

Developing Patient Determination

A Study of 1 & 2 Peter

by

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Lesson 1
From Peter,
To the Scattered Elect
1 Peter 1:1-2

The Author, Peter

This book bears the name of its author, as 1:1 would indicate. Peter is mentioned some 160 times in scripture. His name was Simon, but Jesus said he would be called Cephas, which is a stone (John 1:42). Peter is the Greek word for a stone, thus we have his other name. It is interesting to note that he identifies himself as Peter, which is the name the Lord gave him, instead of Simon, which was the name his parents gave him. He further calls himself an apostle, which means "one sent" (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:7-8).

Very little is known about Peter's early or later life. He was the son of Jona, or Jonas (Matthew 16:17). His home town appears to have been Bethsaida (John 1:44). Later, he evidently moved to Capernaum and lived in a house with his mother-in-law (Matthew 8:5; 14-15). It is impossible to tell when he got married, but Paul said Peter and the Lord's brothers took a wife with them in their travels (1 Corinthians 9:5). Peter did not have the formal schooling some of the Jews thought necessary for one to teach God's word (Acts 4:13). We only learn of the end of Peter's life through Jesus' prophecy in John 21:18-19.

Peter was first brought to Jesus by his brother,

Andrew (John 1:35-42). His name appears first on all four lists of the apostles (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:13). Peter, James and John enjoyed a special closeness with the Lord. They were there when Jesus raised Jarius' daughter from the dead, when Jesus was transfigured and when Jesus went through his deeply moving preparations for the betrayal and crucifixion (Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Matthew 17:1-9; 26:36-46).

Many readily identify with Peter because he is such a character of highs and lows. After Jesus taught the multitudes from Simon's boat, Jesus bid him to cast out into the deep and let down his nets. Peter was skeptical because they had fished all night without a catch, but obedient, and the result was a catch so great that it filled Peter's and Andrew's boat and James' and John's boat to the point of sinking. This caused Peter to feel his own unworthiness and ask the Lord to leave (Luke 5:1-11). When Jesus walked across the troubled sea, it was Peter who started to walk to him on the water but sank when he took his eyes off of Jesus and doubted (Matthew 14:24-33).

When large numbers of his disciples turned away from following Jesus and he asked the twelve if they would go away too, it was Peter who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-69). It was Peter who confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet, later, Peter was told by Jesus to, "Get behind Me, Satan," when he rebuked Jesus for foretelling his death. Peter went from one extreme to another in the washing of feet matter (John 13:1-10). Cephas boasted of his faithfulness when Jesus prophesied the denial (Luke 22:31-34), yet he slept while Jesus prayed (Matthew 26:38-

41). Perhaps to make up for that and to prove his faithfulness, he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (Matthew 26:50-52). Then, Peter forsook Christ and fled, followed afar off, stayed without in the palace and denied his Lord three times, which caused him to weep bitterly (Matthew 26:56-58, 69-75).

After Jesus' resurrection, Peter ran with John to the empty tomb (John 20:1-10). He saw Jesus alive (1 Corinthians 15:5). He swam 100 yards to land to be with Jesus and professed his love for him, but did not boast (John 21:1-17). He saw the Lord ascend and took the lead in choosing Matthias to take Judas' place. He preached the first recorded gospel sermon and healed the lame man at the temple. Luke tells us of his boldness before the Sanhedrin and of his second arrest and the beating he received (Acts 1:4-26; 2:14-40; 3:1-11; 4:1-22; 5:17-42). Through him, God first sent the message of salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 10). He helped defend the Gentiles' rights in the gospel (Acts 11:1-18; 15:1-11), but showed shameful prejudice in Antioch and Paul had to withstand him to the face (Galatians 2:9-21). In short, many can identify with him in his mistakes and hope they do half as well in boldness for the Lord.

The Addressees, Scattered Strangers

It is such an author who writes this book "To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). The ones addressed are strangers in that they no longer lived in their native land. At the time of Peter's writing, they lived in the Roman provinces in Asia Minor, which today is Turkey. In the

LXX (Greek Old Testament), the word for dispersion was used for the Jews scattered to foreign nations (compare John 7:35). Here Peter seems to use it for the Christians who had been scattered by the persecution. It is good to also note 1:14 where Peter refers to his readers as those who formerly lusted in ignorance. Such would not ordinarily be used of Jews.

Certainly, they are members of the Lord's church because they are also called "elect" (1:2). Some would say the letter is only to those of Jewish background because Peter preached to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:9). However, that seems to stretch a point. Paul did not go exclusively to the Gentiles (Acts 13:5, 14:1). Why should we suppose Peter would go, or write, exclusively to the Jews? In fact, Peter describes them as those called "out of darkness into His marvelous light" and those who "once were not a people" (2:9-10). Would the Gentiles think it strange that Jews abstained from their sinful excesses (4:1-4)? These things point to the book being written to all Christians scattered abroad in the world.

The book was written when these Christians were experiencing persecution (1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-19). They were suffering as Christians. The book was either written immediately before the start of Nero's encouragement of persecution directed through the provincial governors toward Christians, or during it, thus 64-65 A.D. Peter wrote the book with the purpose of encouraging them to stand fast for the truth (5:12). Knowing that Christ suffered quietly, though falsely charged, would encourage them to carry on (2:21-25). May all who read the book today find the same patient determination!

God's Elect

Thayer says elect means "picked out, chosen," and foreknowledge means "forethought, pre-arrangement." So, they were specially selected according to a plan God had previously made. Christians are chosen by God (John 15:16-19). It is important to ask if this choosing is conditional, or unconditional. Since Peter goes on to indicate God does not have respect of persons, it must be concluded it is conditional based upon one's actions (1:17). One must be "in Christ" to receive all spiritual blessings. "In him" he is holy and without blame. He has redemption through "his blood." In Christ, "we have obtained an inheritance." In Christ Christians are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:3, 4, 7, 11, 13). Obviously then, the selection is pre-planned by God in Christ. Whatever conditions found to being in Christ will also be conditions of one's being of the elect (Galatians 3:26-27; 1 John 1:6-10; 2:5-6, 23-25).

Those picked-out ones are set apart of the Holy Spirit. Since Christians are sanctified by the word of God and it was the Holy Spirit who inspired men to write and speak the word, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit must take place when one obeys the word (John 17:17; 16:13; 2 Peter 1:21). Christians are set apart unto obedience, that is, set apart to keep on obeying. Christ is going to punish those who do not keep on obeying the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8). So also is Christ's blood set apart to continually cleanse his followers of those sins of ignorance into which they might fall (1 John 1:7). To these elect ones, Peter would extend greetings with the words grace and peace (1 Peter 1:2).

Discussion Questions

1. Describe some of the great highs and lows Peter experienced in his life.
2. What types of lows have you confronted? How did the Lord help Peter that might also be of help to you?
3. What events led to Peter addressing the book as he did?
4. What does the word "elect" mean? How does God elect someone?
5. In what sense are Christians set apart by the Holy Spirit? For what purpose?

Lesson 2

Heaven As An Inheritance

1 Peter 1:3-12

Praise God!

The word "blessed," which is used in 1 Peter 1:3, is not the word translated blessed in the beatitudes, which describes an inner happiness of the spiritual man. Instead, Thayer tells us it means "praised." It comes from the same Greek word from which the word eulogy comes (see also Romans 1:25; 9:5; 2 Corinthians 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3). God is to particularly be praised because of his great mercy which is displayed in Christians being allowed to be born again (John 3:1-8; Romans 6:1-11; James 1:18). That birth is into a life with a hope that lives with real promise. Those in the church were without hope before they were born into Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:12-13). The word "again" is reminiscent of the apostles' lost hope on the night of Christ's crucifixion (Luke 24:21). The Christians' hope is alive because Christ is alive from the grave and God can make them alive from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:16-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

Peter also describes the Christians' living hope as an inheritance, which is appropriate since verse 3 had talked of them being born like children into a family (1 Peter 1:4; Acts 20:32; Romans 8:13-17). Earthly inheritances are temporary and perishable (Matthew 6:19-20). The Christian's inheritance is permanent, lasting. It is also undefiled, in the sense that no sin or impurity will be allowed in heaven (Revelation 21:27). Woods says the

words "that does not fade away" come from the Greek word "amarantos." "The amaranth was a fabled flower whose bloom was perpetual, and whose loveliness never failed." The Christians' inheritance, then, will not run out, nor will its beauty be lost with the passage of time. The word "reserved" comes from a Greek word which indicates a military guard is keeping watch over the inheritance which is in heaven. Christians do not possess eternal life while on earth except in God's promise. It is kept for those who faithfully pursue God's will (1 John 2:25; Mark 10:28-30; Titus 1:2).

Just as a Christian's inheritance is guarded, so is the Christian guarded by God (1 Peter 1:5; Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:7). God guards the Christian through his faith. It is essential to realize, as Peter did, that one's faith can fail. So, each should do all within his power to avoid such failing (Luke 22:31-32; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Hebrews 3:12). He should desire to keep that faith constant until the last time, or day of judgment, when his final, complete, salvation will be revealed.

Rejoicing Despite Trials

They rejoiced because of all the things listed in verses 3-5. They rejoiced though they were enduring a time of heaviness brought on by the trials they were experiencing. Of course, the apostles, Paul and Silas also rejoiced in trials suffered for the Lord (Acts 5:40-42; 16:23-25). Such rejoicing is possible because of Jesus' great promise in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:10-12). Verses such as James 4:14 and Hebrews 11:25 help one to understand the "little while" of this passage. Even if

a Christian suffered throughout life, it would only be a little while compared to eternity (1 Peter 1:6; 2 Corinthians 4:17).

All Christians want to receive Christ's praise in the day of judgment (Matthew 25:21, 23, 34-36); the honor of a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:6-8); and the glory of living in heaven with God (Revelation 21:22-27). Because of that desire, the testing of one's faith is much more precious, or important, to him than the testing of gold. When gold goes through the fiery test, it comes out purified. The Christian's faith is very much like that gold (1 Peter 1:7; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; James 1:2-4).

The Ultimate Source of Rejoicing

After "Doubting" Thomas had seen the resurrected Jesus and proclaimed him as Lord, Jesus said, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Those words seem to echo in his ears as Peter speaks to these scattered Christians who have never seen Jesus, yet love him. This love is agape love, "which indicates an intelligent and purposeful love. It is the love which recognizes its object for what it is; it is the love of consideration and care; it is the love of good will which desires to serve and to promote the best interests of its object" (Kelcy). Belief in Jesus had brought them to a joyful state. Included is that joy of close association with and knowledge of Jesus (1 Peter 1:8; Acts 8:39; Philippians 4:4-7; 2 Corinthians 3:18: 4:6). Of course, present day Christians also look forward to the glory of heaven.

