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Editor’s Note

Our Adult Sunday School study for summer, 2009, will be the Epistles of First and Second Peter. The title for our study is Joyful Christian Living in a Pagan World. Through the study of Peter’s epistles, it is my prayer that every student will understand how to live a joyful Christian life despite opposition and that all will dedicate themselves to living life full-force for Jesus.

In the first epistle, the apostle Peter gave details of how to begin the Christian life and wrote about the affect Christian living should have on the world. This letter was written to God’s people who were undergoing severe persecution in five Roman Provinces that are now in Northern Turkey. As those Christians took their stand for Christ, it caused them to be foreigners and strangers in the same communities in which they lived. Peter went on to describe how to live for Christ in various venues and scenarios. In 1 Peter 2, he revealed how to live for Christ before the lost world. In chapter 3, he shared details of living for Christ in the home, and later, during difficult times of persecution. In chapter 4, Peter wrote about living for Christ in service, then in faith. In 1 Peter 5, he revealed how to live for Christ in humility. Throughout the letter, Peter encouraged those Christians to live faithfully for Christ, to endure suffering and to be living examples of Christ in the midst of their pagan society. Peter gave practical instructions that are totally applicable today, especially for church members whose Christian convictions are at variance with their culture.

In Peter’s second epistle, he shared the secrets of living for Christ by God’s power. He communicated principles of victorious living when facing problems caused by false teachers, rampant immorality and latter day scoffers. In chapter 1, Peter wrote about how to live for Christ by the Word of God and great Christian character qualities. In chapter 2, he revealed how to live for Christ in purity. Then in chapter 3, Peter wrote about how to live for Christ until He returns. Second Peter ends with the charge for God’s people to live holy and godly lives in light of Christ’s soon and sudden return. The title of the study, Joyful Christian Living in a Pagan World, is the recurring theme of both epistles.

This Adult Lesson Commentary is an in-depth study of the Scripture passages in each lesson. Every lesson consists of three elements: the narrative of the Scripture passage; the manna, a discussion of interesting and informative topics related to the Scripture passage; and the word studies, which are based on specific words from the original language used in the Scripture text. The number following each word study identifies the word by the numbering system of Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and is provided for the benefit of those who want to examine the Word of God in greater detail.

We appreciate the three contributors to this Adult Lesson Commentary: Charles Law, who wrote the lesson narratives; Terry Parrish, who translated interesting Greek vocabulary for the word studies; and Roger Stewart, who prepared the mannas.

Larry E. Clements, Editor in Chief of Publications
Baptist Sunday School Committee
About the Writers

Recognized for their knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the Holy Scriptures, the writers of the Adult Lesson Commentary are faithful pastors, teachers and spiritual leaders among the Lord’s churches. Following are a few biographical notes about these men.

Charles Law was reared in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he attended Central Baptist Church from early childhood. He was saved and baptized as a teenager and announced his call to the ministry at age eighteen. A year later he was ordained by his home church.

Brother Law was educated at The College of the Ozarks in Clarksville, Arkansas, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree. He then earned a Master of Bible Languages degree and a Doctor in Bible Languages degree from the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Brother Law pastored churches in Arkansas for several years, after which he entered the chaplaincy of the United States Air Force. For twenty years he represented the churches of the American Baptist Association as an Air Force chaplain. He has served as a writer of various curricula for many years. He and his wife, Nancy, have two children, a daughter, Paula, and a son, Chancy, and two grandchildren. Brother and Mrs. Law reside in Sherwood, Arkansas, where they faithfully serve the Lord.

Brother Terry Parrish is a writer of the Adult Lesson Commentary. He was born and raised in McDougal, Arkansas. He was saved and then baptized at age 11 by Pleasant Grove MBC of Success, Arkansas. He graduated high school at Corning, Arkansas in 1971. He entered the Missionary Baptist Seminary that fall and earned the Bachelor, Master and Doctor in Bible Languages degrees from that school.

Brother Parrish served as pastor of Clearwater in Judsonia, Graceland in Little Rock, Second Baptist in Malvern, Baseline in Little Rock and Springhill in Alexander. He now serves as the Executive Vice President of the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock. He has served as writer for the BSSC for over ten years. He serves now as one of the Recording Secretaries for the American Baptist Association.

He is married to the former Sandra Grable of Little Rock. They have two children, Clay and his wife, Amanda, and Shelly and her husband, Wesley Loftin. They have one grandson, Spencer Parrish.
Brother Roger W. Stewart was born and reared in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he attended Central Baptist Church throughout his entire childhood. He was saved and baptized at age nine. At age seventeen he announced his call to preach before graduating from Northside High in 1984. He soon found himself a student at the Missionary Baptist Seminary where he earned a Bachelor of Theology degree in 1991.

Meanwhile, Brother Stewart married Gena Ashlock in 1986 and was ordained to the Gospel Ministry by Victory Missionary Baptist Church in Sherwood, Arkansas, later that same year. God blessed the Stewart’s with two boys—Brett in 1989 and Hayden in 1991. After pastoring in Michigan for nine years Brother Stewart returned to Southeast Arkansas where he was afforded the opportunity to complete his Master of Theology (2006) and Doctor of Theology (2008) degrees at the Missionary Baptist Seminary.

He is pastor of Olive Branch Missionary Baptist Church (formerly Olive Street MBC) in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He has served ABA churches in Holly Grove, DeWitt, and Star City, Arkansas, as well as in Coloma, Michigan. He is currently a member of the Standing Missionary Committee where he serves as Assistant Clerk. Brother Stewart is Vice President of the Alumni Association for the Missionary Baptist Seminary.
The Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter are part of what many people consider the general epistles of the New Testament. These epistles are so designated because they were not addressed to a specific congregation or individual as were such letters as Romans, Galatians and Philemon. The books of 1 and 2 Peter were written by the best known of the twelve apostles and are the only known record of any of his writings.

**The Apostle Peter**

This man was originally known as Simon, the Greek form of Simeon who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Jesus gave him the name Cephas, which was Aramaic for Peter, the name by which he is best known (Mark 3:16; John 1:42). Both Cephas and Peter mean “rock.” Peter was a native of Bethsaida, a town on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Later, he evidently moved to Capernaum where he and Andrew his brother, along with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were fishermen (Luke 5:10). Energetic and enthusiastic, Peter seems to have been a natural born leader. He frequently acted as the spokesman for the apostles. Unfortunately, he was also impulsive and impetuous. During the early years of the New Testament era, Peter’s primary ministry was to the Jews while Paul was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. (See Galatians 2:8.)

**The Epistle of 1 Peter**

**The Recipients.** This epistle was written “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1). The places mentioned were provinces, or regions, in what is generally known today as Asia Minor. Most of the churches in these places either were established by Paul or were begun by men who were strongly influenced by him. While those congregations consisted primarily of Gentile believers, many Jewish Christians also were included in those bodies. Many Bible scholars teach that Peter wrote this epistle primarily to the Jewish believers in those churches; however, it is clear from 1 Peter 2:10 that Gentile Christians certainly loomed large in Peter’s mind.

**The Purpose.** Peter's primary purpose in writing this epistle was to encourage his readers in times of testing. The word suffer, in some form, appears fifteen times in this letter. In some instances the sufferings of Jesus are the subject, but, even then, Peter often used the Savior’s sufferings as an example for believers. Generally speaking, Christian suffering in Peter’s time was inflicted by one of three sources: (1) unbelieving Jews, (2) pagan Gentiles or (3) the Roman authorities.

**The Date.** It is widely held that the Epistle of 1 Peter was written sometime during AD 60-65, which was about the time Paul wrote his so-called
prison epistles. Which of those two apostles was executed first cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. However, many Bible scholars believe that both Peter and Paul died during the rule of the infamous Nero, who was the Roman emperor during AD 54-68.

**Some Distinctives.** This epistle includes many teachings regarding the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, such as divine election and foreknowledge, redemption and atonement, the believers’ status in this dispensation, the respective roles of wives and husbands and how to suffer as a Christian. Contrary to what many people have assumed, the apostle Peter mentioned that he witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus (1 Peter 5:1).

**An Outline.** First Peter can be readily divided into three basic sections: (1) The Believers’ Glorious Inheritance (chapter 1), (2) The Believers’ Earthly Pilgrimage (chapters 2; 3) and (3) The Believers’ Fiery Trial (chapters 4; 5).

### The Epistle of 2 Peter

**The Recipients.** This epistle was written to the same recipients as was 1 Peter, as can be seen by the apostle’s designation of this letter as “this second epistle” (2 Peter 3:1). Note that those to whom the Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter were written were not only believers but were members of local churches scattered throughout the provinces and regions mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1.

**The Purpose.** If 1 Peter was a warning that believers are subject to suffering because of their Christian identity, this epistle is a call to faithfulness in the face of persecution. Most second epistles are reiterative and exhortative—and sometimes even corrective as well—and so it is with 2 Peter. Peter also wanted to help his readers keep their focus on the second coming of Christ and all that will be associated with His return.

**The Date.** Most likely, this second epistle was penned fairly soon after the writing of 1 Peter. The indication is that Peter wanted to address the readers of this letter while the contents of his first epistle were still fresh in their minds. Peter mentioned that his death was possibly near (2 Peter 1:14). Whether or not he, like Paul, was in prison and was facing execution when he wrote these words is not known. (Compare 2 Timothy 4:6.)

