and it continues going down.

“He took upon him the form of a servant.” Jesus tells us he came not to be served but to serve. (Matthew 20:28) “And he was made in the likeness of men.” Watch as the downward progression continues. “And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself.” He goes lower. “He became obedient.” Lower still. “Obedient unto death, even death of the cross.” And, it doesn't get any lower than death on the cross.

The mind of Christ is very sacrificial, but there is reward at the end. At the very bottom of that downward path comes the exaltation. God highly exalts him and “gives him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.”

It's on this downward path where we see miracles. This is where provision is made. God will reveal things to us no one else can see. You will think to yourself, “my goodness, what is wrong with people?” “Why can't everyone see these things?” It is because most of Christianity is on the wrong path. Instead of being on a path of self-denial and sacrifice we are on a self-indulgent path. A Christian can waste their whole salvation on the wrong path and experience diminished rewards at the end.

If we seek the praise of men, rather than the praise of God, the praise of men is all we get. There is no cross at the end of a self-indulgent climbing path. Instead, we set ourselves up thrones where we can look out over our domain and glory in all of our worldly accomplishments. There is no eternal reward in that, only loss.

Perhaps you are familiar with Jesus' words, “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up the cross daily, and follow me.*” (Luke 9:23) Well, Philippians 2:5-11 is the Apostle Paul drawing us a picture of what that verse looks like. To be a disciple of Jesus we must deny ourselves, pick up the cross, follow Him.

The cross is very sacrificial, and we will never be able to pick it up until we deny ourselves. Listen, it is no longer about us, or what we want. It is all about Jesus living his life through us. The only way it can happen is to have his mind and get on his path. I hope this makes sense to you. With that as our background, we will continue with 1 Peter chapter 4

The Mind of Christ

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;” (1 Peter 4:1)

This does not mean we are incapable of sinning. We most definitely are capable of sinning. Peter is comparing the two paths. He is comparing the downward path of Christ, the

sacrificial path, to the other path most Christians are on. Most Christians are on the upward climbing self-indulgent path. Well, that is sin. To get on the sacrificial path we must forsake the other path. Following Jesus on the downward path is where we should be.

“That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lust of men, but to the will of God.” (4:2) Peter is telling us to get on that downward path, avoid the upward path. Following Jesus is about sacrifice. The focus is not on what we give up; Rather, what we gain. We gain the presence of Christ.

“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in the lasciviousness, lust, the excesses of wine, reveling, banqueting, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” (4:3-5)

All of these things will be judged. We are not getting away with anything. I have repeated this many times as a warning to Christians. When a Christian stands before the Lord the issue is not going to be if we are saved as far as justification is concerned. The issue will be works. What did you do with the salvation He gave you? Did you walk it out and actually live it? How did you deal with trials and tribulations? We will stand before the Lord and give an account of what we have done in the flesh. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Two Paths

There are two paths to choose from. There is the downward path modeled by Christ or the upward path modeled after the world. We can't have it both ways. *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)* We can have temporal rewards now or eternal rewards later. Every sacrifice made now pays dividends later.

In verse three Peter says something about the “will of the gentiles.” (1 Peter 4:3) The gentiles he is referring to would be Roman. The Romans don't know anything about sacrificial living for the betterment of others. They understand what it means to sacrifice for the Roman government. If you sacrifice yourself for the government you will be praised. You might reach hero status; Perhaps, have a statue made in your honor. The Romans understood sacrifice in terms of war and battle, but they knew nothing about sacrifice for the Kingdom of God.

Peter brings up, “walking in lasciviousness, lust, excesses of wine, reveling, banqueting, and idolatry.” This deals with drunkenness and partying. Those who are wasting their life will think it strange when we stop running with them. They will speak evil of us.

If we are living for the benefit of others, and to the glory of God, some people think we are wasting our lives. Those doing the reveling, banqueting, partying and being drunken, think they have the good life. They look at us and think something is wrong with us. The sad thing is there are many Christians on the wrong path. They are self-indulgent and do ministry

only to be seen of men. They will look at sacrificial Christians who are swinging away, going without, and think something is wrong with them. They will criticize their efforts and deem them small. You will hear, “God doesn’t want you to go without.” “Come on up here with the rest of us good Christians and experience the abundant life.” Don’t be fooled. The abundant life Jesus speaks of is not found on the upward path; Rather, it is found on the downward sacrificial path. The greatest miracles happen when we have the mind of Christ.

Riotous Living

When it comes to riotous living, I am reminded of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32) The prodigal son’s downfall was his riotous living. The prodigal son wanted his inheritance early. He wanted to go out into the world. He wanted to live the good life, to live large, and be the king of the world. He liked being the center of attention. A Christian is not supposed to seek those kind of things. We are not to be the center of attention except for God using us in preaching and evangelism. When a believer is made the center of attention we are supposed to turn it around and point everyone back to Jesus.

The prodigal son thought he needed all the attention. He went out grabbing all he could, while he could. He was the life of the party, the big man, buying all the drinks until his fortune was gone. When his fortune was gone so were his friends. Everyone abandoned him. No one was left to help him. He finds himself feeding hogs and eating hog food. It is a horrible situation but that is where riotous living leads. Unless we repent there is disaster waiting at the end of that path.

Lasciviousness

The word “lasciviousness” in verse three is an interesting word. It points to something disgusting or bad. Other translations refer to it as what godless pagans, or gentiles do. It’s not something Christians should be involved in. However, there is a warning in Jude 4 concerning the church.

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 4)

I have asked churches before; how can we take something as beautiful as God’s grace and turn it into something filthy? Inevitably someone will stand up and says, “You Can’t!” Evidently we can, and according to Jude 4 it’s taking place right now. I think it happens every time we get off the downward path and start climbing again. It happens when we start doing our own thing, living our own life with no consideration of God’s will. It is a life of self-indulgence, chasing after the things of the world rather than the things of God.

When walking in lasciviousness we seek to gratify our lust with partying, drunkenness, and idolatries. Peter called it “riotous living” and there is great loss at the end of that path. Stay off the path of self-indulgence and follow Jesus on the downward path of self-denial and sacrifice. There is great reward at the end of that path.

Charity Among Believers

I just love the next few verses starting at 1 Peter 4:7. I like to read them out loud without giving commentary. I once heard a friend of mine in England read this passage of scripture with their English accent. It was read slowly and every word was being emphasized. It blessed me. I wish I could emulate that, but I can't. I want you to slow down and try reading the next few verses focusing on each word. Then pause at the end of each line or phrase and meditate briefly on what you just read.

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:7-11)

That is such a good word right there. I hate to walk over it by giving commentary; but, since this is a Bible study, I need to make a few comments. It starts out by saying, "the end of all things is at hand." we need to be reminded of the judgment of God. I am going to include a couple of verses from John chapter 16. These verses concern the work of the Holy Spirit.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16: 8-11)

Jesus tells us the Holy Spirit is keeping us mindful of these things. The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and the judgment that is to come. And, we need to be reminded of the judgment of God.

Here is another one overcomers need to hear. *"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now has come salvation and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night, **And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimonies; and they love not their lives unto death.**"* (Revelation 12: 10-11)

The trials we face now are only going to get harder. The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. God is all the time telling us to watch and pray. We are to be like watchmen on the wall. We must be sober minded. Sober is more than just drunkenness on alcohol. There are other forms of drunkenness. We can become drunk on success. We can get intoxicated on possessions and materialism. Some people are drunk on themselves, self-promotion, and image

When we get drunk we lose sight of God. A drunk person cannot figure things out. They can't even walk a straight line. They think they are straight but in reality have no idea where they are going or the dangers ahead.

In verse 8 Peter says, “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sin.” He is talking about love for one another. We have looked at things like this before. We should have a love for each other. There should be genuine concern for one another. We have to look beyond ourselves, esteeming others greater than ourselves. Paul in Ephesians had much to say about forbearing one another in love. We are to encourage one another and build each other up, not tear each other down.

Hospitality

Then it says, “use hospitality one to another without grudging.” We are supposed to be hospitable toward each other. Remember, this letter is being addressed to the sojourners who are dispersed in the areas of modern day Turkey. These missionaries, and other travelers, had no money. They were fleeing for their lives to escape persecution. They had to rely upon the hospitality and generosity of fellow believers.

When Peter sends Sylvanus with this letter it also served as Peter’s endorsement of Sylvanus. These disciples didn’t have two nickels to rub together. They had very little as far as worldly possessions were concerned. So, when they went on these missionary journeys they depended upon the hospitality of fellow believers. That is why most of the letters written by the Apostles conclude with some sort of salutation to receive or greet one another.