The ultimate source of every Christian's rejoicing is heaven, the end result of faith. Christians have salvation from past sins (Acts 2:38, 47; 22:16); salvation in the present, so long as they are walking in the light (1 John 1:7); and salvation in heaven (1 John 2:25). Peter was likely speaking of the last of these, though all three certainly could be said to yield rejoicing (1 Peter 1:9).

The Prophets Longed To Understand Salvation's Plan

Jesus may have referred to the prophets' desire to know about God's plan for the salvation of man when he spoke in Matthew 13:16-17 and Luke 10:23-24. These two verses give a unique glimpse of the nature of inspiration. Scripture plainly states that the prophets wrote as directed by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20-21). Peter indicates they wrote some things they did not comprehend and searched their own writings diligently to gain some understanding. They dug deep in study to understand the salvation about which they wrote (Isaiah 2:1-5; 52:13-15; Psalm 18:49; Hosea 1:10; 2:23). Of course, that salvation comes by grace, or unmerited favor. That grace was not for them, but for those who would live in the Christian age (Hebrews 11:39-40). The prophets wanted to know when the events about which they prophesied would take place. Specifically, they wanted to know about the time of Christ's suffering and the glory that would follow it (1 Peter 1:10-11; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22; 16:8-11).

The same Holy Spirit which inspired the Old Testament prophets also gave Paul, and others who preached in Asia Minor, the words to speak as they taught. Thus, the Holy Spirit foretold salvation's coming through

the prophets and announced that it was here through the apostles. Peter says angels had an intense desire to know God's plan for man's salvation, so they stooped down to look closely into it (1 Peter 1:12). Peter thus makes a case for the great value others placed on merely knowing about God's plan to take man to heaven. Those living under the law of Christ not only have such fully revealed to them, they also can enjoy the full reward!

Discussion Questions

1. List reasons Christians today should praise God.
2. Describe the Christian's inheritance, especially as it is portrayed by Peter.
3. Give some reasons Christians should rejoice, especially in times of trial.
4. What could be described as the ultimate source of a Christian's rejoicing? Why?
5. What did the prophets long to know? How could they write words and not know?

Lesson 3

The Christian's Call to be Holy

1 Peter 1:13-21

Because Salvation Has Arrived

Once Peter made it plain how specially favored Christ's followers were to be able to know and participate in salvation's plan, he went on to appeal for those living under that promise to live holy lives. The people of those days would gird up their loins so they could work unencumbered. This would be much like a man taking off a suit coat to do some hard physical labor. While one cannot literally gird up his mind, he can prepare himself for future events by training his mind with prayer and study. The word "sober" conveys the idea of thoughtful and careful. Christians can exhibit the self-control implied here because of their hope, or goal, of heaven. To receive that hope, one must be faithful to the end of his life, or until Jesus comes (1 Peter 1:13; Matthew 25:1-13; Galatians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Peter's next description of Christians would literally be rendered as children of obedience and suggests they ought to act as if they belong to obedience. This should be done instead of putting on the ways of the world and acting like worldly people act (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:2; 5:6-7; Colossians 3:4-10). That was the past lifestyle of those to whom Peter wrote. It was the way they lived when they were in ignorance, which would suggest they were

Gentiles (1 Peter 1:14; Acts 17:30; Ephesians 4:17-18).

Striving To Be Holy, Like God

Christians should try instead to conform to God, who is holy (Hebrews 12:14). The idea is set apart from sinfulness for God's service. This is very similar to the Lord's instruction in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:48). The quote of verse 16 comes from Leviticus 11:44-45; 20:7-8 and 26. God is holy in that he is separated from sin and all manner of evil (Isaiah 59:1-2). Peter notes that God called them and Paul tells us the call comes through the gospel (1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Peter did not question whether they would call on God as their Father, but gave direction for how they should do that calling. First, they needed to be reminded that God is no respecter of persons but will judge each based upon his deeds (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; 6:7-8). Also, when one calls upon the Father, he should remember he is just a pilgrim in this life. This life should be lived in fear. This is not trembling fear, but the fear Woods describes as the "worshipful awe of obedient children toward their beloved parents" (1 Peter 1:17).

The Priceless Nature of Christ's Blood

Further, Christians can approach this loving Father because they know He brought them back from sin with the blood of His own Son. Christians were not bought back with some of the perishable things men hoard up, thus they could not think they earned it or bought it for themselves. They were bought back from an empty life of sin learned

from their fathers. This ought to warn those who simply become something religiously because their parents believed it that way. The word "precious" means highly valued. It is sad that so many pursue the getting of gold and material wealth all their lives with all their might and will spurn the blood of Jesus which is eternally valuable. Christ is our passover lamb that causes eternal death to passover us (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7).

Just as we buy insurance hoping we will never need to use it, God had a plan to save man from sin in the event man chose that course. That plan was made before the world was formed (Ephesians 1:4). Notice Paul said God chose all those who are in Christ, not God chose those who should be in Christ. While the plan was in God's mind for years, it was not made known until Christ came into the world (Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:1-6; Colossians 1:25-27).

Christ was made known for the sake of believers. In fact, it is through Christ that one is made a believer in God. The act that really proves Jesus was God's Son, and indeed that there is a God, is his resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:32-36; 3:14-15; 4:10; 5:29-32; 13:29-33; Romans 1:4). Christ is now glorified in that he is seated at God's right hand. All of this, as has been noted, produces faith in God (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:16-23). Obviously, this is also the source of the Christian's hope for a home in heaven (1 Peter 1:20-21).

Discussion Questions

1. In what way might you gird up your mind?
2. Contrast what Peter's readers acted prior to becoming Christians and how Peter said they should act.
3. What one word describes God? How should Christians approach Him?
4. Discuss the various types of treasures people store up on earth.
5. Describe the special treasure used to buy us out of sin.

Lesson 4
Born
Through The Word of God
1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Purified In Obeying the Truth

Their souls had been cleansed from sin's defilement, at the very moment they obeyed the truth. The truth is the word of God (John 17:17), which was delivered by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). To fail to obey that truth is to perish (2 Thessalonians 2:10-13; verse 14 tells us we are called to belief of the truth by the gospel). One of the purposes of Christians' purification was the production of love of the brethren that was true, or not hypocritical. Such love will come out of a pure heart with the greatest effort behind it, which is the meaning of fervently (1 Peter 1:22).

The purification Peter spoke of in verse 22 took place in the new birth. The new birth takes place through the word of God (Luke 8:11; James 1:18). Babies are born of corruptible seed, as are all fleshly and physical things, but Christians are born of a seed that will never perish, God's word (compare John 3:1-7). It is alive in the sense that it is always active and is able to give life. It abides in that it will never perish (1 Peter 1:23; Matthew 24:35).

The Temporary Material World Versus the Abiding Word

One would never know it by observing the way

people live grasping after all they can find in this material world, but all this is temporary. Peter uses a quote which comes from Isaiah 40:6-8. Clearly, Christians are surrounded by things that are temporary. All flesh will die as surely as grass goes from green to brown in the fall and winter months. All of man's greatness and his achievements will fall away like the flowers do. In contrast, the Lord's word is permanent. That word is the good news God's people preach. Part of what makes it good is its lasting value versus the temporary good of things and accomplishments in this life (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Because Christians are born again by the word of God which lasts forever, they should put off from themselves, or renounce, the sins Peter names. Kelcy says the word translated "laying aside", "apotithemi" means "put off" and was used of the literal act of taking off clothes." It is good to think of these sins as filthy, stinking clothes that one would take off and throw away. "Malice" is ill will or the desire to injure others, according to Thayer. He says "guile" is "a lure, snare; hence craft, deceit". "Hypocrisy" is a word describing one who pretends to be something he is not. "Envy" is descriptive of one who does not like to see any good come into anyone else's life. Such a person is still very much self-centered.

When one speaks against others to ruin their reputations or to cause others to think less of someone else, he is involved in "evil speaking". The same Greek word is translated "backbitings" in 2 Corinthians 12:20. The word "all", which Peter uses three times in this verse, means all kinds of the thing described. Of course, all the sins described here work directly against brotherly love (1:22)

and are of a worldly, or corruptible seed (1 Peter 2:1).

Drinking the Milk of the Word

Having emptied their lives of the above, Christians should vigorously and repeatedly seek the milk of the word, just as a baby cries for milk which is his only source of food. After all, Christians are babies in the gospel (see 1:23 and its comments). At the end of 1 Peter 2:2, the American Standard Version reads, "that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." Thus, the Christians' longing for and feeding on the word causes them to grow in Christ toward the final purpose of a home in heaven.

Concerning 1 Peter 2:3, Kelcy notes that "if" in the original does not express any doubt, but is a statement of fact. Peter's words come from Psalm 34:8 as it appears in the LXX, or Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. The thought is that the milk of the word tastes good and produces good results so Christians will continue to have a strong desire for it.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe what purification from sin means to you and how Peter says it occurs.
2. Give some examples which demonstrate the temporary nature of even those material things which may have seemed permanent.
3. What filthy clothes of sins does Peter say we should throw away?
4. What illustration does Peter use to show the way Christians should crave the word?
5. Discuss ways you can cultivate a longing for the word this week.

Lesson 5

A Spiritual House of Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4-10

Christ, "A Living Stone"

In the Christian's constant seeking after the milk of the word, he will be coming again and again to the Lord. Peter described Him as "a living stone." Christ is a living stone in two ways. He is alive from the dead to die no more and he is a source of life to his followers (Acts 2:22-24; John 14:6; Romans 6:23). Thayer says this word "stone" describes a building stone. Such a stone would be purposefully cut out for use in a particular work, which would well describe Christ (1 Timothy 1:15; Luke 19:10).

The last part of 1 Peter 2:4 comes from Psalm 118:22, which Jesus applied to himself and his kingdom in Matthew 21:42-46. Peter also used this same passage in his first speech before the council (Acts 4:11). While men did not see Jesus as filling their needs and so rejected him, Woods says literally he was "by the side of God...chosen" and precious, or worthy of honor.

A Spiritual Temple of "Living Stones"

The apostle portrays the church as God's spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:9-17). Its members are living stones because they are part of the body of the living Lord (Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:47). They

are built as a house for God, or his dwelling place, which reminds us of Jesus' words in Matthew 16:13-20. In this spiritual temple Christians serve as priests set apart for the Lord's service. They are dependant upon no other human to offer up sacrifices before God. Instead, all of their sacrifices are acceptable to God because they are offered "through" Jesus Christ. Of course, Christians can only approach God through Christ (1 Peter 2:5; John 16:23-24; 15:16).