**Some Distinctives.** Included in this epistle are the seven qualities which, when added to one’s faith, will promote Christian maturity (2 Peter 1:5-8). Peter also mentioned his experience on the mount of transfiguration when he witnessed the majesty of Christ (verses 16-18). The second chapter of this letter is similar in content and character to the Epistle of Jude. Peter referred to the three worlds, the past, present and future worlds—“the world that then was” (2 Peter 3:6), “the heavens and the earth, which are now” (verse 7) and the “new heavens and a new earth” (verse 13).

**An Outline.** The Epistle of 2 Peter has four essential divisions: (1) The Great Christian Qualities (2 Peter 1:1-11), (2) The Scriptures Exalted (verses 12-21), (3) Some Warnings About False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1-22) and (4) The Second Coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:1-18).
In the opening chapter of this epistle Peter, quickly addressed the matter of Christian suffering, which is the most prominent theme in this letter. However, in the first few verses of this chapter, he referred to the new life which believers have in Christ. One who does not have this life will not be able to endure the times of testing which are likely to occur during the earthly life. This new life is the result of the new birth experience, and, after one receives the gift of eternal life, he or she is to follow the Savior in the more abundant life.

**PETER’S SALUTATION**

1 Peter 1:1, 2

This epistle begins with the identity of the writer and its recipients. The inspired writer also mentioned the divine purpose which was behind all of the people and events that were involved in the issues at hand.

*An Apostle of Jesus Christ (verse 1).* In keeping with the custom of his time, Peter immediately identified himself as the writer of this epistle. The reason for that practice was because letters were generally written on scrolls which were then rolled up and sent to the intended recipient. The scrolls were rolled in such a manner as to enable the reader to begin reading the contents immediately upon unrolling the message. Thus, it was important for the reader to know from the beginning who wrote the letter. Peter used the name by which he was best known among the early churches. He described himself as an apostle, which is from two Greek terms which essentially mean “one who is sent.” Peter’s status as an apostle was established by Jesus Christ. He did not choose that position for himself, nor was he put in that office by any individual or group. The apostolic office was among the spiritual gifts given to the early churches until the New Testament was completed. (Compare Ephesians 4:11.)

*The Scattered Strangers (verse 1).* The recipients of this epistle were “the strangers scattered throughout” (verse 1) what is known today as Turkey or Asia Minor. The Greek word for strangers is the same as in Hebrews 11:13 and 1 Peter 2:11 where it is translated pilgrim. *(Note: In both of these references a different term is used for strangers.)* The Epistle of 1 Peter was addressed to people who were not to regard this present world as their home but were to anticipate the eternal home. The word scattered is from diaspora, which
referred to the Jewish people who were living in places other than Judea or Galilee. In James 1:1, the same term is used to refer to “the twelve tribes which are scattered [diaspora] abroad.” The scattered strangers who were the primary recipients of 1 Peter were Jewish believers who were living outside of Palestine in places Peter specifically designated.

**The Five Regions (verse 1).**
Peter particularly mentioned five regions in which those whom he addressed were living: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

- **Pontus.** This region lay south of the Black Sea on the northern coast of present-day Turkey. At times it was a Roman province, and at other times it was administered as part of another province.

- **Galatia.** This term describes a province in the central part of Turkey. The name Galatia also referred to a district that was more encompassing than its provincial boundaries. Much of Paul’s first missionary tour was in southern Galatia.

- **Cappadocia.** This name also identifies a region as well as a province. Cappadocia was generally east of Galatia and north of Cilicia.

- **Asia.** This was the most influential of the provinces and districts mentioned by Peter. It occupied roughly the western third of present-day Turkey. Among the early churches in Asia were those in Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira, Pergamos and Smyrna.

- **Bithynia.** This place was north of Asia and west of Pontus. On his second missionary journey Paul attempted to go into Bithynia and preach the gospel, but the Holy Spirit would not permit him to do so (Acts 16:7).

**Divine Election and Foreknowledge (verse 2).** In the opening statement of this verse, Peter associated divine election with the foreknowledge of God. Those who are the “elect” (verse 2) are those who have trusted Jesus as Savior. Through His omniscience God certainly knows who will be saved and who will not accept Jesus. Humanly speaking, foreknowledge generally affects our decisions. However, this is not so with God. He is not affected by human emotions or motivations. He can know something without acting on such knowledge. Even though God knows who will become one of the elect, no one becomes part of that number unless he or she trusts Jesus as Savior. God
has determined that all those who trust Jesus will be saved, but He does not force anyone to accept Jesus, nor does He keep anyone from doing so. Divine election and foreknowledge are related, but they are not the same.

**Sanctification of the Spirit (verse 2).** The election which Peter mentioned is “through sanctification of the Spirit.” (verse 2). The word sanctification is from a Greek term which denotes a setting apart. Through salvation believers are set apart, or sanctified, to serve God. This sanctification is not the means of salvation but the result of it. The Holy Spirit is involved with one’s sanctification in that He is responsible for the new birth, as it is a birth of the Spirit (John 3:5-8). Moreover, He is responsible for the believer’s new life, as it is life in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11). The Holy Spirit also aids in the progressive aspect of a believer’s sanctification. He provides guidance and assistance as one seeks increasingly and steadily to become conformed more to the image of his or her Savior (See Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.)

**The Sprinkling of the Blood (verse 2).** Following his reference to sanctification, Peter mentioned the matters of obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Christian obedience should be the result of one’s realization of the sanctification he or she has through salvation. Peter’s reference to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus is an allusion to the manner in which the Tabernacle was consecrated, or sanctified, upon its completion, and how the people were consecrated, or sanctified in their use of the Tabernacle as the acceptable manner of worshiping God. When Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar and on the people, they responded, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” (Ex. 24:7; Compare Hebrews 9:18-20.)

**Grace and Peace Multiplied (verse 2).** In the final statement in this verse Peter declared, “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (verse 2). The grace to which Peter referred in this instance is not saving grace. Instead, it is sustaining grace. (Compare 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.) The recipients of this epistle were likely to experience many adversities, including persecution. They needed divine grace to sustain them in the face of such difficulties. Likewise, the peace which Peter mentioned is not the peace with God that is established through faith in Jesus as Savior. It is, rather, the peace of God “which passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). This peace helps one keep his or her focus on Jesus and His work and not on the circumstances with which believers might have to contend. Peter wished for his readers such grace and peace in great abundance.

**PETER’S DOXOLOGY**

After addressing the recipients of his letter, Peter immediately gave praise to God. He mentioned particularly who God is, what He has done for believers and what those who belong to Him can anticipate in eternity.

**Blessed Be God (verse 3).** The first thing Peter mentioned in what could be considered the body of his letter was praise for God. This is reminiscent of the first thing Zacharias, the elderly father of John the Baptist, declared when God removed his temporary muteness (Luke 1:68). The Greek word for blessed
is a term which essentially means “to speak well of.” The word *eulogy*, which literally means “a good word,” is from the same word family. (*Note: In many instances, such as in the Beatitudes, the word *blessed* is from a different term which basically means “happy.”) Peter acknowledged God as the Father of Jesus Christ. This is a reminder that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. God is the Father of every individual through creation. He is the Father of each believer through regeneration. But He is the Father of Jesus Christ in a specific and special sense.

**Begotten by a Living Hope (verse 3).** Not only is God the Father of Jesus Christ, but He is also the Father of all believers, a reality made possible through the new birth experience. Those who trust Jesus as Savior are begotten again. Jesus spoke of the same phenomenon when He told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again (John 3:3). The new birth occurs when one accepts Jesus as Savior. While faith makes it possible for one to be born—or begotten—again, there is also “a lively [or living] hope” (1 Peter 1:3) involved. As used in the Scriptures, the word *hope* refers to more than a mere wish. It denotes an unshakable expectation that what is promised in the Bible will come to pass. In this sense, faith and hope are closely related. Faith sees what lies ahead, and hope accepts it as a reality or an accomplished fact. The believer’s hope is living because it is given by an eternal, all-powerful God.

**The Incorruptible Inheritance (1 Peter 1:4):** An inheritance often came with conditions attached—that has not changed. The will had to be read, the children had to be present, the lawyers had to sign the documentation and adopted children had to be included. These were some of the prerequisites. While there was that similarity, there was also a notable dissimilarity. Peter acknowledged the inheritance of those Christians was neither subject to passing away nor liable to decay. The incorruptible and undefiled inheritance of the Christian stood in direct contrast to that of an earthly inheritance which would have faded away like a flower that withered and wilted. All earthly inheritances—because they were tangible—eventually faded away, but the eternal inheritance of the Christian possessed no tangible, sensual elements that might have been subject to decay and defilement. It was forever—that had not changed.

**Manna**

**The Incorruptible Inheritance:**

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realized because their hope would not extend beyond this earthly existence. (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:19.)

**An Enduring Inheritance (verse 4).**

The “lively hope” (1 Peter 1:3) which believers have because of their faith in Jesus Christ will be realized in an enduring inheritance, one that is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (verse 4). The word inheritance denotes something that is bequeathed to someone by a benefactor. The basic Greek term refers to something that is received by drawing a lot. An inheritance is not earned nor can it be demanded as a right. Instead, it is given. The believer’s inheritance from God is “incorruptible” (verse 4) in that it cannot be marred or diminished by any destructive agent or force. It is “undefiled” (verse 4) in that it is without any stain or blemish. It “fadeth not away” (verse 4) because it will never become old, worn out or outmoded. The inheritance that believers can anticipate is indeed glorious because we are “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). We will share in all that He has.