If I have something you need you should be free to call upon me. If you have something I need I should be able to call upon you. We can’t fix every problem, there might be limitations, but we should be willing to help each other. This is one of the ways God meets needs. We are called to participate willingly without grudging. If we complain about an act of kindness then forget it. There is no blessing in that. It must come from a willing heart.

I once had a Deacon who would complain all the time, about almost everything. Every time he would mow the church lawn he would complain about it. If someone else tried to help him, he would complain about that. One time he was on a rant about something someone did. I finally told him he just needed to stop. You are better off not doing it than to do it grudgingly. Well, he got mad and quit. Big mistake, I ended up being the one mowing the grass. I was only at that church for a couple of years, but the curse followed me for twenty years. Everywhere I went they thought it just natural for the pastor to mow the grass. I knew better than to say anything. I had gone too long to forfeit my reward.

Share Your Gifts

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (4:10) Everyone needs to be using their gifts for the Kingdom of God. Everyone has a part to play; everyone has specific gifts and talents. In shared ministry all the gifts work in unison and in harmony with each other.

Dr. Vinson used to tell a story to illustrate this teaching. Let’s say we are stranded on a desert island somewhere. We are shipwrecked. Everyone comes together and we agree we should build a raft and do everything we can to get off the island. So, everyone fans out

and gathers up supplies. We find everything we need. We have lumber, all the hardware, straps and tools. We get all excited and start constructing the raft. Then we run into a problem. We only have Phillips head screws, but we don't have a Phillips head screwdriver. The only thing we lack is the Phillips head screwdriver. We are forced to improvise a solution. We try hammering the screws in with a rock but that doesn't work. Somebody finds a pocketknife. We tried using the pocketknife to screw in Phillip head screws, but we broke the blade.

We finally get something together but it's a rickety thing. Everyone gets on the raft, and we head out across the water. The raft gets all wonky and starts falling apart. It becomes obvious we are all going to die. Then all of a sudden somebody pulls out a Phillips head screwdriver. We all look at him, "what in the world?" "Why didn't you bring this out earlier?" The response was, "I wanted to keep it for myself." This guy had a Phillips head screwdriver the whole time. He never shared it with anyone and as a result everyone perishes. So, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Two Types of Ministry

"If any man speak let him speak, let him speak of the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11)

Peter is distinguishing between two types of ministry. One is a word ministry and the other is a works ministry. Most people will read this, and skip right over it. They won't pause to think. As a preacher this grabs my attention. I have a word ministry. I am not a minister of things. I am a minister of the Word. I lack in many areas of giftedness. I am not good for much outside of the Word ministry. I used to have mechanical type of skills, but they have slowly diminished over the years. On the other hand, there are people gifted in works style ministry. As a preacher of the Word, he tells me to speak the oracles of God. For people gifted in other areas, they are to minister as they are given ability. All minister to the glory of God and the benefit of others.

Partakers of Christ's Sufferings

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye shall be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

This reminds me of some verses found in Romans. *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us." (Romans 8:16-18)*

It is amazing how many times I have read these verses. Every time I read it I easily receive the first half, the stuff about being “heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ.” But then, I realized I was skipping a few words before picking up again at, “for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us.” I can easily hear that. But, the first time my eyes were opened to the second-half of verse 17, I was troubled. “If so be that we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together.” We need to think about this a little. We are called to suffer with Christ, and it results in greater glorification. When we read the verses in 1 Peter 4:12-13 about being partakers in Christ sufferings, Peter is saying the same thing. It is the path to maximum glory.

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him but glorify God on this behalf.” (1 Peter 4: 14-16) If we are suffering as a result of sin in our life; well, we deserve it. But if we suffer for doing the right thing; then, that is God's glory.

There is a story found in Acts 4, a similar scenario also plays out in Acts 5, where the disciples are arrested for preaching. After being threatened, and told not to preach again, they were turned loose, only to be found preaching again. The authorities bring them back in and say, “did we not tell you not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.” Peter and John both answered, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to harken unto you more than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and hear.” (4:19-20) It is kind of like saying, “do whatever you have to do, but we can’t stop preaching the name of Jesus.” In Acts 5 it says they beat the disciples before they were freed. The disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus’ name. (5:40-42) When we suffer for doing good it glorifies God.

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God: and if it first begin with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17) This is a fearful thought. *“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinners appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” (1 Peter 4:18-19)*

Knowing the judgement of God, we should be doubly concerned for the ungodly. Peter brings up how judgment begins at the House of God. I can’t help but think the church is currently under judgement. When I look at this nation and the world around us, I see a nation under judgement on a shipwrecked planet. If it is true, and this nation is under judgment, I have to conclude the church is also under judgement. As goes the church so goes the nation. Judgement begins at the house of God, and I see signs of judgment everywhere.

Chapter Five (1 Peter 5:1-14)

Recap Context

We are at the conclusion of 1 Peter. I want to recap the context of this letter. We have talked about the possibility of there being a connection between Peter's letter and the letter to the Ephesians written by the Apostle Paul. It is thought Peter might have visited Paul while he was in prison at Rome. The church was under heavy persecution at this time. The persecution of Christians is going to increase and really intensify after the burning of Rome in 64AD. Nero will blame Christians for the burning of Rome. Chances are Nero was the one responsible. People were turning against him. Rome's burning was a political failure and he needed a scapegoat. So, he blamed the Christians, who would have been an easy target.

Christians were already under persecution. It is thought Ephesians was probably written in the year 61 or 62. 1 Peter might have been written 62 or 63. The fire in Rome was 64 AD. Both Paul and Peter will be executed during the increased persecution surrounding the fire of 64. Nero would be dead by suicide in 68AD. That is the context in which these letters are written.

Peter is in Rome when he writes this letter. He uses the word "Babylon," but he is in Rome. Peter is hiding. He is living underground. He is trying to get this letter out and he is going to use Sylvanus to help him.

I know everyone has their own idea of the proper sequence of events, but I have no problem believing all of this happened at the same time. I picture everything happening around the burning of Rome. I can even entertain the idea this letter might have been written immediately following the fire in Rome. I don't know.

Jewish Christians were fleeing north into what we know today as Turkey. It wasn't called Turkey then. I am calling it that to help us visualize location. It kind of makes sense they would flee in that direction. That part of the Roman Empire had not been occupied as long. Roman dominance in the region was happening right about the same time Peter was writing this letter. By 330AD Constantinople (modern Istanbul) would be the center of Roman power. But, at the time of this letter, fleeing Christians would have been out ahead of that.

The other thing they had going for them is Paul and Barnabas had taken missionary journeys and had already established gentile churches in the region. So, these Jewish Christians, looking for a place to flee, would have been drawn to that. These people were running for their lives. They had no possessions, no money, and could not even speak the language. These exiles would have to depend on the hospitality and generosity of other

believers. They were fleeing to an area where they could find refuge and get some help. I can't prove all of this exactly, but that is the scenario I have in my mind.

Peter doesn't even know who he is writing to. He just knows there are Jewish Christians in these regions. He is sending Silvanus to deliver this letter. Silvanus is the perfect guy for the job. He knows the way. Silvanus was with the apostle Paul as those churches were being established.

At this point Peter's concern is for the church in the midst of suffering. People are dying. The trials and tribulations are intense. I want you to feel that. It is easy for us today to read these letters and disconnect ourselves from the trials, tribulations, and persecutions these people were going through. Both Peter and Paul are nearing the end of their lives. Both are doing all they can, while they can, with whatever time they have left. Peter's main concern, in this last chapter, has to do with leadership. He is trying to establish some leadership in the church at the most difficult of times.

Step Up

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:" (1 Peter 5:1) By "elders," Peter is not talking about an office. He is not even talking about the oldest person in the room. He is talking about those who have been a Christian the longest. They have more experiences, more time as a believer. They truly know what it means to follow Jesus. There is a level of spiritual maturity and wisdom to them that is easily recognized by other believers.

Church meetings would be small in number. The church consisted of small groups meeting in houses, or some other secluded place. They did not have church buildings with established hours. There were no steeples or anything like that. If Christians met in large numbers in church buildings it would be like putting up a large billboard saying, "Come Kill Us."

They did not have pastors like we have today. Peter is telling these elders, "It's time for you to step up." And, Peter is including himself as an elder. He intentionally avoids calling himself an apostle. He says, "listen guys, I am one of you." Peter is trying to encourage them. He wants them to step up and lead.