As further explanation of the nature of the church, Peter refers to Isaiah 28:16. Zion is the hill on which Jerusalem was built (1 Kings 8:1). The doors to the church first swung open on Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2). In his comment on Ephesians 2:20, Lipscomb wrote, "The cornerstone is a massive stone in which the two lines of the wall at their foundation meet, by which the true direction of the whole walls depended, since the slightest imperfection in the cornerstone would be indefinitely multiplied along the course of the walls." Isaiah said, "Whoever believes will not act hastily." Peter, by inspiration gives us its full meaning by writing, "And he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame." Those placing their trust in the Lord will not be made ashamed to the point of desiring to flee. Those who trust in and obey Christ become a part of him and his precious nature (1 Peter 2:6-7; see verse 4).

Consequences of Rejecting Christ

Those who reject Jesus and intentionally disobey will discover, like the builders (Psalm 118:22), Jesus is the one on whom God had laid the lines of his plan. They have rejected the only road of salvation. The apostle uses a

quote from Isaiah 8:14 to show what happens to those who do not believe in and obey Christ. Jesus coupled the same two quotes Peter uses in verses 7-8 in Luke 20:17-18. To these unbelievers, Christ is a rock in the road of unbelief over which they stumble (compare Luke 2:34 and 1 Corinthians 1:18-25). The word "offense" comes from the word in the original which suggests the stick that trips a trap. The disobedient, or those who are outside of Christ, will be crushed by the stone they have rejected (1 Peter 2:8).

Results of Obeying Christ

In contrast, the obedient are an "elect race" (A.S.V.) in Christ (Revelation 14:13). They are set free from their sins by Christ's blood and made to be kings and priest in God's service (Revelation 1:5-6; 5:10). Christians are a nation under Christ the king. They are holy because they are set apart for his service (Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 5:25-27) As an alternative to "His own special people," the A. S. V. puts "a people for God's own possession." God purchased the members of Christ's body with the blood of his Son and set them apart to His special use (Romans 5:8-10; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:23). God's special use for his people is to shine with His glory as those who have been called out of sin's darkness into the light of the gospel (Matthew 5:13-16; John 3:19-21; Romans 13:12).

The expressions Peter used in 1 Peter 2:9 to describe Christians are reminiscent of descriptions of Israel used in the Old Testament (Isaiah 43:20-21; Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2). That is because Christians are now the Israel of God (Galatians 6:15-16; Matthew 21:43;

Romans 9:8; 2:28-29; Galatians 3:16, 26-29, 7; Philippians 3:3). He follows those with a quotation from Hosea 2:23 which applied by Paul to the Gentiles in Romans 9:24-26 (compare Ephesians 2:11-13). It seems likely that the letter was sent to a great number of Gentiles. In Christ, all Christians become God's people and receive mercy in the form of the forgiveness of sins (1 Peter 2:10).

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways might Christ be described as living? A stone? A rejected stone?
2. What thoughts arise when you think of the church as a temple and individual Christians as living stones and priests?
3. In what sense do you feel those who refuse to believe in Christ will be crushed?
4. What encouraging descriptions does Peter use to describe the obedient?
5. How does being one of God's people and receiving His mercy impact your life?

Lesson 6
Living As
a Part of God's Temple
1 Peter 2:11-21

Setting An Example for the World

Because they were a part of God's temple, Peter lovingly appealed to his readers, as those who were not living in their true home and would only stay a short while, to keep themselves back from sinful desires which aggressively fought against the eternal part of their beings. He urged them to strive to remain pure for the sake of those unconverted (Gentiles) who, though speaking ill against them, would finally glorify God for the good works they had seen Christians do in His name. Evidently these who glorify will be led to obey and thus glorify God either in the day of obedience or judgment (1 Peter 2:11-12).

The Christian and Government

Peter had received some personalized instruction from the Lord as to his attitude toward governments and may have heard what Christ told Pilate (Matthew 17:24-27; John 19:8-11). Evidently, the early church was frequently accused of being an enemy of the Roman empire, as Christ had been (Acts 17:5-9; John 19:12). Peter encouraged the brethren to obey man-made laws "for the Lord's sake." Such was certainly the Lord's will and their actions would show they were not following a Lord who encouraged rebellion. Of course, Peter's own actions and words

suggest one should submit only until man's law would cause him to violate God's law (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29). The king, in Peter's time, would have been the emperor of Rome, the supreme civil authority of his day. Governors, like Pilate, Felix and Festus, ruled as he directed. The basic purpose of human government was, and is, to keep order, punish evil doers and praise good works (compare Romans 13:1-7).

The apostle indicates it is both God's will that governments keep control and that Christians live lives full of good deeds. Woods notes the word "silence" literally comes from a word that means "to muzzle." Thus, the false accusations raised against Christians by evil men, who were purposefully ignorant as to their conduct, would be muzzled by the good deeds so obvious in their lives. So, Peter said Christians were freed from the law, from the bondage of sin and from death (Galatians 4:21-5:6; John 8:32-36). They were freed from sin to serve God (Galatians 5:13; Romans 6:1-2, 16-18). Their daily dealings with all men should have been designed to show each a personal respect and allow him to maintain his dignity. In addition, their love for the brotherhood should have been readily apparent (compare Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:10; Hebrews 13:1). Christians were to hold God in respect, or awe (Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13). Further, the king was to be afforded the respect due his office (1 Peter 2:13-17).

Patiently Suffering for the Master

Peter knew that in Christ, all men are equal (Galatians 3:28-29). However, that did not change the

obligation a Christian would have to those over him. Even slaves were instructed to obey good and bad, or crooked, masters (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Timothy 6:1-2). These verses teach Christians that service to Christ is a life changing thing. The apostle said they were to strive to give their best to others under all circumstances because they were the Lord's representatives. Servants could subject themselves to bad masters because they knew they were enduring wrongs in order to live a life pleasing to God and be acceptable in His sight (1 Peter 2:18-19).

No particular honor goes to the man who suffers patiently when he is beaten for his mistakes and wrong doing. However, Peter assured his readers that God would accept and honor the man who endured beatings wrongfully administered by a bad master because he wanted to please God (Matthew 5:10). Woods says "into such a life as they were experiencing had they been called (by the gospel) to do good and to suffer patiently." Not only did slaves who became Christians suffer, but all Christians must suffer for the sake of their Lord (2 Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29). After all, He suffered, so his followers must be prepared to suffer. The word "example" presents the idea of a teacher writing the correct letters above and the students trying to copy them below on a page. Peter also portrayed Christ as having left heel prints in sand, or snow. He said Christians should try to place their feet exactly where Christ's were when he walked on earth as the obedient Son of God (1 Peter 2:20-21).

Discussion Questions

1. How should recognition of our short earthly stay and watchful unbelievers impact my daily life?
2. Ordinarily, what should a Christian's attitude be toward government? Under what circumstances would that not be the case?
3. How should a Christian behave so as to silence his critics?
4. How might we apply instructions regarding the slave-master relationship?
5. Under what conditions is there honor in suffering? How can we benefit from Christ's example?

Lesson 7

Christ's Suffering

1 Peter 2:22-25

The Lord Suffered Despite Living Sinlessly

Peter, in 2:22, quoted from the LXX rendering of Isaiah 53:9. Woods says the word translated "committed no" is from the Greek meaning never even once. Kelcy tells us, "The word translated guile denotes deceit or treachery." Jesus was accused of being a devil (Matthew 12:24); a glutton and a winebibber (Matthew 11:19); and a blasphemer (Matthew 9:3; John 10:36). They spit on him and slapped him (Matthew 26:67); scourged him and placed a scarlet robe on his back, a reed in his hand and crown of thorns on his brow and mocked him as a king (Matthew 27:26-31); the people passing by ridiculed him and told him to save himself; and the chief priests, scribes and elders made fun of him by saying he saved others but could not save himself (Matthew 27:39-44). Jesus went through all of that without saying a word (Isaiah 53:7), though he could have called upon twelve legions of angels to defend him (Matthew 26:53). Throughout his life, and especially during the extreme suffering of the crucifixion, Jesus placed his trust in God and committed Himself to carrying out His will (Matthew 26:39, 42, 54). God was worthy of Christ's trust and that of all Christians, as was proven in His resurrection from the dead (1 Peter 2:23).

Woods' comments prove helpful for those who remember Jesus' strong statements about the scribes and Pharisees on certain occasions and may be confused by this verse.

The pointed words of condemnation which Jesus sometimes hurled at the Pharisees and others (Matthew 7:5; 16:3; 22:18; 23:13; 23:25-26) were not the bitter taunts of personal malice, nor the retaliatory retorts for insults received, but the probings of one capable of looking into the innermost recesses of the heart and exposing the corruption there, with the design of saving, if possible, the persons so possessed.

The Purpose of Christ's Death

Peter had gone through a time when he did not understand the purpose of Christ's death (Matthew 16:21-23). In 1 Peter 2:24, he explains the full meaning of that great event by telling that He bore our sins on the cross. Christ bore the consequences of sins when He died for obedient sinners (Romans 6:23; Matthew 20:28; 26:28; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 5:6, 9-10; 1 Corinthians 11:24; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Hebrews 2:9; 9:26; 10:10). The tree would, of course, be the cross. Jesus died that Christians might die to sin and live to do what is right in the sight of God (Romans 6:1-18; Colossians 3:1-10). God's commandments are righteousness, so those keeping them would be righteous (Psalm 119:172). In an obvious reference to Isaiah 53:5, Peter spoke of "stripes," which Thayer says means "a bruise, wale, wound that trickles with

blood." This would seem to refer to the scourging Jesus experienced on the way to the cross (Matthew 27:26).

Perhaps we have read the words "scourged Jesus" without a full understanding for too long. Jesus' sufferings are well explained by Dr. Davis in an article which was first printed in Arizona Medicine and then reprinted in Great Commission News.

Preparations for the scourging was carried out. The prisoner is stripped of his clothing and his hands tied to a post above his head. It is doubtful whether the Romans made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter of scourging. The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Pharisees, always making sure that the law was strictly kept, insisted that only thirty-nine lashes be given. (in case of miscount, they were sure of remaining within the law.) The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the end of each.

The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood (sic. blood) from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally

spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead (sic. lead) first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death (sic.), the beating is finally stopped.

It was by such stripes that Christians were healed from the dreaded disease of sin.