**A Heavenly Inheritance (verse 4).**

The enduring inheritance which is promised to those who have been begotten again by a living hope is a certainty because it is “reserved in heaven” (verse 4). The Greek word for reserved primarily means “kept,” “protected,” “guarded,” and so forth. The One who keeps, protects and guards the believer’s inheritance is the Omnipotent God Himself. No being or force in the universe is wise enough or powerful enough to destroy or diminish what is in store for those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. The inheritance is “in heaven” (verse 4) in the sense that it is associated with God whose dwelling is in Heaven and it is characterized by heavenly qualities—in incorruptible, undefiled and enduring. However, the actual realization of the inheritance will likely start for believers on earth during the millennial reign of Christ and then continue into eternity following the conclusion of the Millennium.

**SAINTS PRESERVED**

Not only does God guard the believers’ inheritance, but He also protects them. Some people claim to believe that Christians will persevere into the eternal age. The truth is, however, that believers will be preserved into the eternal age. We do not have to persevere—in fact, we cannot do so—but God preserves us.

**Kept by the Power of God (verse 5).** An individual’s salvation is the gift of God in every respect. (Compare Ephesians 2:8, 9.) The grace that makes salvation available is from God as is the faith through which one receives salvation. The keeping by which salvation is made secure is also from God. Believers do not have to depend upon themselves to remain saved, but they are kept saved by the power of God. The Greek term for power in the first part of verse 5 is *dunamis*, which denotes “ability,” “strength” or “force.” The words
dynamite, dynamic and dynamo are derived from dunamis. The Omnipotent God is the most powerful Being in the universe. No angel or human can wrest a believer from His hand. (Compare John 10:28-30.) Satan is certainly a powerful creature, but he is no match for the One who created the universe and sustains all things by His mighty power.

The Revelation of Salvation (verse 5). In the last part of this verse Peter referred to “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” The Greek word for revealed essentially means “uncovered” or “unveiled.” The expression last time, as used here, denotes the time that shall begin with the coming of Christ in power and glory. That is when the full realization of salvation will be experienced by believers. By that time all the saved—except for those who will be saved during the Millennium—will have been resurrected, judged and rewarded. The moment one trusts Jesus as Savior he or she is saved as much as he or she will ever be. However, one’s salvation will not be complete until all that God has promised for believers has come to pass. The glorification of believers, which includes their resurrection and recognition for faithful service, will be the final aspect of their salvation.

Rejoicing in Salvation (verse 6). Salvation is a joyous experience. Practically everyone who has experienced salvation can recall the joy that was felt at the realization that he or she had been saved. Joy is an integral component of salvation. When the people of Samaria were saved as a result of the preaching of Philip, the Scripture states “there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8). However, a believer can lose or forfeit the joy of salvation because of sin. King David is a classic example of this, as can be seen by one of the petitions he made in his prayer of confession following his sin with Bath-sheba, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Psalm 51:12). David did not pray for his salvation to be restored. He did not lose his salvation, but he had lost the joy of his salvation. The readers of Peter’s epistle would have their faith tested, but they could rejoice in their salvation nonetheless.

Rejoicing Despite Trials (verse 6). Even though salvation brings great joy into one’s heart, the believer’s rejoicing is mixed frequently with the adversities with which we often are faced during our earthly existence. Peter told his readers that “for a season” (verse 6) they would be “in heaviness” (verse 6) because of the “manifold temptations” (verse 6) they would have to endure. The Greek word for season primarily means “little,” “short” or “brief.” As used here it indicates a brief period of time. Heaviness is from a term which basically denotes “grief” or “sorrow.” The term manifold essentially means “of many and various forms or sorts.” The Greek word for temptations speaks of tests or trials. Satan tempts people so that they will commit sin. God does not tempt anyone to do evil, but sometimes He does allow tests or trials to befall believers (James 1:12-14), and that was what Peter meant by this reference to temptations.

THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS CHRIST

Previously, Peter referred to the revelation of the believer’s salvation which will occur in connection the events of the last time (verse 5). Associated with
the final revelation of our salvation will be the appearance of Jesus Christ, at which time He and all His saints will receive praise, honor and glory.

The Believer’s Trial of Faith (verse 7). In the first part of this verse, Peter mentioned the likelihood of trials for his readers which would test their faith. The Greek word for trial is an entirely different term from that for temptations in verse 6. The words are similar in meaning but have no relationship in their origin. The test mentioned in this verse is like an assayer’s examination by which metal is checked to determine its value. Peter’s example of gold that is subjected to fire illustrates this truth. Fire separates the gold from any impurities that might be in the ore. The more intense the fire, the purer the gold becomes. A believer’s faith is said to be even more precious than the finest gold. The faith to which Peter referred is not saving faith, but the faith by which one lives each day and maintains a consistent testimony for the Lord. Serving faith is valuable because of what it shows to others.

Praise, Honor and Glory for Believers (verse 7). Like gold tried in the fire and purged of all dross, believers will be “found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (verse 7). The terms praise, honor and glory indicates recognition and reward. The determination regarding rewards for Christians will be made at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (See Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10.) The recognition of the faithful service performed by a believer will occur at the millennial reign of Christ, which will be when He appears in great power and glory (Matt. 16:27). In the eyes of this present world Christians are often ridiculed, sometimes despised and occasionally pitied. But in the kingdom age believers will be regarded with the utmost respect and accorded the praise, honor and glory.
they are due because of who they are and what they have done through Christ.

**The Appearing:** this is our English word *apocalypse*. It means “laying bear or to disclose the truth.”
It is not speaking of impending disaster. Instead, it reveals the coming of Jesus. It is translated *revelation*. Word Study #602.

### The Appearing of Jesus Christ (verse 7).
In the closing phrase of this verse, Peter referred to the appearing of Jesus Christ, an event that shall occur when He returns in power and glory to defeat the anti-Christ and his forces and establish His kingdom on earth. (See Revelation 19:11—20:6.) The word *appearing* is a term that essentially denotes a sudden manifestation or appearance. The time when believers will be acknowledged for their faithful service will be at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There is also an aspect of Jesus’ second coming that will be characterized by stealth and silence. This will be when He returns to catch away all believers, those who will still be living and those who have died in the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
Following the Tribulation Period, Jesus will come in such splendor that every eye shall see Him (Rev. 1:7).

### Unseen but Beloved (verse 8).
Since the recipients of this epistle lived a considerable distance from Judea and Galilee, none of them had the opportunity to see Jesus during His time on earth at His first coming. Even though they had not seen Him with their physical eyes, they could see Him with eyes of faith. Those believers were among the great multitude of people whom Jesus said would be blessed because they would believe without having actually seen Him (John 20:29). Peter commended his readers not only for their faith, but for their love as well. Even though they had never seen Jesus, they loved Him. Their love was *agape* love, which is love that is based on principle. One reason those early Christians loved the One whom they had not seen, was because they had seen Him exemplified in the lives and messages of men such as Paul, Peter and other faithful servants of Christ.

### Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory (verse 8).
True faith leads to great rejoicing. Peter reminded those to whom he wrote of their “unspeakable” (verse 8) joy. The Greek word for *unspeakable* indicates something which cannot be repressed. Even though many of Peter’s readers would be subjected to severe trials of their faith, their joy would not be diminished by their adversities. Christian joy is in a person and is not dependent upon one’s situation or circumstances. The expression *full of glory* also describes the word *joy*. The term *glory* suggests the joy to which Peter referred is associated with the glory of Christ. Thus, true Christian joy is irrepressible because it looks beyond the experiences of one’s earthly life and anticipates what will be received and experienced in the life to come.

### THE END OF FAITH 1 Peter 1:9, 10
One does not have to understand all that is involved in salvation to be saved. All the Old Testament believers were saved and the prophets in that
time foretold of the time when salvation shall be realized in its completion despite the fact that they did not always understand fully all that they taught through the Holy Spirit.

The End of Faith (verse 9). Despite the ordeals which the recipients of this epistle would have to endure, they could be certain of “receiving the end of your faith” (verse 9). The Greek word for end denotes a goal or a conclusion. The final realization of salvation for believers is when they receive “the salvation of your souls” (verse 9). The word soul refers to a person’s entire being, or that which makes an individual who he or she is in distinction from everyone else. The soul is the entire being—body, mind and spirit. One’s spirit is saved the moment he or she trusts Jesus as Savior. The salvation of the mind is a progressive matter that occurs in the believer’s daily life on earth, ending in victory when he or she goes to be with the Lord. The body is saved when it is resurrected from the grave. When the body is resurrected, it is reunited with the believer’s spirit and mind which will have been with the Lord while the body remained in the grave awaiting the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:14). When the believer’s body, mind and spirit are reunited, he or she will realize the consummation or goal of his or her faith.

The Prophets’ Inquiry (verse 10). The salvation of the soul which Peter mentioned in verse 9 was a matter about which the Old Testament prophets wondered. They had some understanding of the resurrection, as can be seen in Martha’s remarks to Jesus regarding Lazarus (John 11:24). (Note: Martha’s grasp of the resurrection was based on the teachings of the Old Testament concerning this matter.) What those people did not realize was how a believer’s body, mind and spirit will all be reunited in the resurrection. They had some understanding of the events associated with the end time, but people of this dispensation can have a greater realization of such matters than did those who lived prior to the first coming of Jesus. That was what Peter meant.
by his reference to “the grace that should come unto you” (1 Peter 1:10). It is entirely due to the grace of God that we are living on this side of the cross, and, because of that, we have the benefit of the full Bible by which we can know more about the divine purposes. The matters of the resurrection and rapture of all believers, the first and second resurrections and the intervening millennial reign of Christ were only dimly understood by the old prophets.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 1 Peter 1:11, 12

Between the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of believers is a period of time that is called by various designations by several Bible scholars. Some people have called it the church dispensation because of the prominent role played by the Lord’s churches in fulfilling the Great Commission. Others have designated this period as the dispensation of the Spirit because of all the activities of the Holy Spirit during this time.