Peter says he has been a witness to the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. That means he has also suffered. Again, go back and read Romans 8:16-18. We covered this in the last chapter of this study. Peter is saying the same thing

concerning himself. Peter is taking the downward path of sacrifice. He not only shares in the sufferings, but he also shares in the glory.

Let's really think about this next verse, 1 Peter 5:2. "*Feed the flock of God which is among you,*" Peter is telling these elders to feed the flock. The word being used here for "feeding the flock" is the same word we get shepherd out of. The concept of being a pastor is being developed. Pastors feed the flock. They protect the flock. They lead the flock.

These elders are not pastors yet; But, Peter is telling them to step up and assume a leadership role in the church. The church needs you to step up. This whole thing about feeding the flock is important. He says, "*feed the flock of God which is among you taking the oversight thereof.*" The word for "oversight" means Bishop. Peter is saying, "Come on guys, the church needs you!" "Not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." (1 Peter 5:2)

There are different words used synonymously to describe what we commonly think of as a pastor. We get three of them right here in the first few of verses, elder, pastor, bishop. There are other words, but Peter wants these guys to step up. Step up willingly and not for filthy lucre. Have a ready mind and trust God to provide. If you are getting into ministry thinking of material riches, you are crazy. True ministry is going to be born out of sacrifice.

There is another place in the Bible where Peter hears, "feed the flock." Do you want to see Peter grow up right before your eyes? Look at John 21:15 for a moment.

The Least We Can Do

"So when they had dined, Jesus sayeth unto Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He sayeth unto him, yeah, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He sayeth unto him, feed my lambs. He sayeth unto him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He sayeth unto him, yeah, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. and he sayeth unto him, feed my sheep." (John 21:15-16)

Does this sound familiar? Jesus is telling Peter to feed his sheep. It is the same thing Peter tells the elders to do in his epistle. Forget about personal gain and filthy lucre. This is going to be sacrificial.

"He sayeth unto him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him a third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I loved thee. Jesus sayeth unto him, feed my sheep. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou was young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands,

and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he sayeth unto him, follow me.” (John 21:17-19) And, we already know following Jesus requires sacrifice. Self-denial and sacrifice are the requirements of following Jesus. (Matthew 16:24)

Let’s talk about feeding sheep. There is a play on words going on here. You might already know this; but, if not, I want you to see it. There are three different Greek words that get translated to the English word “Love.” They are agape, phileo, and eros. Agape love is very sacrificial. It is the kind of love Jesus has for us. It is just poured out, unidirectional, and sacrificial. Another word for love is phileo. This is a brotherly kind of love. It is a good word. Phileo is a good form of love, but it lacks the sacrificial element. There is a third type of love that is not mentioned here. Eros is a selfish kind of love. It is bad. It is basically using others to love yourself. Words like erotica are derived from the Greek word eros.

Jesus comes up to Peter and asked him, “will you agape me?” Jesus is asking Peter for sacrificial love. Peter answered back and said, “yes Lord, I will phileo you.” Well, that is not what Jesus asked. Jesus asked for sacrificial love and Peter offered back friendship love. Jesus tells Peter to feed his lambs.

So, Jesus asked Peter a second time. “Peter, will you agape me?” Peter just could not get himself to say it. Instead, he says, “Yes Lord, I will phileo you.” The Lord says, all right, “feed my sheep.”

Jesus comes back to Peter a third time and this time he uses Peter’s words. It’s about like saying, “if that’s all I’m going to get, fine.” So, the Lord says to Peter, “Okay Peter, will you phileo me?” It grieves Peter because he knows he has been exposed. Peter says, “Lord thou knowest all things. You know I phileo you.” Feeding the sheep does not represent the most Peter could do. It is the least he can do.

The good thing is Peter figures it out. The Lord tells Peter how he is going to glorify God by dying. Verse eighteen describes crucifixion. Tradition holds that Peter was executed upside down by crucifixion. We cannot prove it exactly, but we do know Peter was martyred. Peter glorified God by dying. How are you going to glorify God? By living your own life? Doing your own thing? That is not how God is glorified.

In 1 Peter 5, Peter tells these elders, “there is more coming, step up, and at least feed the flock.” Peter is telling these elders the exact same thing the Lord told him. We are to lead by example. (5:3) We do not drive people like cattle. We are supposed to lead as shepherds/pastors/elders/overseers. We lead by example not lording it over anyone. (5:3) I

think that is why Peter refused to use the apostle title. Lead by example, with humility, and when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (5:4) The sacrifices we make now pays dividends later, where it really counts for something.

Good Followers

“likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:” (1 Peter 5:6-7)

Once again, Peter is giving instructions to the elders to step up and lead. He is also reminding everyone else to be humble. Be good followers. Whoever it is that assumes the role of shepherd needs cooperation. The leader must be humble, and followers must be humble as well. Peter refers to followers as the younger. Once again, it is probably reference to those who have not been a Christian very long. Some of them are just babes in Christ. They don't have the same wisdom, experience, or spiritual knowledge. Before anyone can be a good leader they must first put in their time as followers. So, submit yourself, be subject one to another, be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Be careful when it comes to complaining about the leadership God provides. Many people think, if given the chance, they would be better than the current leader. I have heard guys say, “By God, if I was the pastor we would be doing something other.” Instead of working alongside the pastor to provide proper leadership, they work in opposition of God’s chosen. Many a man has tried and many a man has failed. I know plenty of examples of men jumping ahead of God only to lose everything, including their family. If you are working in opposition of God’s leadership that is pride, and God will not honor that. You might think you are finding success for a while; but, ultimately, there is a crash and a door shuts in your face.

“Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.” This is not a reference to the final exultation in glory. Peter is telling us our time will come. If we can humble ourselves and learn from those placed over us, the time will come when we will be called to lead. If nothing else, maybe we are there to learn what not to do.

Even if you are not called as a pastor, you are still being trained for leadership. Somewhere down the line you will be asked to step up. This is all about humility and submission. God

resist the proud but gives grace to the humble. Just wait your turn and while you are waiting learn all you can because you will need it.

Cast Your Cares

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:8) I have been meditating on this verse for some time. I have many cares. I am concerned about my family, health, church, finances. My cares mount up. I can be buried under all my cares. Right here we are instructed to cast all our cares upon the Lord.

I once had a wise mentor teach me how to deal with my cares. I figured if it worked for him I would give it a try. This is what I do. I sit down and I write all of my cares on a piece of paper. I take the paper, fold it, and tuck it in my Bible. I then take my Bible and chunk it against the wall. It is probably best to do this when no one else is around. I then talk with the Lord, out loud, not in anger, but trusting. “Okay Lord, It’s not that I don’t care, because I do.” “But these are now your cares.” “I Trust You with them.”

I don't know if it does any good, but it makes me feel better. At least I am doing something other than just setting around stewing over things. It is a symbolic act of letting go and trusting God with all of my worries. I know he cares for me and I can trust him.

Coming Attacks

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accompanied in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. After that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen.” (1 Peter 5:8-11)

Part of being a pastor includes protecting the flock. Pastors feed the flock, lead the flock, and protect the flock. We have got to be sober and vigilant. We have people under us we are responsible for. The attacks are coming. We should anticipate them and keep our guard up. The enemy is looking for any avenue to get a foothold into the fellowship. Without proper leadership the fellowship is extremely vulnerable.

Peter points toward suffering with a promise attached. After we have suffered a while, we are made perfect and strengthened. This also indicates to me there is more suffering to come. We are being called to something very difficult, at a very difficult time. More suffering is coming. Tough times are ahead.

I want to ask you a question. Why would God give you a pastor? Many Christians only want them around to abuse. Granted, there are good shepherds and bad shepherds, but I assume you have a good shepherd. The only criteria for a good shepherd is he dies for the sheep. (John 10:11) All a good pastor ever hears is criticism. Everything is an argument. According to the sheep they do nothing right.

We need to think about why God would give us a pastor. Is it to ignore him? Is there anyone you are willing to follow? I don't even know if it is possible to pastor biblically anymore. Or, if any true shepherds can still be found. Maybe we are all just a bunch of hirelings. Most churches prefer it that way because if you hire them you can also fire them. You can't do that if they are called by God. We are heading into a time where we need good leaders and good followers. God is calling us to step up. Maybe a time of persecution is needed just to separate the good from the bad, both shepherds and sheep.