The figure of sheep wandering away from the fold, confused, in grave danger from wild animals, while traversing potentially dangerous terrain, represents the soul that has wandered from the fold of God by stepping into the path of sin (Luke 15:3-7). Those who are Christians are back in the fold of God and under the watchful eye of Jesus who is the shepherd and bishop, or overseer, of their souls. A shepherd guides his sheep with love and tends to their every need (1 Peter 2:25; John 10:1-18; Hebrews 13:20)

Discussion Questions

1. List several words and their meanings which describe Jesus' sinless life.

2. How can you rectify Peter's statement that Jesus did not revile in return with the fact that He so pointedly condemned the Pharisees and some others?

3. Give an explanation of the purpose of Christ's suffering and death.

4. In your own words, describe some of the things Jesus suffered.

5. In what sense might you have been considered a

wandering sheep? If that has changed, explain how.

Lesson 8

Following Christ in Daily Living

1 Peter 3:1-12

Submission Applied to Wives

Peter continues, in 1 Peter 3:1, to give instructions on submission, as the word "likewise" would indicate. In 2:13 he dealt with government and in 2:18 with masters. God knew that in any endeavor where more than one person was involved someone would have to take the lead, so, in marriage he made the husband the head over the wife (Ephesians 5:22-29; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:5). Husbands are directed to love their wives, so this submission should be a happy one. This is especially true since they are to love their wives as they do their own body and as Christ loved the church and died for it. The submission enjoined by Peter is particularly directed to the Christian woman whose husband has not obeyed the gospel. Woods tells us, "Do not obey" "is translated from a term which denotes a degree of antagonism in addition to disobedience, plus an element of stubbornness. It means, literally, not to allow one's self to be persuaded." Such men will refuse to hear their wife's pleadings, but may be persuaded to obey by the good example they see in her daily Christian living.

Thayer says the word "observe" means, "to look

upon, view attentively; to watch." Evidently this unbelieving husband is watching his wife to see what impact Christianity will have on her. So, her reverent (meaning of fear) subjection to him will make a good impression (1 Peter 3:2). Woods notes that verses 3-4 should be regarded as a Hebraism, which is a figure of speech used to encourage others to do a good work. Just as John 6:27 does not forbid Christ's followers from working for their daily bread but encourages them to count spiritual meat as far more important, so does this verse encourage a Christian woman to be most concerned with her inward, spiritual beauty. She should not give over much attention to outward appearance, but should devote herself to adorning the inward man (Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16). This apparel will not perish with this earth, but will last through eternity. Her jewelry should be a mildness of disposition and gentle spirit. Such a person would not be selfish, proud, or stubborn. A yielding and patient attitude will truly adorn her life. God counts such women a prized possession.

In support of his previous point, Peter recalled the lives of faithful women of the past who placed their trust in God and hoped for His promises (Hebrews 11:11,23,35). They cloaked their lives in quiet subjection to their husbands and service to God. Coffman does well to point out that Sarah thought of Abraham as Lord even to herself when no one else was around (Genesis 18:12). Her calling him Lord simply shows she was in subjection. Woods says, "whose daughters you are" is literally, "whose daughters you became." The idea is that when they put on a meek and quiet spirit and lived in subjection they became Sarah's daughters by being like her in action. Christian

women continue to be Sarah's daughters as long as they do the Lord's will and do not let someone terrorize them into failing to continue in calm obedience (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Husbands' Treatment of Wives

As in 3:1; 2:13 and 18, Peter, in 3:7, is encouraging proper conduct so the world will see Christ in Christians' lives. Unlike heathen outside of Christ, Christian husbands should have knowledge of God's law and treat their wives with love and consideration (see 1 Corinthians 7:3-4; Ephesians 5:25-31; Colossians 3:19).

They should count their wives as precious, which is the meaning of the word translated, "giving honor." It has the same meaning which was observed in 1:19. It is not popular with some women but still true that man is generally physically stronger than women. (Coffman reminds us of the men's and women's tees at a golf course.) Woman is also an heir to eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:28). Thus, she is spiritually equal to the man and worthy of honor. Where Christianity has grown, women have generally seen their lot improve because of its teachings. Peter enjoins husbands to treat their wives in such a manner so that their prayers will not be interrupted. Discord in the family can break into our prayer life, as can any wrong treatment of a brother (Matthew 5:23-24).

Being A Blessing In the Lives of Others

Peter concludes his discussion of the Christian's treatment of others by telling all to have five special

attitudes. First, Christ's followers should be united in thought under the same Lord, baptized by one baptism into one body, through one Spirit, looking forward to one home in heaven, proclaiming one gospel and worshipping one God (Ephesians 4:1-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:13). Second, a conscious effort should be made to feel with others in joy and sorrow (1 Corinthians 12:26; Romans 12:15). Third, it is the duty of Christians to love each other as brothers from the same family (John 13:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:14). Fourth, believers are to be tenderhearted, or pitiful. The word here is the same as in Ephesians 4:32. Christians should be especially sensitive to the suffering of others (Hebrews 13:3). Fifth, God's children are to be courteous, or humbleminded, which is the opposite of a haughty, proud spirit. The first concern should be directed to the needs of others (1 Peter 3:8; Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:10).

Christians should not seek revenge, or to pay someone back for a wrong they may have committed against them (Romans 12:19-21; Matthew 5:38-44). Neither are they to speak evil about someone who has spoken evil about them. Instead, they should speak well of them, when possible, and call upon God to help them (1 Peter 3:9; Matthew 5:44; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). Remember, Christians were called by God when they were his enemies. He sent his Son to die for them, and because of Christ's blood, forgives them. Therefore, each should bless his enemies and forgive them repeatedly.

God's Watchful Care for His Children

Next, Peter quoted Psalm 34:12-16 in an effort to

encourage his readers to follow the admonitions of verses 8-9. Those who would have a productive life on earth and desired eternal life in heaven should do the things the Psalmist describes (1 Peter 3:10-12).

First, he must stop his tongue from evil and deceitful speaking. Second, he should avoid evil and seek to do good (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; Romans 12:9; Galatians 6:10). Third, he must not only be a peacemaker, but also one who actively pursues it (Matthew 5:9; Hebrews 12:14). Woods notes that the words "on" and "against" in verse 12 are both from the same Greek word which means "upon". The Lord's eyes and ears are upon the righteous for their well-being. He watches out for their good (Matthew 6:33; 28:20) and keeps his ears tuned to hear them express their earnest desires (Matthew 7:7-11; John 14:13-14). The Lord's face is upon those that do evil also, but with displeasure (Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:29; Isaiah 1:10-15).

Discussion Questions

1. Describe some arguments without words which wives might use to win their husbands to Christ.
2. Discuss ways a Christian woman can behave which would make her Sarah's daughter.
3. How might a husband's relationship with his wife effect his prayer life? What should this lead him to do?
4. What five special attitudes does Peter urge Christians to have in their treatment of others?
5. What should those do who want a productive life on earth and eternity in heaven?

Lesson 9
Suffering
1 Peter 3:13-4:6

Suffering for Right and Wrong Reasons

Where the New King James puts "followers of what is good, the A.S.V. puts "if ye be zealous of that which is good." More than just a follower, this individual is an enthusiastic worker who puts his whole self into doing good. Who can really hurt such people? Ultimately, the answer is no one. They may put such to death but through Christ the grave will be overcome and the victory won (1 Peter 3:13; Matthew 10:28; Mark 10:29-30; Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

Lest they assume that they would face no difficulties, Peter tells them an inner peace belongs to those who suffer because of right living (Matthew 5:10). Some would persecute Christians and cause them to be terrified, but Jesus' followers could remain calm because the Lord was on their side (Romans 8:31-39). The last part of verse 14 and first part of 15 come from Isaiah 8:12-13. Instead of fearing their persecutors, Peter would have Christians to set apart in their "hearts Christ as Lord" (A. S. V.). Also, he urged Christians to be ready to defend and give reasons for their hope to anyone who asked. The Christians' hope is for a home in heaven. The answer should be given without haughtiness toward the person asking and with a proper fear of God because the teaching comes from his

word.

Of course, such an answer would be worthless if one's life was inconsistent with the truth he was defending. If one followed the course Peter outlined, they might speak against him as an evil doer and bring wild accusations against him, but his life and manner of answering will put them to shame (1 Peter 3:16).

Those who suffer for wrong doing know they are getting what they deserve. It is better to suffer for doing what is right because one can then know God will only chasten him for his betterment (Hebrews 12:7-11). Notice Peter does not state such suffering would absolutely be within God's will, but indicates it might be (1 Peter 3:17).

Christ's Preaching In the Days of Noah

Christ's suffering included dying for us. Jesus certainly is an example of one who suffered for doing what was right. He was a righteous person suffering for those who are not righteous (Ephesians 2:1-6, 13:16). He suffered "once for all" time, which is the more literal meaning of the word translated "once." His only purpose in that death was to bring man back to God. Jesus died physically, but he was "brought to active life in the realm of the spirit" (Woods). The spirit is that eternal part of man in contrast to his fleshly body, which is temporary.

The "spirits in prison" would have to be the disembodied spirits of the disobedient God waited on in the days of Noah. Their prison would be the Hadean realm where they awaited the day of judgment (compare 2 Peter

2:4-5; Jude 6). Just as Christ is said to have preached to the Gentiles through the apostles (Ephesians 2:17), he preached to the people before the flood through Noah (2 Peter 2:5). There is no indication these spirits were in prison when preached to, only that they were in prison when Peter wrote. Since all men will be judged based upon the deeds done in their body, the doctrine of a second chance after death is a false one (1 Peter 3:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46).

When these spirits were still in the body, they disobeyed God's will. Particularly, they were disobedient during the period when God waited for the ark to be prepared, which could have been one hundred years (Genesis 5:32; 7:6). Noah was a preacher of righteousness, so God waited for them to repent. Compared with the multitudes who drowned, eight souls were certainly few. Those eight were saved in the ark by the very water that destroyed the disobedient. The water was the instrument God used to exercise his saving power (1 Peter 3:20).

Baptism, the Antitype

Through the water, Noah and his family were taken from a world full of wickedness to a newly cleansed world. They were saved from the destruction brought on by man's sin. They were separated from wicked men. Baptism in water is a figure, or "antitype," of that. Thayer says of the word translated "antitype", "a thing resembling another, its counterpart; something in the Messianic times which answers to the type...prefiguring it in the Old Testament." How appropriate then that baptism should take one from his own sinful state to a new life (1 Peter 3:21; Romans

6:3-4; Acts 22:16). He is thus saved from the destruction his own sin has earned (Romans 6:23; Acts 2:38). He is also separated for God's service in that watery surrender to God's will (Romans 6:16-18).