The Inspiration of the Prophets (verse 11). The Old Testament prophets were men who were used by God to proclaim His message to the people. There were two classes of prophets, those whose prophecies were recorded in a specific book of the Bible, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and others, and those such as Elijah, Elisha and others whose prophecies were not recorded in a designated book. Whether or not the prophets had a book in the Bible named for them, they all spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In this verse Peter designated the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ because in so many instances the Old Testament prophets spoke of Him in their messages. “To him [Jesus] give all the [Old Testament] prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

The Testimony of the Prophets (verse 11). The Old Testament prophets testified of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (verse 11). The prophecies regarding the sufferings of Christ foretold His crucifixion and all the agonies associated with it. (Compare Psalm 22:1-18; Isaiah 53:1-12.) The glory that followed the sufferings of Christ began with His resurrection and will culminate in His coronation at the establishment of His millennial reign. Note that in the Greek language the word glory is plural. As Christ experienced many sufferings, so shall He receive many glories, including His victory over death and the grave, His ascension to the Father’s right hand, His coming in great power to defeat the anti-Christ and his forces, His judgment of the nations and His assumption of the throne of David. In addition, there is the glory Christ receives from the faithful service of believers.

The Ministry of the Prophets (verse 12). In the first part of this verse Peter noted that the revelations received by the Old Testament prophets not only were for themselves and the people to whom they ministered, but for people of this dispensation as well. The Scriptures are a unit. They are to be interpreted and applied in the light of that reality. Critics of the Bible try to set the Old Testament against the New Testament, the Pentateuch against the Prophets, the writings of Paul against the four gospels and the book of Acts and so forth. This is an improper use of the Scriptures, however.
the Bible is interpreted correctly, one will see that there are no contradictions. Each book or section of the Scriptures is in exact harmony with one another. Thus, the Old Testament speaks to us even today.

**The Descent of the Holy Spirit (verse 12).** Whether one considers the words of the prophets or the gospel proclaimed by the apostles and others, the message is about Jesus Christ and the One who inspires and illuminates is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent from Heaven on the day of Pentecost. The apostle Peter mentioned that “the angels desire to look into” (verse 12) the things which he had mentioned in this passage. Even though the angels are highly intelligent creatures, they cannot comprehend all that is involved with the salvation of believers because they cannot be the recipients of such a gracious gift. The angels can understand divine power, but divine mercy is beyond their ability to grasp. They cannot fathom how the Almighty, sovereign God uses such weak sinful humans in accomplishing His purposes.

**ORIGIN OF NEW LIFE IN CHRIST**

Jesus declared in John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” By nature each person is dead in trespasses and sins, but through faith in Jesus one receives spiritual life (Eph. 2:1, 5). As one demonstrates in his or her daily walk in the life that has been received from Christ, he or she enjoys the more abundant life. When Christ returns in power and glory, believers will receive the consummation of their faith, which is salvation of the soul, that is, the individual in his or her entirety.
The life that believers have through their faith in Christ as Savior is a new life in every respect. It begins with the new birth, it is characterized by a new outlook, it is energized by a new hope and it is destined for the new Heaven and earth. Thus, it is no wonder that the apostle Paul wrote, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). The new life in Christ is to be a life of holiness that is based on one’s relationship with God.

HOPING TO THE END 1 Peter 1:13

Hope is one of the remaining spiritual gifts. In the physical realm hope is necessary to keep one from becoming overwhelmed with frustrations, failures and disappointments. Sometimes, however, one’s hopes are not realized. In the spiritual realm hope is absolutely certain because God always fulfills His promises.

Girded and Sober. The word wherefore links this verse and those which follow with the wonderful blessings and assurances that Peter mentioned in the opening verses of his epistle. The expression, gird up the loins of your minds, is a call to action. In the time of the apostles men, as well as women, dressed in robes. If a man had to engage in strenuous physical activity, especially that which involved his legs and feet, he usually gathered up the ends of his robe and tucked them into his belt, which was often called a girdle. When this expression is used with reference to one’s mind, it is an exhortation against letting thoughts and decisions hang loose. To gird up the loins is to be prepared for action. The exhortation be sober indicates the need for vigilance. The Christian life involves action, but one needs to be certain he or she is involved in the right kind of activities. When the decision to act is made, the believer needs to be sure to do the right thing in the right way.

Hoping to the End. Once a Christian has prepared his or her mind for action and given careful consideration to what should be done, a critical motivation comes into play. The believer’s hope is more than a desire or something for which one wishes. It is, instead, a settled assurance that what God has promised will occur. The phrase, to the end, speaks of a goal or a destination. To hope to the end is to believe firmly that there is a worthwhile purpose for one’s life. Believers are not only saved from hell, but we are saved to some-
Effects of New Life in Christ

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thing as well. We are saved to be witnesses of the transforming power of the grace of God. The recipients of Peter’s epistle would be faced with severe testings and trials. Despite all the adversities, they would have to endure, however, they could be assured that their Christian lives had purpose and meaning. Hope would sustain them and enable them to look beyond their circumstances and keep their eyes on the goal that awaited them as subjects of the heavenly King.

Divine Grace. Salvation in its entirety is a matter of divine grace. It was conceived in the mind of God and was set forth in the divine purposes. Salvation became effective through the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It will be brought to consummation when He returns in power and glory. Divine grace has made salvation possible and assures that it will be realized in its entirety by each believer. Peter wanted his readers to understand that their goal or hope depended completely on grace. Since that was the case, they could be sure that their hope would come to full fruition. If it were up to them to keep themselves saved, they would not be able to do so, and their hope would not be realized even though they had their minds properly girded and were fully vigilant in their attempts to cope with the circumstances and challenges of life. Divine grace made it possible for them to anticipate the ultimate victory even if they did lose some battles.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ. The term, the revelation of Jesus Christ, denotes the time when He returns to earth in power and glory and establishes His earthly kingdom. This event will be one of many remarkable phenomena which are associated with His second coming. Believers will have already been resurrected and judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:13-15; Colossians 3:4.) When the Tribulation Period has run its course, Jesus will appear in majestic brightness and glory and defeat the forces of the anti-Christ and establish Himself as King of kings and Lord of

Be Sober: in its original meaning the term means “not intoxicated.” Peter uses it in the figurative sense here. Our minds are to be clear of mental fuzziness. Our hearts are to be focused on the Master. Our spiritual focus comes from a mind girded to Christ. Word Study #3525.

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Gird Up the Loins of Your Mind (1 Peter 1:13): Clothing from antiquity was peculiar but specific. The tunic, often made of two pieces of sackcloth or goat hair, was the most essential of the garments. It served as the outer layer during the day and a pallet upon which to sleep at night. This heavy garment was held to the waist by a girdle-like belt made of leather, coarse cloth or rope. On occasion, when men needed freedom from the long, bulky robe to work, run or go to battle, they lifted the hem of the tunic and tucked it into the waistline. Peter used this metaphor when he challenged his readers to “gird up the loins of your mind” (verse 13). His intention was to urge preparedness, sober thinking and the like—the meaning was to gather up all loose thoughts from worldly sources and tuck them neatly into the plan and will of God.

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lords (Rev. 19:11—20:6). Not only will Jesus Himself rule over the nations, but He will be assisted in doing so by believers who will reign under Him and with Him during the Millennium. Most likely, the rewards that will be determined at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be made fully effective during the Millennium. Thus, the revelation of Jesus Christ will mark the culmination of one’s salvation and the hope associated with it.

OBEDIENT AND HOLY CHILDREN 1 Peter 1:14-16

In this passage, Peter mentioned two things that should characterize one’s Christian life—obedience and holiness. A believer to live in such a manner must avoid the sinful life-style of the past and embrace the new life that is marked by conformity to the will of God and His purposes for each individual.

**Obedient Children (verse 14).** Believers are to live “as obedient children” (verse 14) not to be saved but because they are saved. Obedience is an important matter in the Christian life, but it is not the means to such life. Instead, Christian obedience is an unmistakable proof and irrefutable evidence that one has indeed been saved. The root term for obedience conveys the sense of submission to another. To obey someone is to acknowledge and accept his will. For believers, God’s will is to become their will. The word children is from teknon, which essentially means “one who is born.” The Bible teaches that children are to honor their parents, and the best way to do so is for children to be obedient to their parents’ wishes (Eph. 6:1-3). Since believers are children of God through the new birth experience, we should be eager to honor our Heavenly Father by obeying His will for our lives. We can be assured that He is a loving Father who wants only the best for His children.

**Former Lusts (verse 14).** The terms obedient children and former lusts denote contrasting conditions. Obedient children indicates what Peter’s readers were—or should have been, at least—as a result of their salvation, while former lusts describes their situation prior to salvation. The word ignorance also speaks of the unsaved state. (Compare Acts 17:30.) Even though one has been saved, he or she can live so as to act like an unbeliever. This is indicated by the expression, fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts. The word fashioning is from the same term as conformed in Romans 12:2. To fashion oneself according to the former lusts is to be conformed to this world. This conduct will keep one from growing in grace and reflecting the image of Christ in his or her life. The former lusts are the passions and desires that lead one to continue to act, talk and think as an unsaved person. This is not how God wants His children to live.