Structure

I want to say something about church leadership structure. There are different structures in different churches. Churches will adopt one kind of structure over another. All of whom will claim to be the "most biblical." Some churches have a pastor only. Some will have pastor and deacons. Some churches have pastors and elders, or pastors, elders, and deacons. Some only have elders with one of them designated the preaching elder.

I don't put much stock in any of it. To me it is all structure and structure is structure. Every church needs structure and every church has their reason for the structure they have chosen. For the most part the structure is determined by the church's circumstance or need. I have been to countries where Christianity is not welcome. Churches operate under heavy restrictions or even banned. They do not have pastors because they did not want to be designated as a church. They prefer being called a fellowship. Nobody is going to give themselves the title of pastor. But, there was a group of leaders in the church. They were recognized as being more spiritually mature. They called these leaders elders. These elders would pick a book of the Bible. They would then divide up the passages and assign them to individual elders. Each elder would take a turn preaching their assigned passage. It worked beautifully for them. There was no professional clergy. Some of the elders were also responsible for smaller house groups. They did not meet in a church building, just a rented space somewhere. Their circumstances necessitated their structure.

There are churches today that will just wear themselves out arguing over structure. Well, it's structure. Do whatever works. And, don't think your way is error proof, or your way is the only way. Often I hear from those who advocate for elder lead systems. They will make

a point of saying, “every time elders is mentioned there is a plurality of elders.” Well, yeah, because there was a plurality of churches. These were small, very small groups.

Marcus

“By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.” (1 Peter 5:12-13) We have already discussed the importance of Silvanus to this mission. We have discussed the significance of using the word “Babylon” and what it means to be “elect.” For the first time he makes mention of Marcus.

Marcus is the guy God used to write the book of Mark. This illustrates the younger being submissive to the elder. When Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey they took Mark. Halfway through the journey, Mark backs out and he returns home. Paul loses faith in Mark and no longer trusts him. On the next missionary journey Barnabas wanted to bring Mark back but Paul wouldn't have it. So, Paul and Barnabas have a falling out over Mark. Barnabas, being the encourager, takes Mark and they go to establish churches. Paul ends up taking Silas (Silvanus), they go north toward Turkey.

This illustrates how the younger person submits himself to the elder. There is no room for pride here. Mark had to put in his time to re-establish his trustworthiness. He had to face the rejection of Paul and submit himself to Barnabas. Then right here, at the end of this letter, his name is mentioned as a spiritual son of Peter. The Apostle Paul would later call on him again. In due time Marcus was brought back up and called upon to lead.

“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity peace. Peace be with you all that in Christ Jesus, Amen. (5:14) And that's the end of first Peter. We will continue with 2 Peter in the next chapter.

Chapter Six (2 Peter 1:1-21)

This lesson transitions into 2 Peter chapter 1. We are going to begin by reading the first couple of verses. *“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,” (2 Peter 1:1-2)*

When 2 Peter was written the apostle Paul was already dead. We have already talked about how Paul’s letter to the Ephesians and 1 Peter were written at about the same time. Paul was writing to gentile believers, and Peter was writing to the Jewish believers who were fleeing persecution. Paul’s letter may have preceded Peter’s letter but not by much. We know when Rome burned Christians were blamed. Persecution intensified after the burning of Rome. The Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter were both got caught up in that intensification.

Paul spent two years in prison at Caesarea before being sent to Rome. He survives a shipwreck on the way to Rome. When he finally makes it to Rome he spends another two years as a prisoner under house arrest. While a prisoner he has access to a few things. He couldn’t go anywhere but people came to visit him, and he managed to send out letters. These letters would become known as his Prison Epistles. Many scholars believe Paul was released from prison and made a missionary journey to Spain before being arrested again. I tend to think his situation continued to worsen. He went from house arrest to the dungeon where he wrote his Pastoral Epistles to Titus and Timothy.

All of a sudden Nero was in a hurry to get rid of Paul and Peter. At this time Peter would have been living underground just trying to survive. Paul was executed first. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians made it out first, then 1 Peter would shortly follow. Paul is dead by the time 2 Peter is written.

Let’s revisit how 1 Peter begins. *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered, throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through the sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” (1 Peter 1:1-2)*

In the introduction of Peter’s first letter, he addressed it to Jewish believers. “Elect” identifies them as Jews. These sojourners are fleeing north to escape persecution. This second letter, 2 Peter, is not addressed specifically to Jewish believers. This letter is

addressed to everybody. *“To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our savior Jesus Christ.”*

Paul is no longer on the scene and the whole responsibility falls upon Peter. Peter is feeling the weight of all of that. There is pressure on him to do all he can, while he can, in what little time he has left. We would be wise to live our remaining days the same way.

Sufficiency of Scripture

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (1 Peter 1:3)

This is addressing the sufficiency of God’s Word. Back in my seminary days I took some nouthetic counseling courses. This is one of the verses they had us memorize. The sufficiency of scripture was stressed to us. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. “Life and godliness” speaks toward the sanctification part of our salvation.

Personhood and Works

Once again, in the doctrine of salvation we have the event of justification. Once saved, sanctification begins. There are two aspects to sanctification, our personhood and works. Sanctification means to be set apart holy for God’s use. Anything that belongs to God is considered sanctified and holy. But, that doesn’t make our behavior or works holy.

That side of sanctification is a process. This is where we work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) This is where we deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him. (Luke 9:23) This is where we are being transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:2). This is where we store up treasure in heaven. (Matthew 6:19-21)

God sets us on a journey where we grow up to be more like Christ. At some point we will die. That is the glorification part of salvation. So, the doctrine of salvation includes justification, sanctification, and glorification. God’s path for us is specially designed to reach maximum glory.

God is telling us right here in verse 3, “that according to his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.” He is talking about the sanctification part of our salvation. He has given us everything we need to make it. We can do this. We can live the Christian life and succeed. We must get on God’s path. It is not automatic. But, we can do it! He is not calling us to do something that is impossible. It is very much possible, and he is the one who makes it possible.

In these first three verses we have the whole doctrine of salvation. Justification is up there in verse one, “to them who have obtained like precious faith with us through the

righteousness of God our savior in Jesus Christ.” Then the third verse, “as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” That is the sanctification part. Then Peter ends the verse with, “in the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” There we have it, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Virtue

Let's talk about virtue for a moment. Virtue has to do with having a good moral life. A virtuous person doesn't just sit around and do nothing. Virtue is a lifestyle. There is activity involved. A virtuous person is looking for ways to please God. They look for ways to honor and glorify Him. Dr. Vinson would always talk about the creative energy behind virtue. We put this energy to work. Get after it! Just don't sit there! Do something!

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4)

In the first three verses Peter is hitting on the doctrine of salvation. He points out how salvation is by faith in Jesus. God also promised he has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Just look at all the great and precious promises God makes. God has done his part. When we get to verse five we move into our part.

Diligence

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” (2 Peter 1:5-7)

The first thing Peter brings up is diligence. I want us to look at Philippians 2:12 to help us understand the word, “diligence.” *“Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12)*

If we are diligent at something, we will do it. It requires action. Being diligent in our salvation requires work. We will work at it. We don't work to attain justification; But, we are expected to live the Christian life and be productive. “Working out our own salvation with fear and trembling” has to do with sanctification. Every saved person has ministry gifts and a calling on their life. There is more to being a Christian than just existing. There is more to salvation than just being saved. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Diligence means we apply ourselves to the work.

Knowledge

Peter says, “add to your faith virtue.” We have already talked about virtue. Next he says, “to virtue add knowledge.” We must apply ourselves to learning. We spend time in God’s Word. Peter wants us to grow in our knowledge of God. This is not the type of thing where we just sit around and get fat with knowledge. God wants us to be active. We tend to sit around and become bloated with knowledge. If we are not careful we can become prideful in our knowledge. It is one of the dangers of academia. Knowledge without works will lead to our ruin. The same is true the other way around. Works without knowledge also leads to ruin.

Virtue has creative energy. We must add knowledge to our creativity. If we are operating only in creativity, without knowledge, we will make all kinds of errors. If we take our knowledge and start doing it we will gain discernment.

Temperance

Next, “to knowledge add temperance.” Temperance has to do with self-control. Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24) These instructions are the essentials of discipleship. We will never get to that place of following Jesus until we first deny ourselves. This is where temperance comes in. Self-denial requires self-control. We can't go where we want to go. We can't do what we want to do. Our life is no longer ours to live; Rather, it now belongs to the Lord. There is no self-denial without temperance.