Since Noah and his family were saved through water, with it being the instrument of God's saving power, it is important to recognize that the water of baptism is the instrument of God's saving power in the Christian age, too. Baptism is not a bath to take away filth from the body. Having given the definitions of "an inquiry" and "a demand" for the word "answer", Thayer says, "As the terms of inquiry and demand often include the idea of desire, the word thus gets the signification of earnest seeking, i.e. a craving, an intense desire." Thus baptism is our calling out to God with an intense desire for a good conscience. This is accomplished "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ," which would stand for all involved in his sacrificial death, burial and resurrection. In baptism, man dies to sin, is buried and raised to walk in a new life (Colossians 2:12).

Preparing to Suffer

The resurrected Christ has now returned to heaven (Acts 1:9), where he is seated at God's right hand. Such a seat symbolizes the honor and power that is now his (Psalm 110:1; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3; 12:2). Having assured his readers that Christ suffered for them (1 Peter 3:18), Peter urges them to prepare for troubles ahead. His words bring forth the image of a soldier getting his weapon, when he tells them to arm themselves with Christ's attitude toward suffering. The one who suffers persecution for Christianity has given up the life of sin. Thus, sin no

longer lures him through lusts that appeal to sinful men. Instead, he is drawn by the will of God to live the right life. A Christian's time for living in sin is past (1 Peter 3:22-4:2).

"Licentiousness" describes uncontrolled desires, such as, gluttony and sensual passions. "Lusts" is a word describing desire for things forbidden. "Drunkenness" and wild drinking parties, or "revelries," should also be put away. Woods says the word translated "drinking parties" describes a drinking contest in which each one tries to outdo the others. "Abominable idolatries" would describe the sinful excesses some went to in worship of idols. The Christians to whom Peter wrote had participated in all of these. Having realized the emptiness of sin, Christians look on their lives of selfish desire as being more than long enough (1 Peter 4:3; Romans 6:21; 13:11-12).

Living totally unrestrained lives was so common and acceptable to the Gentiles that they were shocked by those Christians not joining them. They were astonished that Christians did not rush to let their lives overflow, or flood, with evil deeds. So they blasphemed them, accusing them of untrue things in an attempt to injure them. However, Christians do not have to worry with a response since these will be judged by the great judge of the living and the dead (Matthew 12:36-37; Romans 14:12; Acts 10:42). Kelcy says the word "ready," "indicates that Christ is competent and qualified; he stands prepared to judge and may do so at any time." Because Jesus will judge all men, the good news was proclaimed to some who had died by the time Peter wrote. They were not dead when preached to, but had heard the message that can cause one to live eternally in the spirit like God. All will be judged

according to what they did in the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who obey the gospel will live in the spirit like God (1 Peter 4:4-6).

Discussion Questions

1. How might one suffer for the right reasons? The wrong?
2. Through what means did Christ preach in Noah's day? To the spirits in prison?
3. Discuss how baptism saves.
4. Discuss the attitude of Jesus toward suffering. How can we arm ourselves with such an attitude?
5. Why did Peter think the Gentiles would think the life of Christians was strange?

Lesson 10

Glorifying God

1 Peter 4:7-19

Serving to Glorify God

From considering some who had heard the gospel and already died, Peter went immediately into the nearness of the end of all things. Peter may well have been specifically thinking about the end of the Jewish system and destruction of Jerusalem which was just a few years away from the time of his writing. To this writer, it also seems likely that he took the Lord's words to heart (Matthew 24:36-44) and constantly thought of His return as imminent so that he would be prepared (Matthew 25:13). Stable thinking and self-control coupled with a regular diet of prayer would help keep one prepared.

A deep love for the brethren would also help sustain a Christian during an approaching disaster, as the destruction of Jerusalem might be considered, as well as encourage him in faithfulness in watching for the Lord's return. Such love causes one to forgive and forget sins the brethren may have committed against him. That love would also cause one to participate in hospitality, or being friendly to strangers. In a day when so much wickedness was found in public inns, it was very important for Christians who were traveling to find lodging in a place

where they would not be exposed to so much evil. Thus, hospitality is frequently enjoined upon Christians (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:7; 5:10; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; 3 John 5-8). As with anything done in the Lord's service, there would be no true value in entertaining strangers if one did it with a complaining spirit (1 Peter 4:7-9).

The word for "gift," in 4:10, is the Greek word *charisma* and indicates it is something given by the grace of God. It can stand for miraculous gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4), but does not have to (Romans 6:23). Either usage here would be fine. Whatever God has given the Christian has been entrusted to him and should be used wisely (1 Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:14-30). Christians should especially want to use what they had to help fellow Christians.

Of the word translated "oracles," in 4:11, Thayer says, "In the New Testament spoken of the words or utterances of God." It is used in Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12; and here. Peter seems to be continuing the thought of verse 10 by saying those who used the ability to speak, which God gave them, should speak only those words that God revealed. Those who do by helping others need to realize that their ability to serve and the means with which they serve are from God. Thus, God provides the words of the speaker and the means of the doer and all should be used to glorify him (1 Corinthians 10:31; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8). God has planned for man to glorify him in Christ, or his body, the church (Ephesians 3:21). Praise belongs to God now and throughout all eternity.

Glorifying God in Suffering

Trials are a part of the Christian's life and should not surprise him (John 15:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:12). Woods says of the "fiery trial," "the figure here used is that of gold ore cast into a crucible for the purpose of separating the worthless dross from the precious metal." When Christians suffer for the same reason Christ suffered, they have reason to rejoice (Matthew 5:11-12). Such rejoicing in sufferings can occur now because Christians look forward to the great joy the faithful will experience at Christ's return (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Woods says the word "if" at the beginning of verse 14 would be better translated "when". When others speak evil of Christ's followers because they wear the name Christian, in word and deed, they should be inwardly happy, which is the meaning of "blessed" here and in Matthew 5:1-12. That happiness stems, in part, from the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Christ is evil spoken of when Christians are evil spoken of (Acts 8:3; 9:1, 5). Others may speak evil of Christ because of the good lives of believers, but the good done in His name glorifies Him.

Christ's disciples can be happy when suffering for Christ, but should be ashamed to suffer as an evil doer. "Busybody" comes from the Greek word "alotrio-episkopos" which Thayer says is "one who takes supervision of affairs pertaining to others and in no wise to himself." Disciples should not suffer for such actions. On the other hand, there is no shame in suffering because one follows Christ. The name "Christian" is also used in Acts 11:26 and 26:28. It would appear to be the new name

promised in Isaiah 62:2 (1 Peter 4:15-16).

Woods says "judgment" is used in 4:17 to denote severe trial. They were already in the season of that trial. If God would allow the church (see 1 Timothy 3:15) to go through such trials, then the wicked need not expect to escape the sure doom awaiting those who refuse to obey (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Peter then quoted from the LXX translation of Proverbs 11:31 (1 Peter 4:18). God will save those who walk uprightly from the great trial to come, but it will be with great difficulty. If God would take great difficulty to save the righteous from the impending trial the ungodly would put them through, imagine the terrible punishment God would send the ungodly to in the end of time.

On the basis of what he had already written, Peter concluded that Christians who suffer should remember that such suffering is a part of being a Christian. They should place their soul's well-being in God's hands, since He is the creator and sustainer of life and can be trusted to maintain it (1 Peter 4:19).

Discussion Questions

1. If you thought the end of the world was tomorrow, what would you do today?
2. How could brotherly love help in perilous times?
3. In what sense could a Christian be described as an oracle of God? What should this lead one to do?
4. Under what circumstances should a Christian be able to rejoice in suffering?
5. What can we learn from the fact that "the righteous one

is scarcely saved"?

Lesson 11

Submitting To God and Resisting the Devil

1 Peter 5:1-14

Shepherds Over the Flock of God

In the New Testament church the name "elders," which literally means older, came to stand for the leaders of local congregations (Acts 11:29-30; 14:23; 15:2, 3, 6, 22; 16:4; 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17-20). Since the word "elder" is used interchangeably with the word bishop (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7), it is clear that both words describe the same office. Peter exhorts them as a fellow elder. He also was one who saw the suffering of Christ as he was crucified and looked forward to the glory that will belong to all Christians when they get to heaven. Peter, of course, was one who witnessed Christ's suffering and was to carry his testimony to all the world (1 Peter 5:1; Luke 24:46-48).

Peter said elders have the very important task of shepherding, which includes the whole work of a shepherd, God's flock (Acts 20:28). The shepherd rarely fed his flock, but he did pasture them. In his book, *A treatise on the Eldership*, J. W. McGarvey says, "Their duty was to guide them from place to place, to protect them from wild beast, and to keep them from straying." He went on to give

some insight into the shepherds of that day, by saying, "The Jewish shepherd was at once the ruler, the guide, the protector, and the companion of his flock." He emphasizes the way they handled their flocks, when he says, "He did not drive them to water and to pasturage; but he called his own sheep by name, so familiar was he with everyone of them, and he led them out, and went before them, and the sheep followed him, for they knew his voice. John 10:3,4." Hebrews 13:7 talks about "those who rule over you." McGarvey says the word actually means lead, as in leading one to a conclusion, an idea also found in 1 Timothy 5:17. The word translated "rule" in that verse is the same one used to speak of the father's position in relation to his family in 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

Notice that Peter says the elders are to be bishops, or overseers, of the flock. Also note that it is God's flock, not the elders' flock. They are stewards over God's possession. It is the flock among them, or in their own congregation (Titus 1:5). Since God gave elders the oversight, Christians should yield to them as long as their actions do not contradict the will of God. Obedience is especially important because the elders are responsible for the members' souls (Hebrews 13:17). They will be made to rejoice if a soul is saved and grieve if it is lost. The members will thus not have to be forced, or constrained, to serve, but will willingly follow. Neither should elders serve because of the personal gain that might arise from such service. This verse and 1 Timothy 5:17 clearly indicate elders were paid to work in the first century church. Misuse of the position to obtain more money would be wrong. Instead, he should eagerly serve with his ultimate desire being to please God (1 Peter 5:2).

Peter warned elders not to become power mad and rule with a domineering attitude (Mark 10:42-45; 3 John 9-11). Instead, he encouraged them to lead lives that would be a clear pattern to follow (1 Corinthians 11:1). They should ever be mindful of the fact that they work under Jesus Christ who is the Chief Shepherd (John 10:14; Hebrews 13:20). Elders should not serve with thoughts of earthly, temporary rewards that will perish. Instead, they should know that faithful service will bring an imperishable reward when Jesus comes the second time (1 Peter 5:3-4).