**He Is Holy (verse 15).** In this verse Peter returned to a positive note and exhorted his readers to be holy. As the basis for such an exhortation, he cited
the holiness of God. God is holy in every aspect of the term. The Greek word for *holy* essentially means “set apart.” God is holy in that He is set apart from all manner of sin. He is not contaminated—or even tainted to the least degree—with any sin at all. He is also holy in the sense that He is set apart to accomplish His purposes. He is fully committed to this mission. Nothing can deter Him from doing what He has determined to do. The holiness of God is in stark contrast to the lack of holiness that universally characterizes human beings. When Isaiah saw his vision of the holiness of God, he heard the seraphim declare that the whole earth was filled with the glory of God, a fact which led the prophet to exclaim, “Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5).

**Be Holy (verse 15).** As God is holy, so are believers to be holy. The holiness of believers is to be apparent “in all manner of conversation [daily conduct]” (verse 15). In salvation one is set apart to serve God. This is positional holiness. We are made holy because of our standing in Christ. There is also a practical aspect to holiness which is based on our position in Christ. The realization that we have been set apart to serve God should lead to a life of active and faithful service, and, as we render such service to Him, we will become increasingly more like Him. Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites were to wear distinctive clothing which would mark them as a people who were different and belonged to the true God. (See Numbers 15:38-40.) Sometimes proper clothing will help identify us as Christians—and certainly our clothing should never compromise our Christian testimony—but beyond that, our speech and actions should always give clear evidence that we belong to God and are among His people.

**The Call to Holiness (verse 16).** Peter’s call to holiness was based on Leviticus 11:44. This Scripture is the culmination of a series of commandments which God gave to the Israelites regarding items that were designated as “clean” or “unclean” under the Law of Moses. The eleventh chapter of Leviticus is an extensive account of which creatures—including beasts, fish, fowls and insects—could be considered clean and which were to be regarded as unclean. The clean creatures could be eaten for food, while those declared unclean were not to be consumed. A study of these exhortations indicates that there were

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**Holy in All Manner of Conversation** (1 Peter 1:15): English, unlike Hebrew, is a living language. Word meanings today are sometimes much different than when used in their original context. Take the old English word *conversation* for example. In present day, this word means “to engage in a dialogue with another person.” In Peter’s day, it referred to how one conducted his daily life—at home, at work, at school, at play, at war and so forth. The holiness afforded the Christian by God must be manifested in life, living and lifestyle. Being related to a holy God demanded that the child of God reflect said holiness. God has always been best glorified on earth when His children live like Him.
valid reasons, such as to promote and maintain health and hygiene, for some of the distinctions. In some other instances the distinction seems to have been more for the purpose of appearance. The Israelites were expected by God to be a separate people. They were to witness to their Gentile neighbors, but they were not to partake of their sinful practices. Therefore, they were to be holy, even as their God. Modern day believers have no restrictions on what they can eat, but they are expected to be holy, nonetheless. One’s testimony among unbelievers will be more effective if it is substantiated by a life-style that is consistent with his or her profession.

THE IMPARTIAL JUDGE

Believers are not to be careless or indifferent toward their standing as children of God. Not only is He a holy God, but He is also an impartial God who deals with all mankind in complete justice and righteousness. Thus, the believer’s call to personal holiness is one which should be accepted with complete respect and reverence.

The Impartial Judge. In the first part of this verse Peter reminded the recipients of this epistle that their God is an impartial Judge in every respect. He was aware of all their circumstances. He knew who was suffering, and He knew the reason for their sufferings. As a Judge who is just and holy in the most complete sense possible, God knew how to deal with those who were persecuting His children, and He knew how to enable the believers to handle their adversities. Peter’s reminder of the impartiality of God should have had a twofold effect on his readers. First, they should have been encouraged. Their ordeals were known by God, and He would give them the sustaining grace they needed. (Compare 2 Corinthians 12:9.) Additionally, those believers should have been restrained from taking matters into their own hands. They were not to retaliate for the ordeals to which they were subjected. Instead, they were to allow God to respond with any retribution that might have been necessary. (See Romans 12:17-19.)

Reverential Fear. Even though God is holy, He is also the Father of those who have trusted Jesus as Savior. He is not an aloof, unapproachable deity,
but He is instead a loving Father who is concerned about all the needs of each of His children. One should not assume from this, however, that God can be treated casually or without the respect and reverence which He is due. Peter reminded his readers that their time on earth—"the time of your sojourning here" (1 Peter 1:17)—was to be passed "in fear" (verse 17). As used in this instance, the word *fear* indicates a reverential awe. God certainly has the power to be a terrible foe for those who oppose Him and His people, and unbelievers definitely should be aware of this. However, believers should view Him in an additional light. We should see Him as an awesome God who through His omnipotence and omniscience has created all things and continues to sustain the entire universe. We have received from Him life that will not end and cannot be taken from us.

**REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD**

1 Peter 1:18, 19

The realization of the tremendous cost of salvation should cause Christians to be thankful for what God has done. He paid a price for the redemption of mankind that no one else could ever pay. Salvation is free for those who believe, but it required a dear cost—the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

*Not Redeemed with Corruptible Things* (verse 18). The term *forasmuch* is a linking word. The reverential awe with which believers should regard God should be enhanced and even intensified by one’s understanding of the precious price that was paid for his or her redemption. The Greek word for *redeemed* literally means “to loosen by paying a price.” It denotes a price that is paid to secure the release of someone who has been kidnapped or is enslaved. *Corruptible* denotes that which is subject to ruin. The ruin might be due to decay, or it could, as in the case of gold or silver, be due to a loss in value for whatever reason even though the item itself is not lost. Through the centuries gold and silver have been among the most enduring matters for mankind. However, these metals can be subject to tarnishing, and they can be devalued in other ways as well. The redemption of mankind could not be purchased with anything—even highly valued metals—that can become reduced in value.

*Redeemed from Useless Traditions* (verse 18). The fact that Peter specifically mentioned the “vain conversation” (verse 18) which his readers had received “by tradition from your fathers” (verse 18) suggests this epistle was directed primarily to Jewish Christians even though Gentile believers were certainly included in the scope of its message. The expression *vain conversation* denotes a life-style that is empty, futile and without value. The Jews were religious, but their religion was nothing but a hollow shell. It looked impressive with its elaborate rituals and ceremonies, but all those matters were meaningless because the minds and hearts of the people were directed
more to the activities themselves than to any spiritual significance they might have had. Similarly, many people are impressed with religions that appear showy or significant. However, a religion that does not proclaim the truth about mankind’s need for redemption from sin and the price Jesus paid for that redemption is worthless and even dangerous.

The Precious Blood of Christ (verse 19). This is the positive feature of the topic which Peter began explaining in verse 18. After establishing that we are not redeemed by corruptible things—even though they might be things as valuable as gold or silver—he emphasized that the price of mankind’s redemption is of even greater worth than the finest gold or silver. The precious blood of Christ was the ransom which was required for the deliverance of mankind from their bondage to sin. For thousands of years the blood of multiplied thousands of sacrificial animals was shed on altars erected by the patriarchs and on the altars at the Tabernacle and Temple. However, those sacrifices only pointed to the supreme sacrifice which would fulfill all the typical sacrifices. A blood sacrifice was required because life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Spiritual life can be obtained only through the sacrifice of the One whose blood was without sin. That is why the blood of Christ is so precious.

A Lamb Without Blemish or Spot (verse 19). Peter’s reference to “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (verse 19) reminded his readers of the lamb used by the Jews in their Passover observance (Ex. 12:3-6). Not only was the lamb which was chosen for that occasion to be without any obvious blemishes, but it was to be kept up for four days for further observation. Similarly, Jesus was thoroughly tested by Satan during His earthly ministry, which lasted perhaps for the greater part of four years. During that time there was not a single instance of any sin committed by Him of any kind. Jesus was truly proven to be a Lamb without blemish or spot. The Greek word for blemish denotes blame. Jesus was “without blemish” (1 Peter 1:19) in that He was completely blameless, as He had not committed any sin. The term for spot indicates a stain. Jesus was blameless, or without blemish, because He was pure in every respect. He was not guilty of any word or deed that would have stained Him.

THE ETERNAL REDEEMER

Some people have taught that when Adam sinned, God had to develop a plan of redemption. That is not so. God was not caught by surprise by Adam’s sin. In His omniscience He knew what would happen, and He took the necessary steps to make sure that redemption for mankind was available even before it was needed.
Foreordained in Eternity Past (verse 20). The pronoun who refers to Christ, the Lamb without blemish or spot. The Greek word for foreordain is the verb form of the noun prognosis, which basically means “foreknowledge.” Since God knew beforehand what Adam was going to do when faced with the choice regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He made the necessary arrangements for mankind’s redemption. The expression, the foundation of the world, refers to the creation of the universe. The “foundation of the world” (verse 20) is essentially the same as the creative act described in Genesis 1:1. Prior to the beginning of anything, there was nothing but God. Many Bible scholars refer to that situation as eternity past since it preceded the beginning of time as far as human reasoning is concerned. In that state when only God existed, He determined when and how He would provide for the redemption of mankind that would be plunged into the bondage of sin through Adam’s sin.