Patience

From temperance Peter says add patience. Patience has to do with picking up the cross and following Jesus. Patience is required to stay under the burden. Following Jesus requires self-denial and sacrifice. When under the strain there is always temptation to chunk off the burden and run. We will be begging God to remove the burden, but he holds us in there reminding us, “his yoke is easy and his burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30). We are taught these lessons through trials. If we submit our will, he supplies the power. But, the temptation is always to give up and quit. It takes patience to make it to the end.

Godliness, Kindness, and Love

From patience add godliness. This is simply godly living. God wants us to be godly examples at all times, even in the midst of suffering. Then he wants us to add brotherly kindness to godliness. The word for “brotherly kindness” is phileo. We have already talked about that word. It is a brotherly or friendship kind of love. Then he says to take it further,

add charity to brotherly kindness. The word for “charity” is agape, and we have already talked about it. Agape is the highest form of love and is very sacrificial.

Holy Living

The active word here is “add.” The growth spiral should come to mind. We just keep adding to what we know, by doing. When we do what we know we gain discernment and growth takes place. We just keep adding one thing to another. This is the path to holy living. We are supposed to be growing in holiness. Once we get saved we just take off and we don't quit. It continues for the rest of our life. There is no jump off point where we just maintain and hold. If we stop anywhere along the line we begin to digress.

We have all seen people who were once on path. Then for whatever reason they stop. It doesn't take long before they begin to digress. It quickly becomes a free fall. They can spiral out of control, and without repentance there is a crash at the end. So, remain diligent. Don't give up. God has made incredible promises to us.

Spiritual Growth

“For if these things be in you, (he's talking about this path of spiritual growth) and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sin,” (2 Peter 1:8-9)

Here is another promise of God. If we are diligent in applying ourselves to these things we will abound. We are promised to be productive. We will produce fruit. Producing fruit will come naturally if we diligently apply ourselves to the pathway of holiness. But, there is also a warning if we are not doing these things. See verse nine again. “He that lacks these things are blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sin.”

Accountability

I want to remind you of a story found in Matthew 25. *“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and I went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His Lord answered and said unto him, thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath.” (Matthew 25:24-29)*

Isn't that amazing! In this story there is a five talent guy, a two talent guy, and a one talent guy. All of them are described as being servants of God. The five talent guy goes, and he gains five more talents. He now has ten talents. The Lord says to him, "well done thou good and faithful servant." The two talent guy comes along, and he has taken his two talents and gained two more talents. He now has four talents. The Lord looks at that and says, "well done, enter into your reward." This is what we want to hear. We want to hear "well done thou good and faithful servant."

Notice that the five talent guy is not being compared to the two talent guy. Nor is the two talent guy being compared to the one talent guy. We are individually accountable for what we have been given. And, "To whom much is given, much is required." (Luke 12:48) In our sanctification journey God puts us on a path. You won't have to answer for my path, and I won't have to answer for yours. But, we will both have to answer to God for how we kept our own individual path.

The one talent guy goes to the Lord. He did nothing with his talent. The one talent guy says, "Lord, I knew that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou has not sown." The Lord looks at him and says, "You wicked slothful servant!" "You knew these things!" "And, you still did nothing!" "Take that unprofitable servant, take away his one talent and give it to the ten talent guy." Then the Lord says, "take this sorry servant and toss him into outer darkness where there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

Weeping and gnashing teeth is present because of regret. We are held accountable for what we know. This man knew these things, he had been warned, and still did nothing. Outer darkness is not hell. Now, a lost person will most certainly end up being tossed into the lake of fire. But, all three of these guys are called servants of God. All three are believers. A couple of them proved trustworthy with the Lord's possessions while the third guy blew it.

If you think outer darkness is a reference to hell then you believe someone can lose their salvation. In my thinking outer darkness has to do with our proximity to the Lord. Being in the light is being near the Lord. Being cast out into darkness represents diminishing rewards. Come up with your own conclusions but one thing is for certain. If you are not serving the Lord now, you will not be serving him in heaven either.

I brought this story up to illustrate 2 Peter 1:8-9. If we are on the path of holiness we are guaranteed to be productive. But, if we lack these things, we are blind and cannot see afar off, and have forgotten we were purged from our sin. That is the same warning Jesus is giving us in the Parable of the Talents. That one talent guy ended up with less in heaven

than he had on earth. Does that not concern you? There is no excuse for wasting our salvation. We will be held accountable.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence (there's that word diligence again) to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:” (2 Peter 1:10) The point is, we won't have to worry about outer darkness if we give due diligence to make our calling and election sure. There is more to salvation than just being saved. We have to be living it and doing something with it.

Glorification

“For so is an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:11) This is a reference to glorification. If we believe in Jesus for eternal life we will go to heaven. But, if we want to maximize our glorification we must get on God's path for our life. God has given us everything we need to accomplish everything set before us. But, we can blow it. We can waste our whole salvation. Severe consequences will follow if we waste our salvation.

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by the putting you in remembrance: Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.” (2 Peter 1:12-15)

Peter never wants to be accused of neglect. We will never be able to say Peter didn't warn us. In fact he continues to remind us every chance he gets. I get upset when I think about how much preaching I sat under, for so long, and no one ever told me this stuff. I had pastors who never shared any of this with me. Or, maybe they did, and I just wasn't there. Maybe, I wasn't giving my due diligence at the time. If so, that has all changed. I now have the responsibility to warn you, or I will be charged with neglect. When Peter says it's his job to put us in remembrance, this is something we should already know. If we already know it then it is good to be reminded.

Peter talks about his approaching death. “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.” God has already revealed to Peter by what death he was going to glorify God (John 21:18-19). The Apostle Paul has already glorified the Lord in his death. Peter knows his days are numbered. He fully intends to glorify God in the same manner. But, as long as Peter has breath, he will continue reminding us of our responsibilities and our accountability to God.

Being Reminded

Peter has no problem repeating himself. “I will endeavor that ye may be able after my deceased have these things always in remembrance.” (5:15) Listen, “I’m writing this stuff down.” “I am sending it to you.” “Maybe, after I’m dead, you will pay attention.” Peter says, “even when I am dead I will still be reminding you.”

Personally, I leave messages, notes, and journals around for people to find when I am gone. Sometimes I feel like the most ignored person on the planet. I leave stuff laying around thinking maybe they will listen after I am dead. This whole remembrance thing is serious business for Peter.

Repetition is good. Have you ever notice how pastors tend to repeat themselves? Often, they will repeat the same thing over and over again. People will sometimes complain but it is actually a good thing. No one ever learns everything the first time through. The pastor is not trying to bore you. They will often hit the same topic from other angles, adding more insight and depth. I have certain themes I come back to all of the time because I believe they are neglected. If you have one of these guys for a pastor you are blessed. Part of his job is to keep us mindful of important things. Many churches never get to hear what you hear, not even once.

A Witness

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Peter is referring to the Mount of Transfiguration. He was a witness to all that. But, it’s more than the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter was a witness to the whole thing. He was witness to Jesus’ life. He was a witness to the miracles. He heard Jesus teach. He saw things play out right before his eyes. Peter was there when Jesus was betrayed. He was there at the crucifixion. He was witness to the resurrection and the ascension. This reference to the Mount of Transfiguration is Peter saying, “I was permitted to look into His glory and to actually see Jesus’ glory.”

Let’s refresh our memory concerning the Mount of Transfiguration. *“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias*

talking with him. Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold the voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” (Matthew 17:1-6)

Peter made a mistake here. He was elevating others to the same status as Jesus. Peter looked at Moses and Elijah and said, “let us make three tabernacles.” God abruptly stopped him mid-sentence. “NO! This is my beloved son! Here ye him!” We sometimes make the same mistake. People will sometimes try to elevate other human beings to God like status. There are people who will pray to Saints and elevate Mary. Don’t do that. Don’t elevate other religious figures to God like status. Peter was making that mistake when God corrected him.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in the dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart:” (2 Peter 1:19) All of the prophecies God gives us are sure. When God gives us a prophecy it is filled to the letter. There are a ton of prophecies concerning Jesus’ birth, his life, death, and resurrection. We are given all manner of prophecy concerning his soon return. We witness prophecy playing out before our eyes every day.

There are prophecies concerning where Jesus would be born. It happened exactly as given to us in the Word of God. There are prophecies stating that not one of his bones will be broken. It happened just as prophesied. It was prophesied he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. Well, guess what? Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver.