Submitting to God

"Younger" and "elder" in 1 Peter 5:5 are plural. The two words occurring so close together may well indicate Peter is simply referring to age in both cases and is telling young men to yield to the wisdom of older men. However, this verse does seem to continue the thoughts of verses 1-4, and makes this author believe Peter is telling the younger members to submit to elders, just as they submit to Christ the Chief Shepherd. Most members would be younger than the elders and this designation would seem to stand for the group of all other members. The next injunction is a general one directed to all Christians. Woods says, "the meaning is, 'Tie on humility like a slave's apron.'" Perhaps Peter was remembering a great lesson the Lord had taught him (John 13:1-17). God is opposed to all who are proud and extends his favor to those who are of a lowly spirit and ready to serve (Proverbs 3:34; 6:16-17; Luke 14:7-11; 18:9-14).

Because God opposes the proud and is all powerful,

believers should submit to His will knowing that such submission will ultimately lead to their glorification. Similarly, all worries and those things over which they are anxious should be placed in the Lord's hands (Psalm 55:22; 37:5; Matthew 6:25-34). There is a great consolation in knowing God has care for the individual Christian (1 Peter 5:6-7; Matthew 10:28-31).

Being Watchful and Standing Firm

Even though Christ's followers can cast their worries upon God, they cannot go to sleep on the job and fail to be watchful for themselves. They must maintain a calm, thoughtful and watchful attitude. The reason for such an attitude is the devil. Woods says, "An 'adversary' is, technically, an opponent in a lawsuit; here, it is used to identify Satan as the one on the opposite side of a trial for life or death." The word "devil" indicates he is a slanderer and false accuser of the saints. He is like a hungry lion that is growling as he runs after his prey. Woods says the words "walks about" refer to a restless walking up and down as he constantly looks for a victim. He will swallow up, or destroy, any whom he catches outside of the fold (1 Peter 5:8).

Like soldiers holding the line in battle, the apostle urged God's children to stand firm against the attacks of the devil. Their ability to stand firm originates in the faith produced by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Knowing the devil is pursuing ought to cause Christians to constantly study the Bible in an effort intended to help stand fast against him. Any suffering endured by Christians standing firm is not unique to them. Other

brethren have suffered and died for their faith (1 Peter 5:9).

Peter then concentrated on one characteristic of God, His grace. God is the great giver of unmerited favor. God calls His people through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13) to share in His eternal glory, which is in Christ (A.S.V.). Though disciples might have to suffer for a time, Peter said it is nothing compared to their eternal reward. Peter's prayer for them was that God would "perfect" them, which would be to ready them for service. This is the same word used in Mark 1:19, which is translated "mending". Peter also prayed that God would shore them up, "establish," like one might a wall that was teetering. He also wanted God to give them strength in the face of severe trials. When Christians realize God's glory will not fail or His dominion diminish, it is easier to face temporary trials (1 Peter 5:10-11).

Closing Comments

Silvanus is also called Silas in the book of Acts (2 Corinthians 1:19; Acts 18:1-18). He was with Paul when he wrote both letters to the brethren at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Peter describes him as faithful and says the letter is "by" him, which may indicate he wrote it while Peter dictated, or he carried it to them, or both. The letter, 1 Peter, was a short one in length, especially when the great theme of God's grace is considered. Its purpose was to instruct them in God's grace and encourage them to stand fast in that grace (1 Peter 5:12).

Who was the "she who is in Babylon" who sent

greetings? Woods thinks it is Peter's wife, who was also a sister in Christ (1 Corinthians 9:5). John Mark was Peter's son in the same sense that Timothy was Paul's (Philippians 2:22; 1 Timothy 1:1-2). Both of these people sent greetings to those addressed.

Much like Paul, Peter direct Christians to be sure their use of the kiss, which was a common form of greeting, should be done with a proper attitude (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). His final prayer for them was that they enjoy the true peace that can only belong to those in Christ (1 Peter 5:13-14).

Lesson 12

Introduction to 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:1-4

Introduction

The author of this letter is Peter, the apostle (1:1). He alludes to Christ's prophecy concerning his death (1:14; John 21:18-19). He defends the Lordship of Christ by referring to himself as an eyewitness of the transfiguration (1:16-17; Matthew 17:1-9). He mentions the first epistle (3:1). Kelcy says, "As to style, both have a considerable number of words which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Both have a tendency to use uncommon words." Kelcy goes on to show specific words used in both epistles which are rare in other New Testament books. They are: precious (1 Peter 1:7, 19; 2 Peter 1:1); virtue (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3; supply (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 1:5); love of the brethren (1 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 1:7); without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 3:14); and ungodly (1 Peter 4:18; 2 Peter 2:5-6; 3:7). Kelcy also demonstrates similarity in teaching between the two epistles. Both refer to the end of time (1 Peter 1:5; 4:7; 2 Peter 3:10-11); prophecy (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 3:2); the flood (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5; 3:6) and refer to the saved as chosen and called (1 Peter 1:2; 2:21; 2 Peter 1:10). Kelcy further found words used almost exclusively by Peter in Acts that are used in 2 Peter. Those words are:

obtained (1:1; Acts 1:17); godliness (1:7; Acts 3:12); unlawful (2:8; Acts 2:23); day of the Lord (3:10; Acts 2:20); and wages of unrighteousness (2:13, 15; Acts 1:18).

The external evidence has been called weak by some because the book is not referred to by name in the first and second centuries. However, Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) uses words and phrases which are only found in 2 Peter in the New Testament. Kelcy says Aristides (A.D. 130) uses an expression which seems to come from this epistle. He notes that Hippolytus (A. D. 215) "contains echoes of the epistle." Further, there is a book called *The Apocalypse of Peter*, which has been dated around the middle of the second century, that made extensive use of this epistle. Kelcy explains why it may not have been quoted as much as some other New Testament books, when he says, "It is likely that the early church did not widely quote the epistle due to the fact that it was not addressed to a specific church or person and to the fact that it is brief and contains little that is new."

It is written to the same people who received the first epistle (1 Peter 3:1). Peter's purpose in this writing was to refresh their memories as to what were the prophets' and Jesus' commandments (1:12-13, 15; 3:1-2). There is no reference within the epistle to date or place of writing. We assume it was written shortly after the first epistle (A.D. 64 or 65) and possibly from Babylon (see 1 Peter 5:13).

As we study the letter, it will become plain that Peter was dealing with a threat posed by certain false teachers (2:1-2). They were self-willed and spoke in an irreverent way about things they did not even understand

(2:10-12). They engaged in immorality and tried to seduce others to join them (2:13-14, 17-18). They made empty promises about freedom, while they themselves were again enslaved in sin (2:19-22). Also, they ridiculed the promise of the Lord's return (3:3-4).

Peter and His Readers

Some have said that the use of both names, Simon, which was his own original name (Matthew 4:18; 16:17), and Peter, which was the name Christ gave him (Mark 3:16; John 1:42), shows this author is a copycat and is trying doubly hard to convince his readers that he is Peter. This just shows how far liberal scholars will go to discredit inspired writers. A true copycat would have been very careful to use exactly the same introduction as Peter made in his first letter and not draw attention to himself with such a change.

Thayer says a servant is "one who gives himself up wholly to another's will." Peter describes himself as such a servant and an apostle because that was Jesus' will (Luke 6:13-16). Peter is writing to those who, because of God's love and not their own working, have come to have a faith equally as rewarding as the faith of the apostles. Those in Christ obtained their faith through God's righteous, or just, dealing with all men and continue to have it as long as they remain in the right path, which is in Jesus. Observe that Jesus is called God our Savior (2 Peter 1:1).

Growing In Grace and Peace In the Knowledge of Christ

As in the first letter (1:2), Peter prays that they may have the great blessings of God's unmerited favor and the peace which it supplies. Grace and peace quickly grow when we continue to grow in our understanding of God and Christ (2 Peter 1:2).

Christ, through his powers as God, to which the word "divine" points, gave the apostles all things that pertain to eternal life and living God-like, which will keep one in the way of that life. Passages such as this one, and others like John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Jude 3, reveal no apostolic thought of future revelations. Instead, they clearly teach the completeness of the revelation delivered in the first century. Life and godliness come through the knowledge of Christ who both called us to glory and purity of deeds and called us by his glory and pure deeds (2 Peter 1:3).

The "things that pertain unto life and godliness" reveal great and priceless promises. When these promises belong to someone, he shares in the divine nature, or becomes partners with God (Hebrews 12:10). Christians have escaped the corrupt morals of the sinful world. The corruption which comes because of lust (2 Peter 1:4).

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss reasons for believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
2. What do you think Peter's purpose was in writing 2 Peter?
3. What threat did Peter seem to deal with in the letter?
What was the nature of the people involved in the threat?
4. How can we demonstrate that we have given ourselves up totally to the will of Christ?
5. Do you think the Bible is God's complete revelation to

man? Why, or why not?

Lesson 13

Developing A Heavenward Vision

2 Peter 1:5-11

Each Christian Must Bring In His Part

The A.S.V. translates this verse, "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge." Because of the promises belonging to those in Christ and the glory in which they share, they will quickly strive to add their part. Woods says the Greek word translated "adding on your part" (A.S.V.) is only used here in the New Testament. It literally means, "Bringing in by the side of." It "indicates the comparative unimportance of man's participation in his salvation by suggesting that his part is merely contributing, 'brought in by the side of what God does', and yet is absolutely essential, since God's part is done only on condition that man complies with his" (2 Peter 1:5a).

Faith, Virtue and Knowledge

Of course, one must begin with faith (Hebrews 11:6). Of the word translated "supply" in the A.S.V., Woods says, "Originally it meant to found and support a chorus, to lead a choir, to keep in tune, and then, to supply

or provide. As here used, the graces which adorn the Christian character are to be chorused into a grand symphony to the delight and pleasure of him who fashioned and made us for his own good pleasure." The second of the eight notes on the Christian scale is virtue. The word suggests one developing the courage to stand for what is right. The third note is knowledge which grows out of the courage to stand for the right. Such will cause one to seek out the Lord's will and practice it in daily living, thus growing more sure of the things learned (2 Peter 1:5b; Hebrews 5:12-14; Ephesians 5:15-17).