Manifested in the Last Times (verse 20). Peter referred in the last part of this verse to the time of Christ’s manifestation as “these last times” (verse 20). The Greek term for the verb was manifest denotes that which is clearly evident. The manifestation mentioned by Peter in this instance occurred at the first coming of Christ. The period designated as these last times began with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem and will conclude after His millennial reign when He delivers the kingdom over to the Father. (See 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.) Even though the time covered in this period will be at least three thousand years, it is regarded as the last days in the Scriptures because the coming of Christ was the next significant event that was proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets. They foresaw both His first and second comings but could not necessarily distinguish between the two events. Thus, all matters associated with both adven ts of Christ are regarded as the last days. (Compare Hebrews 1:1, 2.)

Resurrected and Glorified (verse 21). The pronoun who at the beginning of this verse refers to Christ. Since He is the manifestation of God, one

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Foreordained but Manifest (1 Peter 1:20): The omniscience of God has allowed Him intimate knowledge into two areas of redemption. First, God knew who would bring salvation to the lost world—Jesus (1 Peter 1:2). Second, God knew to whom salvation would be offered—“for you.” Though Christ did not die on the cross until the first century AD, it had been established in eternity past (Rev. 13:8) that His death and subsequent blood was the manifestation of salvation for the human race. What was once known only to Jehovah prior to the creation era has now been made known to all mankind through Jesus and His shed blood. Even before Adam and his descendants sinned, God planned for redemption (2 Tim. 1:9). Neither Herod Antipas, nor Pontius Pilate, nor the Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem, on that fateful day were responsible for the death of Jesus. Jesus was not a martyr—He did not die for a purpose. He was a sacrifice—He died for a people. Ultimately, He died because His death had previously been determined by God (Acts 4:27, 28).
must believe in God through Christ. Anyone who claims to believe in God but refuses to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God and the Second Person in the Godhead does not fully and truly believe in God according to Peter’s statement in the opening phrase of this verse. The resurrection and glorification which Christ received was from God the Father who is the First Person in the Godhead. Thus, the plan of redemption for mankind was determined and accomplished in its entirety by God. Christ was foreordained to be the Redeemer before anything was created. In the course of time, He came to earth and later died on the cross, giving His precious blood as the ransom price. God raised Him from the dead and received Him back to Heaven. At the appointed time, Christ will return and bring all things into harmony with and in subjection to the Father.

**Faith and Hope in God (verse 21).** In the closing statement of this verse Peter again directed the attention of his readers to God. Our faith and hope are to be in Him. As He raised Jesus from the dead and glorified Him, so will He do for all believers. Our victory over death and the grave is certain because Jesus was triumphant over death and the grave. The hope of the resurrection is what the Scriptures call that blessed hope. In Titus 2:13, Paul mentioned that believers are “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The term *that blessed hope* refers to the resurrection of those who have died in the Lord. (Compare Acts 26:6-8.) The glorious appearing of Christ speaks of His coming in power and glory at the close of the Tribulation Period. Thus, the two phases of His return were addressed by Paul. Peter reminded the recipients of his epistle that the believer’s hope of ultimate victory, which will occur when our bodies are raised in glory, is certain.

**BORN OF THE WORD**

Each person who has trusted Jesus as Savior is a member of the family of God. Believers should regard one another as brothers and sisters because each one has experienced the same kind of spiritual birth and has received the same kind of spiritual life. What God has done for one, He has done for all.

**Loving with a Pure Heart (verse 22).** Because of our relationship with God through faith in Jesus as Savior, we have a relationship with other believers. The purification that results from obedience is a reference to the salvation experience. The obedience mentioned by Peter in this instance occurs when one exercises faith in Jesus. This same matter was addressed by Jesus Himself during His earthly ministry when He declared, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him [the Son] whom he [the Father] hath sent” (John 6:29). One obeys “the truth through the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:22) in
the sense that he or she is led by the Spirit to the point of trusting Jesus, is convicted by the Spirit of the need to trust Jesus and is born of the Spirit when he or she trusts Jesus. Because of the new birth experience, one can love other believers with an “unfeigned [genuine, sincere] love” (verse 22). This love is from a heart that has been purified through the cleansing that is received in salvation. The word heart denotes the center of one’s affections and emotions. With a cleansed heart one can love “fervently” (verse 22). The Greek word for fervently is ektenos, which essentially means “in an extended manner.” The love believers have for one another should extend beyond the circumstances and adversities of life.

**Born of the Word (verse 23).**

The kind of love Peter described in the preceding verse is not based on human emotion or affection. Instead, it is love that is made possible for believers because of the new birth experience. According to Peter’s explanation, believers are born again by the Word of God. The Word of God is described as “incorruptible” (verse 23) seed. The term incorruptible denotes that which cannot be marred, diminished or made deficient in any manner. The incorruptible seed that is effective in producing the new birth is the Word of God, whether it is proclaimed, printed or made known in any other manner. This was taught by Jesus in what is often considered the parable of the sower. (See Luke 8:4-8.) When the disciples asked for an explanation of the parable, Jesus told them plainly, “The seed is the word of God” (verse 11). The Word of God is incorruptible in that it is wholesome and beneficial in every respect. It does no harm except to the cause of Satan, and it does much good. The incorruptible nature of the Word of God is also seen in that it “liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). The most readily understood expression of the Word of God is the Bible. This is what Peter intended by his description of the everlasting quality of the Word. (Compare Mark 13:31.)

**The Glory That Fades (verse 24).** In contrast to the Word of God, which is alive and continues forever, is the fleeting glory of mankind. Verse 24 is an allusion to Isaiah 40:6, 7. The word flesh denotes human beings in their natural—or unregenerated—state. The term grass speaks of small vegetation, such as grass, herbs, wild flowers, small shrubbery and so forth. Often such
vegetation produces flowers quickly, but they do not last long. When grass, herbs and wild flowers are cut, they usually dry out in a matter of hours. This is an apt description of human glory. Even if it is quickly attained, it is generally fleeting in duration. Quite often someone is suddenly thrust into the limelight only to fall as quickly into shame and disgrace when something negative in his or her past is brought to the surface and exposed. To hear the praise of man is certainly pleasing to the fleshly nature, but such praise cannot last beyond this life and usually lasts only a relatively short time. Human effort cannot make the flesh immortal nor the accomplishments of the flesh to endure beyond time. The brief glory of human praise and adulation is in marked contrast to the enduring nature of the Word of God and all that is produced by God’s Word.

The Everlasting Word (verse 25). The everlasting Word of God contrasts starkly with the fleeting glory of man. The first part of this verse is a quote from the last part of Isaiah 40:8. The Word of God was first spoken by Him, or by men whom He used as His spokesmen, and then recorded by men who wrote through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Whether spoken or written, and whether spoken by God or inspired men, the Word of God is sure and steadfast. In the last part of this verse, Peter emphasized the Word which had been preached to the recipients of his epistle. The Greek word for gospel is from a term which essentially means “good news” or “glad tidings.” (Compare Luke 2:10; 8:1.) Many of the people in the churches included in Peter’s epistle heard the gospel from Paul or one of his missionary associates. Evidently, Peter had had some contact with at least some of the churches whom he addressed, and, if that had indeed been so, he would have had opportunities to preach the gospel to them. It goes without saying, of course, that messages which are not based on the inspired Word of God will not endure. What causes a message, whether spoken or written, to have the enduring quality is the fact that it is in harmony with the everlasting Word of God. It is God’s Word that endures. The words of men, in and of themselves, have no basis for endurance.

EFFECTS OF NEW LIFE IN CHRIST 1 Peter 1:13-25

This passage emphasizes the relationship believers have with God. Since the One who has begotten us is holy, we too should be holy in every aspect of life (verses 13-16). Since God is our Judge and our Redeemer who has ransomed us with so great a price, we should conduct all our earthly pursuits in reverential fear (verses 17-21). Since we were begotten by the incorruptible seed of the Word, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and our relationship with one another should be characterized by agape love (verses 22-25).
Not only are believers born of the Word, but their spiritual growth and nourishment are provided by the Word. One’s new life in Christ is depicted in this passage by several figures of speech, some of which contrast the believer’s past with his or her present standing. In regard to the responsibilities of Christians, some negatives as well as positives are included. In the new life one has in Christ, there are many wonderful privileges along with some serious obligations which are presented in these verses.

NEWBORN BABIES  
1 Peter 2:1, 2

The metaphor of a believer as a babe and the Word of God as spiritual milk by which one is sustained and nourished is not unusual in the New Testament. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12, 13.) It is vitally important for newborn Christians to be properly nourished so they can assume their proper place in the service of Christ.

Some Things To Reject (verse 1). In the Christian life there are some things which should be shunned because they can be detrimental to one’s spiritual growth and progress. The Greek word for laying aside indicates a deliberate, intentional decision. The things mentioned in this verse are of the fleshly nature and should be rejected by believers.

Malice. This term is from a word family that denotes evil in general. Evil desires and evil deeds are to be laid aside by those who have been saved. One’s failure to do so will result in stunted spiritual growth for individual Christians and broken fellowship among believers. Sins of malice are deliberate, intentional acts which are best avoided by deliberately and intentionally laying them aside.

Guile. The Greek word is dolos, which originally denoted bait for fish or an animal trap. This term not only indicates a desire to deceive others, but an intention to harm them in some manner as well, as can be seen in the attitude of the Jewish leaders who hoped to take Jesus “by subtilty [dolos]” (Matt. 26:4), or “by craft [dolos]” (Mark 14:1). Believers who act with guile are being insincere if not actually dishonest.