We have a more sure word of prophecy. It is likened to, “a light that shineth in the dark place.” The Word is like a flashlight. When we are stumbling around in darkness we see nothing as we ought. But, when we enter into Christ all of a sudden the light comes on. BOOM! As we follow him on our sanctification journey we begin to see more clearly. All manner of things are being revealed to us. It is on the path of self-denial and sacrifice where we see all of the miracles. If we slip over onto the self-indulgent path seeking temporal glory we will stumble. Even a saved person can flounder around in darkness. Don’t waste your salvation. Get on your path. Turn the light on and walk in it.

Inspiration

“knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:21)

This is about God's inspired Word. Peter just told us he was a witness to everything. "I was even at the mount of transfiguration." Peter is a witness, but God gave him the understanding. Peter was not left with his own interpretation of God's acts. God interpreted His own act to him. "No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation." Peter says, "I'm not speaking out of my own imagination."

"Holy men of God' spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In propositional revelation God performs an act. It can be any act. It can be creation, the parting of the Red Sea, the birth of Christ, the cross. All those things Peter witnessed, God provided the interpretation. In propositional revelation someone witnesses God's act. It can be any of the biblical writers, Moses, David, Paul, Matthew or in this case Peter. But, none of the biblical writers are left to their own understanding or interpretation. The definition of inspiration is God interpreting His own act.

God performs the act, then God interprets his own act to the witness. God inspires the witness to write it down. The beauty of the whole thing is, God uses human instruments. The biblical writers are like pens in the hand of God. At the same time, God accommodates the personality of the writer. Anyone can clearly see the difference between Peter and Paul's writings for instance. God is giving them understanding but their personalities come out. Still, they are only human instruments. God is the real Author.

This is a very high view of scripture. Scripture is more than just a witness. It is the very Words of God. The Bible is more than just a written record of God's revelation. The Bible IS God's revelation to man. We can rest assured, what we hold in our hands is the very Word of God.

Chapter Seven (2 Peter 2:1-22)

False Teachers and False Prophets

2 Peter chapter two is dealing primarily with false teachers and false prophets. As we read this I want you to include yourself in the warning. We tend to exclude ourselves from much of what we read. We read these things about false prophets and think he is talking about someone else, but he is not. Clearly there are false prophets coming from cults and false religions. There are evil people out there with evil intent filled with false doctrine and lies. But, there are different levels of false prophets and false teachers.

The mistake we often make when reading these verses is to exclude ourselves from the warning. It is easy to read this and think everyone else is the false prophet and I am the good prophet. The problem is we are all capable of being false teachers. All we have to do is get off the self-denial, sacrificial, path. Once on a self-indulgent path we move easily into being false teachers. I promise you, everyone reading this has been a false prophet at one time or another. When pride settles in it becomes even worse. Every one of us has the capacity of being a false teacher. I don't want you to miss any of the warnings God has for us.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Beware of being merchandised. Those leading us astray want us to believe they are in God's service. They will use feigned words in an effort to draw us in. God's true prophets always have a message of repentance. The true prophet of God is always pointing people to Jesus. False prophets draw people to themselves. They want you. They want what you have. They want you on their side. They want to win you over to their way of thinking. This is what it means to be merchandised.

In the Old Testament God gave us prophets to warn the king. When the people went to Samuel wanting a human king, God gave them a king. They no longer wanted God as their king. They wanted a human king so they could be like all the other nations. God gave them a king but warned them the day would come when they would regret it. (1Samuel 8)

To keep the king in check, God gave us prophets. It was the prophet's job to speak to the king and inform him concerning God's will. The problem was the kings didn't always like what the prophet had to say. What the king did to counter this was to put the prophets on the payroll. The kings had paid prophets among their advisors. They even developed schools for prophets. These schools were for people preparing to be on the King's payroll.

The king would ask one of his prophets, "what should I do?" The prophet would say, "I don't know king." "What do you want to do?" The paid prophet would tell the king what he wanted to hear. They had to because their livelihood depended on it. God countered the paid prophets by sending in real prophets who were not on the payroll.

Biblical prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos were not on the payroll. The real prophets would speak God's truth, but the king hated it. The payroll prophets would call God's true prophets false prophets. The paid prophets had it easy, while God's true prophets were mistreated and killed. Once again, true prophets are called false prophets by false people. False people will call false prophets a true prophet. The deception is incredible.

Their Entrance

Peter says these false teachers come in "privily." You don't know who they are. They don't stand up and say, "Hey, look at me! I am a false teacher!" They often come in undetected. They are in the pews, sitting in our churches, attending Sunday school. They don't start out trying to lead the masses. Sometimes they look to pick off only a few. False teachers will just start talking to people. Once they get rooted into the fellowship they start spreading their ideas. They seem knowledgeable but they are full of pride. They themselves can't be taught because they already know everything. They see it as their job to straighten everyone else out.

It's hard to protect a church from this because everyone has their own ideas and agendas. Once someone is convinced of something they start bringing it into the church. They do it just by talking and spreading ideas. There are some individuals who love causing discord. They will stir things up with questions based on opinion, rather than objective truth, edifying self rather than the hearer.

I have seen people work their way into a fellowship and before long they are asked to teach. Their influence starts to spread. The pastor can preach a message on Sunday, and the person teaching will go to their class and teach the exact opposite on any given topic. It is

amazing what enters a church through the backdoor, back channels, phone lines, and text messages. Their whisper campaigns seem innocent until they erode the integrity of the church with their false teaching, lies, and slander.

Peter says, “they bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord.” One of the early heresies to come into the church had to do with the person of Christ. Some people taught Jesus was God, while others taught Jesus was only a man. This debate went on for years until the emperor called a council together in 325AD to settle the matter. They landed on good, solid, acceptable, theology. They concluded Jesus was both God and man. He is 100% God and he is 100% man. But, long before it was settled, Peter was dealing with the issue. We still have people today trying to pass themselves off as Christians, yet deny the deity of Christ. These are not real Christians, they are fakes.

False prophets don't see themselves as being false prophets. That is the nature of deception. They see themselves as being a true prophet while all others are false prophets. They try to persuade through argument. The goal is to lure people into their way of thinking, expand their influence, and merchandise us. This is a serious problem. Peter then gives us some Old Testament examples concerning their judgement.

Judgement of False Teachers

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment: And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after afterwards should live ungodly;” (2 Peter 2:4-6)

False teachers and their heresy will be dealt with. The first example is how God deals with his angels. God holds the angels accountable. They don't get away with anything. What makes us think we won't be held accountable? The second example given is Noah and the old world. God spared not the old world but saved Noah a preacher of righteousness. I have heard it said, the sins of this present generation far surpass the sins of the old world. It is only by the grace of God we are still here.

I sometimes hear criticism about preaching from the Old Testament. They will argue we are in an age of grace. I will hear, “We don't need to be reading from the Old Testament, we need the New Testament.” Well, Peter is using the Old Testament. These Old Testament

stories are given as examples. This is serious stuff. Yes, we have grace. We have a ton of grace. Thank God for grace. God giving us every opportunity to repent is grace.

The third example is Sodom and Gomorrah being turned into ashes. We know what the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were. Today those same sins are championed. There are churches who take pride in their progressive views toward the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now, let me ask a question. Why would God put the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible? He says he is making Sodom and Gomorrah an example to those who live ungodly. Heed the warning.

Peter continues with the example of Lot. *“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day-to-day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment:”* (2 Peter 2:7-9)

Lot lived in the midst of unrighteousness. We currently live in the same kind of unrighteousness. Lot was in agony over this. His righteousness in the middle of unrighteousness vexed his soul. Not us, we just adapt to the unrighteousness and keep on going. Lot’s righteousness is seen as unrighteous by the unrighteous. Unrighteousness is called righteous by the unrighteous. That's just the way it is. The same is true today.

Reprobate

I want us to read some verses from Romans chapter one. These verses frighten me because it says God will give us over to uncleanness, vile affection, and a reprobate mind. Listen to how this plays out.

“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affection: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they were not liked retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness,

maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whispers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, and implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (Romans 1:24-32)

A reprobate mind can no longer discern between right and wrong. We will call that which is unrighteous righteous, and that which is righteous unrighteous. We look at the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, homosexuality, unable to figure out if it is right or wrong. It's not that we are being judged for our homosexuality; Rather, homosexuality IS judgement. We have been given something condemned by God and we can't figure out if it is right or wrong.