Self-control, Perseverance and Godliness

The fourth note is self-control, or as the King James has it, temperance (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; Acts 24:25; Galatians 5:23). As one grows in the knowledge of right and wrong, naturally he should try to control his fleshly appetites and direct them into the right path. The next note up the scale is perseverance, or patient endurance of the wrong. This describes one who faithfully serves the Lord, climbing over every obstacle to reach the heavenly home. "Godliness," the sixth note on the Christians' scale, is the proper respect toward God, the Father of all Christians. Such will lead one to live a godlike life (2 Peter 1:6; Matthew 6:9; Mark 12:28-31; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 6:6, 11).

Brotherly Kindness and Love

Immediately following one's respect toward God will be a love for his fellow man. Jesus said that was the second commandment. Particularly, here we have love for the brethren, which is a necessary outgrowth of love for

God (1 John 4:19-5:1; Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1). This describes the love which brothers in a family have for one another. Out of respect for God and love for the brethren grows the highest note on the Christian scale, love. This is the word agape, which describes a setting of the mind to do that which is best for another. The object of such love does not have to be desirable or lovely (2 Peter 1:7; Romans 5:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, 13; Colossians 3:12-14).

Avoiding Spiritual Myopia by Developing Eternal Vision

The graces of verses 5-7, must be in the Christian and multiply if he would not become idle (See K.J.V. margin) and without fruit in the knowledge of Christ. Peter uses the word "if" to show the great importance of having these in one's life. He also uses the word "abound" to show Christianity is not half-hearted, but an all-out effort. If one does not do these things, he is blind to things far off, or eternal in nature. Such an one has forgotten the cleansing from sin received at baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), as evidenced by the life he leads (2 Peter 1:8-9).

Since verses 8 and 9 are true, Christians want to strive with all their might to make sure their calling and election. They have been called through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). The gospel is for all (Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16), but not all receive the call with an obedient spirit and thus fail to be of the elect (Matthew 7:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-6). One can be sure of his calling and election if he does the things Peter has set forth. Peter assures such individuals will never fall. How can one make

sure that which has never been unsure? Thus, this passage teaches the possibility of apostasy. The near-sighted will fall, but those whose sight is set on the far goal of heaven will not fall.

Because Christians diligently work to make their call and election sure, they will enter heaven. Christians are already in the kingdom and look forward to being in the eternal kingdom, or heaven (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:9; Matthew 25:34; Acts 14:21-22; 2 Timothy 4:18). Remember, the A.S.V. said Christians must have a faith which supplies virtue and virtue knowledge, etc. (verses 5-7). If one supplies the graces and abounds in them (verse 8), God will abound ("abundantly") supply ("ministered") heaven, which is the eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Discussion Questions

1. List and briefly describe the first three notes in the chorus of a Christian life.
2. Why do you think self control is important to Christian living? How does it impact our ability to persevere?
3. What does it mean to be godly? If we are godly, how will it effect our relations with our brethren?
4. How can you better practice agape love? To whom should it be directed?

5. What is spiritual myopia, or near sightedness? How can we avoid it?

Lesson 14

The Sure Foundation of Christian Living

2 Peter 1:12-21

Peter's Personal Concern

Because Peter wanted his readers to receive the blessing of heaven, he wrote to remind them of some truths they already knew. It is the job of those proclaiming the truth to encourage their listeners in good works and urge them to constantly test themselves through examining the truth (2 Timothy 4:1-5; Jude 3-4). Truth can slowly fade from one's memory if he is not reminded so that it might be kept fresh. The children of Israel proved this repeatedly in the Old Testament (2 Peter 1:12).

Peter felt obliged to constantly remind them of the truth, even until his death. He calls his fleshly body a tent, much as Paul does (2 Corinthians 5:1-4), evidently to call attention to the temporary nature of that body. To Peter, death was as simple as taking off one's clothes at the end of the day, or taking down a tent, as the words "put off" indicate. Notice that he wanted to stir them up. The word actually suggests waking someone up from sleep (Mark 4:38). Peter knew his death would come "swiftly" (A.S.V.) because of Jesus' prophecy (John 21:18-19). Knowing this

may have made Peter feel more strongly the urgency of reminding his readers (2 Peter 1:13-14).

He had urged them to "give all diligence" in their service and now says he will "be careful to ensure, or give diligence, endeavor, to give them this inspired message to keep them in memory of the truth. The word "tent" (from verse 13) and "decease" are both found in Luke's record of the transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36, esp. 31 and 33). Woods says, "Peter was present and powerfully impressed with the events there occurring, and in the use of these terms he gives an undesigned guarantee of the genuineness of the record and authenticity of the matters recorded" (2 Peter 1:15).

Reliable Truths

Peter has been talking about writing this epistle to them so they would remember the important doctrines he, and others, had previously taught them. Now, he tells the reason for wanting to do that as he begins with the word "For". Peter and the other apostles were not following after the artfully designed myths of Greek and Roman mythology when they spoke of Christ's second coming, which would be with power (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 1 Corinthians 15:23-26). Instead, they had personally seen Jesus and the greatness he so often displayed (2 Peter 1:16).

Peter isolated on one display of Christ's greatness, the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). McGarvey notes that Luke's account says Jesus took Peter, James and John apart with him "to pray." He further notes that Jesus customarily went aside to pray at

night (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12; 21:37; 22:39-41) and concludes this event was at night also. During the transfiguration, Jesus' body radiated light like the sun. Peter identifies the voice from heaven as that of the Father and says His statement gave honor and glory to Christ. Particularly, it showed Christ's greatness as God's messenger over and above Moses, the lawgiver, and Elijah, the prophet (Hebrews 1:1-2). Interestingly, the Jews understood the claim of Sonship to be one which made Jesus equal with God (John 5:17-18). God's statements clearly show his love for the Son and recognition of that equality (2 Peter 1:17).

The event was not one dreamed up as a myth would be, but Peter, James and John were on the mount and heard the voice. The mount was holy because God was manifested there (Exodus 3:1-6; 19:10-13; Joshua 5:13-15). The transfiguration gave the apostles more confidence in the Old Testament prophets. Peter's readers were advised to pay close attention to those prophets. Their prophecies were like a lamp shining in a sin-darkened world. That light would aid them until the dawn of understanding began to really illuminate their hearts. Jesus is pictured as the "day star", which is Venus, because full acceptance of him truly heralds the morning of the Christians' day of understanding (2 Peter 1:18-19).

To truly understand prophecy, one must first realize that such was not the product of the prophet's own mind, or invention. Instead, they were carried along in their speaking, much as a ship is carried along by the wind, by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Discussion Questions

1. What reasons does Peter give for reminding his readers of the truth?
2. What was his highest priority for them after his death? Why do you think he felt that way?
3. Do you believe the story of Jesus' life is a myth? Why, or why not?
4. Tell the transfiguration story, especially from the eyes of Peter.

5. Why should we pay close attention to the message of the Old Testament prophets? By what means did they write?

Lesson 15

Destructive Doctrines and the Doom Faced by False Teachers

2 Peter 2:1-11

Destructive Doctrines

In stark contrast to Holy Spirit inspired prophets who spoke true words that gave light, there were false prophets who led the people astray (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Isaiah 28:16-17; Jeremiah 6:13-15; 14:14; 23:14, 32; Ezekiel 13:1-9; Micah 3:8-12). Unfortunately, Peter had to warn that there will be false teachers who try to lead the church astray (Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). They would quietly bring in false teachings that would divide the church (Jude 4). Usually false teaching is brought in subtly beside truth. They may have denied the Lord through some teaching which destroyed his Lordship (see 1 Corinthians 15), or they may have denied him through living lives as if they had not been bought with Christ's blood (1 Corinthians 6:13-20). Their end was going to be unexpected, yet brought on by their own misdeeds (2 Peter 2:1).

Peter warned that these false teachers would lead

many to engage in unbridled lust. People who were not yet Christians would not be able to distinguish between true Christians and those following false teachers, so the way of truth would be spoken against, or blasphemed, as if it were evil. These false teachers lead people astray out of a desire for personal gain. They used words made up for the occasion, which indicates they knew what they were saying was not true (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:5; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 1:9-11; Jude 11, 16). God has always held such false teachers in contempt. Their lives are headed down a path of destruction and their punishment neither loiters along the way nor nods off to sleep (2 Peter 2:2-3; Philippians 3:18-19).

The Doom Awaiting False Teachers

Angels were created by God to serve him and do his bidding (Hebrews 1:7, 14). To prove punishment surely waited for the false teachers mentioned in verse 3, Peter referred to some angels who violated God's will and were being held in bonds awaiting the day of judgment (Compare Jude 6). These verses do not reveal when these angels sinned, nor which angels they are. However, Peter did indicate they were held in a dark place until judgment arrived (2 Peter 2:4).

The second and third illustrations Peter used to prove punishment will surely come are both used by Jesus in Luke 17:26-29. Literally, Peter described Noah as a herald of what is right in God's sight. Despite the fact that he proclaimed it, the people continued on in their evil ways until God destroyed them. Peter did give a ray of hope when he mentioned the eight people who were saved.

Anyone can be saved as Noah, his three sons and their wives were if he will strive to please God.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, brought on by God's judgment, is described in Genesis 19:1-26. It came upon them because of homosexuality (Jude 7), pride, abundant idleness and a refusal to help the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:48-50). God intended for this destruction to stand as a reminder to all who would live ungodly in the future (2 Peter 2:5-6).

God's Sure Deliverance

Again, Peter sought to show that God will save any righteous who may be found among the wicked. Lot was worn out with worry over the sin he saw all around him. What Lot saw and heard caused him to be in mental anguish every day. He loved right living and was disturbed by evil deeds.

There can be no doubt that God knows how to deliver those living godly lives, a conclusion which logically comes from the examples in verses 4-8. The word translated "temptations" here could also be translated "trials." Notice, Peter does not promise God will keep trials out of Christians' lives but does say He will deliver them. The day of judgment will be for all, and the unrighteous will hear their sentence pronounced on that day as well (2 Peter 2:7-9; Matthew 25:41, 46).

All of the unrighteous will face punishment, but the ones named in 2 Peter 2:10 are especially reserved for judgment. Their sin must have been terrible, since Peter

refused to name it specifically. He calls it uncontrolled desire that pollutes the flesh. Also, they had no respect at all for authority, evidently even Christ's (2:1). That lack of respect lead them to take liberties with God and man. They were determined to have their own way and that seemingly led them to speak evil against any authority that got in the way of their pursuit of what they wanted.

In contrast, angels, who were much greater and more powerful than the false teachers, would not even bring accusation against the false teachers, who were their inferiors. The false teachers seemed to have no problems with conscience when they were obviously speaking evil about those who were superior to them (2 Peter 2:11).