Hypocrisies. This term is closely associated with guile. Hypocrisy is often used to deceive others. The Greek word for hypocrisy is hupokrisis, which essentially means “concealment under a false pretense.” In Peter’s day actors
were known as hypocrites because they wore elaborate masks which readily identified them as the hero or the villain in the drama in which they were performing.

*Envy.* Envy is the ill will that is stirred up because of the good fortune of others. These feelings easily lead to resentment and sometimes cause one to say or do things designed to make himself or herself compare more favorably with others. Envy caused the brothers of Joseph to sell him into slavery (Acts 7:9). The apostle Paul mentioned envying in his extensive list of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

*All evil speakings.* The verb form of the term for evil speakings is katalaleo, which essentially means “to speak against.” This is a strong word, which indicates harsh accusations. The same basic term is rendered as backbiting (2 Cor. 12:20) and to speak evil (James 4:11). The evil speaking against which Peter warned could be described as slander, a term with which we are more familiar.

**Some Things To Desire (verses 2, 3).**

These verses give the positive side of the Christian life. The expression newborn babes refers to the new birth experience, which occurs when one trusts Jesus as Savior. In the physical realm, babies require milk for their nourishment. Similarly, those who have been born again require spiritual nourishment, which is “the sincere milk of the word” (verse 2). The Greek term rendered sincere is the exact opposite of dolos, the word for guile in verse 1. The Word to which Peter referred is the Bible. The Scriptures are wholesome, healthy and helpful in every respect. One who follows the teachings of the inspired Word will not be led astray or harmed in any manner. (Compare Psalm 119:104, 105.) The Scriptures also enable one to grow in the knowledge of Christ, thus enabling him or her to become more like the Lord in daily life. In verse 3, Peter reminded the recipients of his epistle that they had already drunk from the pure, unadulterated milk of the Word. The phrase, if so be, does not imply a question, or even a supposition but states a reality. In today’s English one would use the word since for if so be. To taste that the Lord is gracious is to believe Him and commit oneself to Him. The psalmist expressed this thought by declaring, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103).

**THE LIVING STONE**

The metaphor of a stone as an image of the Messiah is used in both the Old and New Testaments. Since stone is an enduring element, it is an appropriate symbol of the One who is often considered the Rock of Ages. He is the Rock
upon which believers are to build their lives and profession. (Compare Luke 6:47, 48.)

**Rejected by Men.** This verse opens with the phrase, *to whom coming*, which could be rendered as, *to whom ye are coming*. The pronoun *whom* refers back to the word *Lord* in the closing part of verse 3. The gracious Lord is the One to whom believers come. He is depicted as a “living stone” (verse 4) because He has been raised from the dead and is alive forevermore. (See Revelation 1:18.) The expression, *disallowed indeed of men*, speaks of His rejection by mankind. There is a twofold sense regarding the rejection of Christ. First, He was rejected by His own people, the Jews. John 1:11 states, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The Greek term for the first instance of *his own* is *ta idia*, a neuter plural which basically means “his own things,” and denotes the world, or perhaps mankind in general. The second *his own* is from *hoi idioi*, a masculine plural which essentially means “his own people,” and refers specifically to the Jews (Mark 8:31). Even though the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, He also has been rejected by mankind as a whole, as indicated by the fact that each individual, whether Jew or Gentile, must trust Jesus as Savior for himself or herself.

**Chosen by God.** The One who was rejected by all mankind was chosen by God to be the Savior. The Greek word for *was chosen* is *eklektos*, which primarily means “selected.” Previously, Peter described the recipients of his epistle as having been elected, or chosen, by God (1 Peter 1:2). Here the apostle refers to Jesus as the chosen One. That selection occurred in eternity past, as can be seen in that Jesus was foreordained as the Redeemer of mankind before anything was created (1 Peter 1:20). God could have waited until He created the angels and then chosen one of them to be the redeemer, or He could have created a redeemer for the sole purpose of filling that role. However, in His omniscience He chose to designate the Second Person in the Godhead as the Redeemer. In doing so, the Triune God thus became not only mankind’s Creator, but their Redeemer as well. In the closing phrase of this verse, Jesus was described as being “precious” (1 Peter 2:4). The Greek word
for precious denotes not only value but esteem as well. Jesus is invaluable, being of incalculable worth. He has also been honored by the Father far above all other beings in the universe (Phil. 2:9).

THE LIVING STONES

In verse 4, Jesus was depicted as the “living stone” who was chosen by God as the Redeemer of mankind. Here believers are described as “lively [or living] stones” (verse 5) who are brought together into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, and are to offer through Christ spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God.

A Spiritual House. Salvation is a matter of individual responsibility. Each person has to decide for himself or herself whether or not to trust Jesus as Savior. Although people are saved as individuals, believers are not to remain isolated from other Christians. Instead, we are to become part of a scriptural church in which we can fellowship with other believers and unite our efforts to worship and serve God. The term spiritual house is a designation for a congregation of believers. The “house” (verse 5) mentioned by Peter in this instance was said to have been “built up” (verse 5), an expression which denotes the construction of a house or some other structure. The tense of the verb built up indicates a builder. Matthew 16:18 clearly shows that the builder is Jesus Himself, and He is also the foundational Rock. Each congregation is a spiritual house in the sense that it is an abode for the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22). The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer. (Compare 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20), and He also abides in each local church. (Compare 2 Corinthians 6:16.)

A Holy Priesthood. Under the Law of Moses the descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, constituted the priesthood for the Israelites. To serve as a priest was both a hereditary right and responsibility. The priests served as teachers of the Law and led the Israelites in their worship ceremonies. With the death of Jesus on the cross, the Law, and the Aaronic priesthood as well, was done away. When Jesus died, He opened the way for each believer to approach the throne of grace without having to go through a priest or any other intercessor (Heb. 10:19-21). Under the new covenant, Jesus is the High Priest for all believers (Heb. 9:24-26), and each Christian is a priest (Rev. 1:6). Note that the priesthood mentioned by Peter is a holy priesthood. The Greek term for holy is hagios, which essentially means “separate” or “set apart.” Like the Aaronic priests, believers are set apart to serve and worship God, functions which can be done most effectively through a scriptural church.

Spiritual Sacrifices. One of the most important responsibilities of the priests under the Law was offering sacrifices. All those sacrifices involved
material things. Usually an animal, such as a lamb or goat, was sacrificed. However, there were times when offerings of incense, wine and cereal were made. (Note: Cereal offerings were called meat, the King James term for food, offerings in the Old Testament.) These sacrifices are no longer needed because they were fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Instead, believers of this era are to offer spiritual sacrifices. Material things might be involved in the sacrifices offered today, but they are spiritual in the sense that they are not ritual or ceremonial as were the offerings that were given under the Law of Moses. Among the spiritual sacrifices that should be offered by believers today are “your bodies” (Rom. 12:1), one’s prayers which are “an odour of a sweet smell” (Phil. 4:18), “the sacrifice of praise” (Heb. 13:15) and sacrifices of doing good and sharing (verse 16).

Acceptable Sacrifices. In the closing statement of this verse, Peter mentioned that the spiritual sacrifices which believers of this dispensation are to offer to God are acceptable to Him through Christ. The Greek word for acceptable basically means “well received.” Under the Law of Moses only certain animals were acceptable as sacrifices. They had to be clean animals, as opposed to those regarded by the Law as unclean, and they were to be free from diseases, injuries and other problems. The prophet Malachi rebuked the Jews for offering unacceptable sacrifices to God (Malachi 1:6-10). The spiritual sacrifices which were discussed previously are pleasing to God because they are offered by people who have trusted Jesus as Savior and are following Him as Lord. Many people participate in church and religious activities for personal—or even sinful—reasons. These endeavors are not pleasing to God and He does not regard them as acceptable sacrifices.

THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE 1 Peter 2:6, 7

Peter reverted in these verses to the metaphor of Jesus as a rock. He wanted to remind the recipients of his epistle of the critical role Jesus played in the divine purposes. Because of who we have become and what we can do through Jesus, believers also have critical responsibilities in the work that God wants to accomplish on earth.

Laid in Sion (verse 6). This verse begins with the phrase wherefore also, which serves as a double conjunctive, thus linking it to what was stated prior
to the immediately preceding statement. Peter thereby directed the attention of his readers back to the “living stone” which he mentioned in verse 4. The Scripture to which Peter referred is from the Old Testament, as will be noted in the paragraph to follow. The Greek word for the verb lay essentially means “to set down” or “to place,” and the Old Testament term conveys the same thought. The fact that God specifically laid a chief corner stone in Sion denotes an action that had a specific purpose or plan. The word Sion (the Greek form of Zion) refers specifically to Jerusalem, and is often regarded as being symbolic of Jewish life and culture. Zion became known as the city of David (2 Sam. 5:7). This term also is used in some instances to designate the Temple site and on some occasions even Israel as a whole.