Rejecting Authority

“But chiefly them that walk after the flesh and the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusations against them before the Lord.” (2 Peter 2:10-11) It's dangerous to slander Godly authority. The angels won't do it, but it happens in church all of the time.

“But these, are natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that are they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime, Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceiving's while they feast with you.” (2 Peter 2:12-13)

There are people who want to drag us into their filth. They use every tactic imaginable. They plant seeds of doubt and confusion in our mind trying to misguide us. They are people just like us, deceiving and being deceived. Don't get sucked in. Be on guard against self-willed people who speak evil of dignities. They have no respect of authority, especially the authority of God's Word.

Rioting

I want to point out something in verse thirteen. It says, “they pleasure to riot.” This should serve as a warning to us. This behavior is increasing every day. People are engaging in rioting. I want to caution you on this. Do not get caught up in large crowds. If you are rubbing elbows with too many people, you are going the wrong way. I am not against

peaceful protest. I am all for freedom of speech. But rioting, burning buildings, and looting is evil.

Avoid large crowds who are in an agitated state. Pay close attention to who you are with. When large crowds get formed a dark spirit can move in and overtake it. Everyone is susceptible. I have seen videos of crowds moving through a city. It will look like a flock of birds moving in unison. Even Christians get caught up in it, and before long they are breaking into buildings, looting stores, and stealing whatever they can carry out. It happens in broad daylight and into the night, cars and buildings burn. Too many people end up injured or dead. This is what happens when we “sport ourselves.”

At some point the riot ends leaving a wake of carnage. Some of the rioters end up being caught. They go to jail and while at trial they can't explain what happened to them. They will say, “I don't know what came over me?” “I was just out there on the street protesting with everyone else, the crowd got big, there was excitement, and I was caught up in the moment.” They have no explanation for why they did what they did. They try to reason it by blaming others, but that doesn't work either.

We might have a worthy cause, but if we get caught up in the mob, we risk losing control of our senses. One demonic spirit can control a whole crowd. It doesn't matter the issue or how worthy the cause. I personally avoid jumping on any bandwagons. Anyone can be manipulated with feigned words and emotions.

Beguiling

“Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and have gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a Tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.” (2 Peter 2: 14- 17)

Beguiling is taking place. The definition of beguiled means to charm or enchant someone in a deceptive way. We have both the beguiler and those being beguiled. Those who are beguiled think they are 100% correct about everything. When people are beguiled they don't even realize it. They in turn beguile others. There are beguilers trying to beguile you right now. We can easily get sucked into something by believing lies. We will start behaving

in ways and adopting practices that are not biblical. I want to read some verses out of 2 Timothy.

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) All of these things are present every Sunday in church.

“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away by diverse lust, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Timothy 3:6-7)

Isn't it sad? That's what it means to be beguiled. These are the ones who slip in. They operate through back channels. They think they are so smart. They think they are Bible teachers. They might have every commentary. They see themselves as the authority on any given subject. They are quick to correct everyone's errors but can't see their own. They are not open to any correction and prove obstinate to the Word of God. They are always studying but unable to come to the knowledge of truth. I have known plenty.

False Sheep

I want us to read something from Acts. The apostle Paul warned the church about these people. Paul spent three years in Ephesus and when he left he gave them this warning.

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:29-31)

This grieves Paul. He has been teaching them day and night for three years. It is time for him to leave but before he goes he warns them. “As soon as I leave grievous wolves are going to come in.” It's more than just false shepherds. It includes false sheep. They have not been revealed yet, but when opportunity arises, they come forward. Paul said, “even among your own selves' men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples to themselves.”

A true prophet of God is always pointing people to the Lord. They are like John the Baptist, “behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.” “Look, there He goes,

follow him!” “Don’t follow me, follow Jesus.” False teachers come after you with feigned words to beguile you. They are motivated by selfish ambition and covetous wants. They are making merchandise of us. They want us to follow them.

Profit Prophets

I want to go back to 2 Peter 2:15 and discuss Balaam for a moment. Peter brings up Balaam as an example. Balaam is known as the profit prophet. He was one of those prophets on the King's payroll. He was in it for the money.

Balak, king of Moab, saw the children of Israel coming and he feared them. The children of Israel were tremendous in number. He wanted Balaam to curse the people of Israel. Evidently Balaam is a halfway decent prophet, even though he is on the payroll. Balaam goes to the Lord and says, “the king wants me to curse the people of Israel.” God tells Balaam not to curse what He has blessed.

Balaam goes back to Balak and tells the king what God said. The king says, “what if I give you money?” With the offer of money Balaam reconsiders. He goes back and asked God again. When he sets off to carry this out there is an Angel standing in the way. Balaam is so blind, spiritually blind, he can't see the Angel trying to stop him. His donkey speaks to him with a human voice. It shows how blind and spiritually deaf paid prophets are. God's judgment ultimately befalls them. False teachers are wells without water, clouds that are carried with the tempest, to whom the midst of darkness is reserved forever.

The Victims

We pick up reading again 2 Peter 2:18. These are the victims. *“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promised them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same as he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after that they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to the mire.” (2 Peter 2:18-22)*

We can fall victim to the beguilers. We can be sucked in with swelling words of vanity. There is an allure. It speaks to our lust. The beguilers know how to hook us. Even the most sincere believer who truly loves the Lord can fall victim. Of course, a sincere follower of Jesus wants to experience everything the Lord has for them. When they see someone experiencing something they haven't, it is intriguing. It is like bait dangling in front of us. A person who desperately wants to please Jesus might be lured in, only to get hooked. Everything is a trap. The beguilers use our selfish wants against us. When we come to faith, and give our life to Jesus, we experience great freedom. The beguilers want to lure us back into bondage. Once snagged our end is worse than the beginning.

Legalistic Bondage

I want to share something with you from Galatians chapter five. This is a warning for those who have found freedom and have come into a proper knowledge of Jesus Christ. Don't let someone come along and mess you up.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye were fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” (Galatians 5:1-9)

The Apostle Paul issues a warning. It is the same thing Peter is addressing in 2 Peter. A heresy had come into the church. The Judaizers were causing people to be circumcised before they could get saved. They associated circumcision with salvation. Peter himself was deceived in this. Paul had to come along and correct Peter of his errors. That is why Peter knows what he is talking about.

Paul says, “if I would have taught circumcision no one would be persecuting me.” People like the legalism stuff. Paul preached salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. Because of that, he is now being persecuted. Once saved, a person finds freedom from every rule keeping religion. Paul warns them they can be led back into bondage by these beguilers. Paul says, “who is it that messed you up?” “You started out so good.” “You were

doing well.” “Then someone came along and messed you up.” “Who is it that messed you up?”

I have seen many people fall victim to these kind of things. I have seen people come to Christ and they start off well. They love the Lord, serving, and growing. Then they get tangled up with the wrong person, some beguiler from work or something. Then a pride issue pops up. They think they are smarter than everyone else. They think they are smarter than their pastor, smarter than their parents, or any wise counsel provided by God. Instead of listening to the Godly wisdom around them, they listen to the beguiler from work.

You were set free at one time. To go back and get tangled up in some sort of religious legalism makes no sense. Your pride is killing you. You can easily find yourself in worse bondage than you were before. Be careful of these things. There are people trying to suck you in with their enticing words, appealing to your lust.

In Matthew there is a parable where a demon is cast out. The demon goes looking for a place where he might land. When the demon finds no place he returns back to the place where it all started. He finds the place nice and swept. The demon goes out and finds seven of his demon buddies and they move back in. The man, who was once free, is now seven times worse than he was originally. (Matthew 12: 43-45)

Anyone can get sucked in. Then the enemy will use you to suck other people in. *“But it is happened unto them according to a true proverb, that the dog turned to his own vomit again; and that the sow washed to her wallowing in the mire.”* (2 Peter 2:22) If you get delivered, stay free, stay clean. If you came out of some sort of a legalistic religion don’t get sucked back into it.

Chapter Eight (2 Peter 3:1-18)

Always Reminding Us

Peter's main concern in this chapter is if we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. He connects it with the soon return of Christ. We should be living with some sense of urgency and understanding. The Lord's return is very near, and we will be held accountable for what we know.

"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:" (2 Peter 3:1) Peter says, "I want to remind you of something." He said the same thing in chapter one. It is always good to be reminded. Peter is not telling them something they don't know. They have already been instructed in these things through the prophets and the apostles. He is just stirring up their minds by way of remembrance.