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the method and message of false teachers.
2. What problems do false teachers create? What destination did Peter say they were going toward?
3. Briefly relate the three illustrations Peter used to show punishment would surely come.
4. Do you believe God can deliver the godly from trials? Why, or why not?
5. Why do you believe angels would not bring accusations against false teachers? What lesson is in this for us?

Lesson 16

The Depravity and Deceptions of False Teachers

2 Peter 2:12-21

A Sad Portrait of False Teachers

The false teachers, of whom Peter spoke, were like animals with no conscience going about taking whatever they could by force. Man usually destroys such animals because of the damage they do and Peter said these should have been similarly destroyed. Though they were ignorant about certain matters, they spoke evil against them. The road of selfish desire would actually be the road to the false teachers' own destruction (2 Peter 2:12).

Sin offers much, but pays only injury and harm to the sinner. Sinners often try to hide their evil deeds by doing them under the cover of darkness (Ephesians 5:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:7). Peter described some so wicked that they enjoyed practicing their evil deeds even in the day. They were like ugly stains on a pure white garment. Tragically, these wicked people came to the feasts, which the Christians enjoyed, and pretended to be good people. They enjoyed putting on such a show and deceiving people

by causing them to believe they were faithful (2 Peter 2:13).

These false teachers were so wicked that they found opportunity for satisfying their lusts in even the most innocent and harmless situations. They could not look on a woman without seeing her as "an adulteress" (KJV margin). With such an outlook, they could not cease sinning. They dangled the appealing bait of their wickedness before young Christians and others who were not well-grounded in the faith. They had been trained, much like a runner training for a race, in greed and were cursed children in the eyes of God (2 Peter 2:14).

They had once been in the way of truth (verse 2) but had abandoned it. Apparently, Balaam was a prophet for God when the messenger of Balak first approached him about cursing the children of Israel (Numbers 22:1-14). Balaam desired the reward Balak, the king of Moab, offered if he would curse Israel, but three times God moved him to speak a blessing (Numbers 22:15-24:25). Finally, he counselled them to entice Israel to sin so the Lord would curse them (Numbers 31:16; 25:1-9). Balaam planned to go despite God's solemn warning. The ass speaking was a miracle worked by God to warn Balaam of the dangerous course he was following. A weary traveler in an arid country has his hopes raised by the sight of a well. These false prophets were like empty wells, raising hopes only to dash them to pieces. Also, they were like a mist, or cloud, that extended hope of rain to a farmer with sun parched fields, but never delivered on that promise. A dark judgment awaited them (2 Peter 2:15-17).

Beware of Empty Promises

The false teachers, about whom Peter warned, used big words that sounded good but were empty. They lured those who had just escaped back into the ways of sin. Christians certainly are free from the bondage of sin and death (John 8:32-36; Romans 6:6-7). However, the false teachers told young Christians they were free to do as they pleased. Peter said they preached freedom, but were themselves the slaves of sin (2 Peter 2:18-19; Romans 6:16-18; 8:1-6; Galatians 5:1).

The deceivers had escaped the defilement of the world. This was done through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Peter, in 2 Peter 2:20, does not use the word for general knowledge, but for precise or full knowledge. Clearly, the false teachers had not always been hypocrites. Note, they had escaped but were now entrapped in the tangled webbing into which they sought to lure others. Because they knew better, it could truly be said they were in a worse condition than they were in before they first learned about Jesus (2 Peter 2:20).

It would have been better for them not to have fully known the Lord's will, than to reach the state of turning back. Better because they brought reproach on the church. Better because they were more receptive to the gospel when they were unconverted sinners than when they were erring Christians. Also, better because greater knowledge brings with it greater responsibility (Luke 12:36-48). Peter used the proverb of the dog returning to its own vomit from Proverbs 26:11. The proverb about the sow is likely from a source other than the Bible, but certainly is true. Note that

the dog had vomited up what made him sick and the sow had been washed clean. Both went back to that out of which they had come (2 Peter 2:21-22).

Discussion Questions

1. What was Peter trying to say by comparing the false teachers to brute beasts?
2. What two things does Peter tell about the false teachers which show how deeply evil they were?
3. What might a false teacher do who was like Balaam?
4. In what ways might modern day false teachers abuse the topic of freedom?

5. Read 2 Peter 2:20-22. How do these verses relate to the doctrine of "once saved, always saved"?

Lesson 17

The Sure Promise of Christ's Return

2 Peter 3:1-18

Words To Trust

In chapter 2, Peter dealt with the false teachers and the terrible judgment they faced. His transition to speaking to the brethren is made by use of the word "beloved." Both 1 and 2 Peter are written to open-minded brethren with the purpose of reminding them of some facts they had already learned. Their minds had been purified through obedience to the truth. Particularly, Peter reminded them of truths which had been dealt with by the prophets, the Lord and his apostles. The Lord had first delivered the commandment, or whole body of truth to be obeyed, and had used the apostles to tell the world of it (2 Peter 3:1-2; John 16:13-14; Acts 1:6-8).

Mockers Who Would Deny the Lord's Return

The first thing to be considered is the coming of those who would mock the truth. The "last days" are the days of the gospel age, which is the final age of God dealing with man (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2). This is

just one of several New Testament warnings about false teachers who would come during the Christian age (Acts 20:29-31; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 1 John 2:18). Peter indicated they would be those who would seek to fulfill their own selfish desires.

They, according to Peter's prophecy, would center their scoffing on the second coming of Christ, suggesting that since the patriarchs died, or even the beginning of creation, all things continued like normal. Actually, this fits exactly the Lord's statements concerning his return (2 Peter 3:3-4; Matthew 24:36-44).

Answering the Scoffers

The scoffers had ignored the creation. It was a perfect proof that things had not always been the same. Instead, God had spoken and the waters were separated to that above and below the firmament. Then, God spoke and caused dry land to appear (2 Peter 3:5). In fact, it was by means of the water above the firmament that God had brought about the flood, which was also an event that proved things had not always been the same. Peter mentioned the heavens and earth that existed in his day in contrast to the earth that existed before the flood. God spoke and the world was covered with a flood. Further, Peter said, it is by his word that the present world is reserved, or stored up, for a destruction by fire. The word "perdition" could be better understood if we used the word destruction. Much like the world was not wiped out of existence by the flood, these ungodly men will not cease to exist but will be banished from God's presence. The word translated "perished" in verse 6 is the same one translated "perdition" in verse 7.

Peter would also have the scoffers know that the passage of time did not mean that God would fail to keep his promise. Time is insignificant to an eternal being. God allowed time to pass, not because he forgot his promise, because he is willing to suffer long with man in the hope that all will take advantage of their opportunity and repent. God desires the salvation of all men (2 Peter 3:8-9; John 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:3-4).

The "Day of the Lord"

There are numerous references to the "day of the Lord" in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). When coupled with Peter's words in 2 Peter 3:10, they can be seen as plainly referring to the second coming of Christ. That coming will be unexpected, like that of a thief (Matthew 24:42-44). Evidently, the word "heavens" stands for the place where the birds fly. They will pass away with a loud noise, which is the noise of destruction and may describe the roaring of a fire (see verse 7). The very building blocks of the universe, or elements which may be atoms or even smaller, will be melted in the flame. The earth and all of man's works in it, such as houses, monuments, etc., will also be burned up.

The fact that this earth and all the works in it will be destroyed should have moved Christians to recognize their ultimate home, or country which is the meaning of the word "manner," and live as if they really were its citizens (Philippians 3:20-21; Hebrews 11:13-16; 2 Corinthians 4:18). Christ's disciples should, therefore, live a pure and

reverent life in the sight of God. The Christian should look forward to the Lord's coming, according to Peter, and be so expectant that he would speed its coming if he could (2 Peter 3:11-12).

The Promise of New Heavens and A New Earth

The new heavens and new earth promise is evidently from Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22. Christians should know that when the old earth is destroyed there will be a fresh world in which to live (Revelation 21). Since they looked forward to the Lord coming again and a new dwelling place, Peter said they should give their best and fullest effort to be at peace with men and God, without sin laid to their charge and able to stand before God free of condemnation (2 Peter 3:13-14).

Instead of scoffing at God's promise of the Lord's return, Peter said Christians should be grateful the Lord waited and count it as an opportunity for more to be saved. It should be remembered that Paul withstood Peter to the face on one occasion (Galatians 2:11). Yet, Peter called him "beloved brother." All Christians should learn from the spirit displayed by this apostle and learn to stand up for truth without hating the sinner and, more importantly, how to receive criticism intended to help us without letting our pride get in the way. Peter recognized Paul's writing as inspired, thus he said "according to the wisdom given to him" (2 Peter 3:15; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; Galatians 2:9). It is impossible to know which of Paul's references to longsuffering Peter had in mind, but any of them could be used by Christians to help them keep on keeping on.

Evidently Paul's letters enjoyed a wide circulation in the early church. Paul had certainly written about judgment, the suddenness of the Lord's coming, God's longsuffering and the eternal abode of the soul. Some, but not all, things in Paul's writings were hard to understand. This can be because of false ideas held by the reader as well as the depth of the subject matter. Peter was an apostle, yet could admit difficulty in understanding some of the things Paul presented. No one should be ashamed to admit such problems. Instead, all should be prepared to give intensive study to a matter before reaching a conclusion (Acts 8:31; 2 Timothy 2:15). Peter said the untaught and those without firm convictions would take a hard to be understood scripture out of its context and destroy its true meaning. Notice Peter counted Paul's writing as scripture (2 Peter 3:16).

Since they had been warned of false teachings and the twisting of scripture in advance, Peter believed Christians would be better prepared to avoid being carried away into false doctrine. If Christians cannot fall, why would Peter warn them against it? Instead of falling from their stable position, Peter would have them to grow up in God's favor and in a fuller understanding of Christ's teachings. Peter closed by ascribing Christ glory until the "day of eternity," as Woods translates. Woods goes on to say it is appropriate to call eternity a day "because it is indeed an everlasting one, without a yesterday to precede it, or a tomorrow to follow it" (2 Peter 3:17-18).

Discussion Questions

1. Who delivered words worthy of being remembered?
2. What are the last days? What type of people did Peter say would come then? Upon what would they focus?
3. What arguments could be used to answer their challenge?
4. What is the "day of the Lord"? How does Peter describe its coming? How should it make believers want to live?
5. How should we view the time prior to the fulfillment of the promise?
6. How can we avoid twisting scripture? Why should we care? In what did Peter want the brethren to grow?

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Zoe Taylor, a fine Christian woman who always exhibited patient determination in serving the Lord. Though she has passed from this life, she lives on in the memories of her children, grandchildren and the many others she encouraged along the way, including this minister.

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