Scoffing

"That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us apostles of the Lord and Savior: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lust, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:2-4)

In the last days there is going to be people scoffing the whole idea of the Lord's return. I believe it will sound something like this, "our fathers talked about the coming of the Lord, our grandfathers talked about the coming of the Lord, his father before him talked about the coming of the Lord, and it hasn't happened yet." Therefore, they conclude, if it hasn't happened yet it's not going to happen. That's the kind of scoffing I picture in my mind. The argument among Christians today centers on "how and when" he is going to come. But, it is about to shift to "if" he is going to come.

Honestly, I have yet to witness any of this. I have not seen anyone scoffing the teaching of Jesus return. Churches today are conducting seminars, having Bible studies, books are being written about the soon return of Christ. We have Sunday night eschatology studies on the Book of Revelation and Daniel. There might be some scoffing from the lost world but not much. I'm not saying it doesn't happen. I just haven't heard much of it.

Dr. Bill Vinson would point out something that would get me to thinking. Our scoffing is not always verbal with words. We can scoff by our actions and behavior. I anticipate the day is coming when the return of Christ will be mocked from our pulpits. I keep my ears peeled for it. But, pay attention to how we mock God with our behavior.

If we believe the Lord's return is imminent it would change everything about how we live our life and how we conduct church. We would focus on things of eternal value. We would not waste time on temporal things. Our priorities would be different.

We may not realize it, but we are scoffing God just by the way we live our life. The lost world around us can see it but we can't. The hypocrisy is blaring. If we truly believe the Lord's return is near we would be more bold with our witness. We would live with a greater sense of urgency.

Unsaved people are living for something too. Lost people are trying to develop a utopian society based on their lust. They have their notions of what the world should be. In verse three he mentions, "walking after their own lust." But, he's not talking about lost people in that verse. This is the church. Peter is reminding believers what was spoken by the holy prophets and apostles.

As believers in Jesus we are not setting up a utopian society. Rather, We live in anticipation of His soon return. When Jesus returns he will set up his Kingdom. Can you see the difference? The lost world is not concerned with the Lord's return. If Christians were concerned we would display more urgency. We would lay hold of Jesus and live for him. We would live with a sense of calling and purpose. We would get the word out, live it, and share it with others. We may not be hearing verbal scoffing right now but that doesn't mean scoffing isn't taking place.

Our Response

"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and partition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:5-7)

This is our response to the scoffers. Remind them that God is not inactive. God has already done much. He created the world. The world became so sinful He destroyed it in the flood. The old world of Noah's day was destroyed with a flood. There is going to be

another judgment. These are more than just a talking points. Look at everything God has already done by His Word.

Look at those verses again and notice the emphasis on God's Word. In verse five, "by the **word** of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of water..." Move on to verse six, "**whereby** the world that then was being overflowed with water perished." The word "whereby" is reference to the Word of God. Then to verse seven, "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same **word** are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

It is the Word of God that holds it all together. The Word of God created the earth. The Word of God sustains the earth. The Word of God judges the earth. Apart from the Word of God we would not be here. It seems kind of crazy to scoff the Word of God at this point.

One Day

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3: 8-9)

This is a very important verse. It is God's desire for every person to be saved. God is demonstrating a tremendous amount of patience with us. He is demonstrating more patience with us than he did with the old world of Noah's day. The judgment reserved unto fire is practically here.

God is patiently waiting for more to be saved. This speaks to both God's patience and how fast time flies. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, God is patient. A thousand years is as one day, time flies. However, His patience will come to an end.

Dr. Vinson began to associate this with the millennial reign of Christ. Don't dismiss the idea, spend a little time thinking about it. The verses just previous to these talked about the Lord's return. This is not to be read as a mathematical formula. But, somehow Peter just condensed everything down to a day.

When we start thinking about these things there is a lot going on. There is a lot of things playing out right now, before our very eyes. "One day" the Lord will come again, we know that, unless you are one of the scoffers. God will wait a "day" and in that time those who will be saved, get saved. God will establish his millennial reign on the earth. There will be people saved during that time as well. I know all of these things are subject to

interpretation. I am not here to argue details. Everyone has their own notions of how it will play out. But, it all plays out as if it's a day.

Burned Up

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversations and godliness, Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (2 Peter 3:10-12)

There's a lot being compressed into Peter's one day. It is going to be shocking. There is an important question being asked here. Considering the judgement, “What manner of persons ought we be?” The answer to the question is, “look for and hasten the coming of the day of the Lord.”

If we are hastening the coming day of the Lord we will be out there living this stuff. The trials we face right now is hastening the coming day of the Lord. It is our responsibility to be out there carrying the burden. Live with a sense of calling and urgency, share the gospel, because the day of the Lord is at hand.

After the Great White Throne Judgment, heaven and earth will be burned up and a new heaven and a new earth will be created. Now, if we believe this stuff, and we are not scoffers, it will make a huge difference in the way we look at things. Pointing people to Jesus hastens the Day of the Lord. Currently he is holding off, waiting for more people to get saved. God wants to see as many people as possible get saved. We should be the same way.

Peter is asking the church, what kind of person should we be? Make your life count for something, redeem the time. Stop wasting time on worldly pursuits. Our pursuits should be on things of eternal value because everything around us is going to be burned up.

Peter talks about the elements. God is the one who brings the elements together and He holds the elements together with His Word. Once God is finished, everything is going to be burned by fire. Consider these verses from 1 Corinthians.

“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be

burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved yet as by fire.” (1Corinthians 3:13-15)

Everything we spend our lives doing is going to be tested by fire. All of our worldly pursuits, and ambitions, will be burned up, all of it. The only thing that survives is our service to the Him. Everything else goes up in flames. We are supposed to be storing up for ourselves treasure in heaven, not on this earth. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21) We must put our attention on spiritual matters. Invest in things of heaven. If there is no eternal value, it is a waste of time.

Gains and Losses

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:13-16)

This is the warning. When we are living our own life, instead of pursuing after God, we will suffer eternal losses. To “wrest with scripture” means we twist them around to suit our lust for temporal rewards. Don’t do that. The sacrifice we make now, on behalf of others, has eternal rewards. I think this is a good time to read about the new heaven from Revelation. Let this encourage you.

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these things are true and faithful.” (Revelation 21:1-5)

Don't waste your life. Don't waste your salvation. Live your life with a sense of urgency and calling, not for the benefit of self, but for the benefit of others, to the glory of God, redeeming the time for the days are evil.

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall into your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:17-18)

These are Peter's last words. He dies shortly after this letter is written. The Lord's return is very near. Before we know it every one of us will be standing before the judgment seat of Christ. We will give an account of what we've done in the flesh whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10) Make your life count. Don't waste your salvation. Live for the Lord now. Tell others about Jesus. God has been extremely patient with us, but this life comes to an end sooner than any of us realize.

Conclusion

I feel like I have accomplished something by reaching the end of this study. It feels good being reminded of so many important things. We must have a grasp of these important doctrines. Peter's letters are meant to encourage us in hard times.

Much time has been spent looking at the doctrine of salvation in this study. Over-and-over again we are reminded not only of justification but the importance of sanctification as well. It is in almost every chapter. Not only are we reminded of grace but also the importance of good works. These are things every believer must hear.

There are reminders of our calling and what it means to follow Jesus in this book. Our personhood might be holy, but our behavior takes effort. The mind of Christ is one of self-denial and sacrifice. Our mind must be the same.

This book helps us see the importance of being on God's path instead of making our own path. The trials we face are meaningful and prepares us for hard times ahead. Being on God's path will take us into maximum glory. We can draw upon that for the trials we face today.

Now that we have been reminded, we need to remind others. Use this little book however you see fit. This book is made available for free. There is no copyright. All Bible quotations are KJV and in the public domain. You are encouraged to make as many copies as you want for study groups or for free distribution among friends. Now go, make a difference, start reminding others of the simple truths they should already know.

During the time of the writing of 1 & 2 Peter Christians were hated, especially Jewish Christians. They were being persecuted and were scattered into regions that typically did not have a Jewish population. They were going into those regions just trying to flee the persecution.

The apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter was given the task of writing to the Jewish Christians. Both Peter and Paul are basically hitting the same topics, at about the same time, but they have different audiences. We will look at what God gives us in these letters and you will see what He also expects from Christians today as we live through our own trials.

Pastor Travis Welch has served in Texas and Oklahoma during his years of ministry, as well as assisting in teaching for 4disciples.org. His only goal in each of his books is to bring glory to God and make greater disciples for his Lord Jesus Christ.

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