**The Chief Cornerstone (verse 6).** The stone that God laid in Sion is called “a chief corner stone.” This is a reference to Isaiah 28:16. The reason for the difference in the wording between Isaiah’s prophecy and Peter’s statement is because Peter quoted from the Septuagint version, a Greek translation of the Old Testament which was widely used in the time of Jesus and the apostles. The term Chief Cornerstone denotes a massive stone that was placed under each corner of a building so the angle of the walls would be correct in relation to each other and each wall would be perpendicular to the floor. As the Messiah, Jesus was the Chief Cornerstone upon which the Jewish nation was to trust for cohesion and stability. He is also the Chief Cornerstone for the church, institutionally speaking, thus making certain that each congregation is like a building that is framed together properly and can be an appropriate dwelling place for the Lord through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

**Believing on Him (verse 6).** In the last part of this verse, Peter assured his readers that those who believe on Jesus “shall not be confounded” (verse 6). The belief to which the apostle referred here is not mere intellectual awareness of Jesus, or even an acknowledgment of the reality of His existence. The faith which saves is belief that trusts—or accepts—Jesus as one’s Savior. (Compare Hebrews 11:6.) The word confounded is often used today to indicate perplexity or confusion. However, the Greek
term denotes something more intense, with the essential meaning being “to be made ashamed” or “to be disgraced.” One who trusts Jesus as Savior will never have any reason to be ashamed of his or her decision. Peter’s phrase, shall not be confounded, was rendered as, shall not make haste, by Isaiah (Isa. 28:16). Isaiah’s statement depicts an army that had been overpowered by a superior force and had to retreat in shame. Believers in general, and the church in particular, can be certain of ultimate victory over Satan (Matt. 16:18).

Believers and Unbelievers (verse 7). Two groups of people are contrasted in this verse, those who have believed on Jesus and those who have not, or “them which be disobedient” (verse 7). For believers Jesus is “precious” (verse 7), but to unbelievers He is a stumbling stone, a matter to be considered later. The word precious appears three times in the first seven verses in this chapter (verses 4, 6, 7). As was noted previously, the Greek term indicates not only great value or worth, but high honor as well. Believers esteem Jesus highly because they have some understanding of what He has done for them in the past, what He is doing for them in the present and what He will do for them in the future. Peter’s reference to “the builders” (verse 7) in this verse refers to the Jewish leaders who led their nation to reject Jesus as their Messiah. (Compare Psalm 118:22.) The phrase, the head stone of the corner, is essentially equivalent to the Chief Cornerstone, a term which has already been considered.

THE STUMBLING STONE

In this verse, Peter presented the negative features of the rock metaphor regarding Jesus. As the Chief Cornerstone, He provides cohesion and stability for churches and for individual believers as well. For unbelievers, however, He is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (verse 8).

The Stumbling Stone and Rock of Offense. These terms describe the dire consequences that will befall those who refuse to trust Jesus as Savior, that is, those who are “being disobedient” (verse 8). The expression, stone of stumbling, denotes an effect of judgment rather than an accidental mishap. The stone speaks of Jesus who was previously presented as the chief corner stone. Stumbling indicates a fatal fall instead of a mere tripping over a small
rock. One who rejects Jesus as Savior plunges himself or herself down upon Him, so to speak. The phrase, rock of offence, depicts the same fate from a different perspective. The Rock is Jesus. The word offence refers to a stick or some other device that was used in that day as a trigger for traps. When the stick was disturbed, the trap ensnared the prey. Jesus is a rock of offense in that unbelievers have to make a decision whether to accept Him as Savior or not. That which causes them to stumble is their refusal to believe the Word of God and act accordingly. Their unbelief is disobedience, and their disobedience causes them to stumble, that is, they fall under the condemnation of God. (Compare John 3:18, 19.)

Appointed To Disobedience. The last phrase in this verse, whereunto also they were appointed (1 Peter 2:8), has been a source of much discussion among students of the Scriptures. Some people use this statement to support their view that certain people were foreordained and predestined to reject Jesus as Savior. The term whereunto basically means “concerning which.” Appointed is from a term which primarily means “to set” or “to place.” Unbelievers are appointed to disobedience in the sense that their refusal to trust Jesus as Savior causes them to reject Him. There is no middle position. One either trusts Jesus and receives salvation and all that is included with it, or he or she rejects Jesus and is subject to all the consequences that result from one’s refusal to believe. Individuals have the option to believe or not to believe, but those who do not believe do not have the option of escaping the consequences of their unbelief. Note that the merciful God gives most people many opportunities to accept Jesus as Savior, and, once the decision to do so has been made, it is a decision that will abide forever. It should also be noted that, because of the certainty of physical death and the uncertainty of physical life, no one should abuse God’s mercy. (Compare 2 Corinthians 6:2.)

THE PEOPLE OF GOD 1 Peter 2:9, 10

Having developed extensively the metaphor of Jesus as a rock—He was depicted as a living stone, a Chief Cornerstone, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense—Peter then described more fully the dignity and duties of
believers. Regardless of when or where they have lived, they have been the people of God.

**Their Description (verse 9).** Peter previously mentioned somewhat briefly what believers can become through salvation and some of the responsibilities they have as a result of their salvation (verse 5). Here he gives deeper insight into who believers are and how they should live.

A *chosen generation.* The Greek word for *chosen* is the same as for elect in 1 Peter 1:2. Believers are chosen, or elected, because of their faith in Jesus as Savior. Through salvation they become part of a special group, as indicated by the expression, *a chosen generation.* The term *generation* is from *genos,* which essentially means “kind” or “sort.” (Compare Matthew 13:47; 1 Corinthians 14:10.) This word was also translated as *nation* (Mark 7:26; Gal. 1:14) and thus designates a specific people.

A *royal priesthood.* Earlier Peter mentioned that present-day believers are a “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5). Here the priesthood constituted by modern day believers is termed a royal priesthood, an allusion to Exodus 19:6 in which God told the Israelites that He intended for them to become “a kingdom of priests.” The royalty envisioned by God for both the people of Israel and today’s believers is that of obedient, devout people who acknowledge God as their King and who worship Him acceptably.

A *holy nation.* This is another term from Exodus 19:6. “An holy nation” is what God wanted the Jews to become, and it is what He wants also from believers of this day. The word *holy* means “separated.” A nation is a group of people who have a distinct identity and are organized under a viable government. The most effective expression of the holy nation today is the institutional church.

A *peculiar people.* This expression echoes a statement found in Exodus 19:5. The Greek word for *peculiar* basically means “purchased.” This connotation is seen in Acts 20:28 where Paul referred to the church as having been “purchased [from the same root as *peculiar*] with his [Christ’s] own blood.” The blood of Christ was the purchase price for all believers, but beyond that, His death on the cross also was the price that had to be paid for His church. God wants each believer to be a part of a scriptural church.

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**Manna**

The Royal Priesthood (1 Peter 2:9):

With the exception of a few word pictures that pointed to the Messiah, the combining of the monarchy and priesthood was all but unheard of, though it had been intended (Ex. 19:6). Until the arrival of Jesus in the flesh, such a coupling was foreign to Middle Eastern thought. However, with Jesus came the reconciling of those national powers. What made such a marriage so peculiar was the fact that kings were served by the people while priests served their contemporaries and constituents. Ironically, it was not just Jesus who coupled the two offices in one flesh so also did the Christian, through Christ. He became royalty in that he belonged to the lineage of Christ—King of the Jews and King of kings. He assumed the priesthood as he was able to approach God for himself. “The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Matt. 27:51).
Their Duty (verse 9). Because of all that God has done for believers, we have a solemn duty to worship and serve Him acceptably, as Peter indicated in the last part of this verse. The verb shew forth is from a term which actually means “to tell out.” The Greek word for praises is rendered as virtue in its other instances in the New Testament (Phil. 4:8; 2 Peter 1:3, 5). This term refers to moral excellence. (Note: The “virtue” that flowed from Jesus when the ailing woman touched His garment [see Luke 8:46] is from the word dunamis, which means “strength” or “power.”) Believers are to tell about the goodness and greatness of God because He has called them out of “darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The word darkness speaks of one’s plight before he or she is saved, while marvelous light is indicative of the tremendous change that results from salvation. Believers should give clear testimony to the fact that they have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. This can be done most effectively through one’s relationship with a scriptural church (Matt. 5:14, 15; Rev. 1:20).

Their Destiny (verse 10). The destiny awaiting the people of God is described in a twofold sense as being “now the people of God,” and as those who “now have obtained mercy” (verse 10). In so doing, Peter contrasted the former condition of believers with their standing following salvation. By nature each individual is in a state of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1, 5). When one becomes born again, however, he or she receives spiritual life. Believers become the people of God in the fullest sense of the word by associating themselves with other believers. The word people is a collective term and thus indicates a cohesive relationship among the individuals who constitute the group or entity. The expression, which had not obtained mercy, denotes those who are unsaved. Mercy is obtained or received when one is forgiven of his or her sins and is given the free gift of everlasting life. The ultimate expression of the destiny awaiting believers will be when they are all assembled together before the throne of God in the fullest enjoyment of the mercy they received through their faith in Jesus as Savior.

PICTURES OF NEW LIFE IN CHRIST 1 Peter 2:1-10

This passage is quite descriptive in the terms used to denote the new life believers have in Christ through their salvation experience. Among the things mentioned by the apostle Peter as depicting Christians and their relationship with Christ and with one another are newborn babes, living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a peculiar people. He also described Christ as a living stone—rejected by men but chosen and honored by God—as the Chief Cornerstone, a stumbling stone and a rock of offense.
When one becomes saved, he or she continues to live in the same environment as before. The only thing that has changed is the believer. However, for the Christian “all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). The new life one has in Christ with its new relationships and responsibilities is to be demonstrated before the world in his or her daily life. Regardless of one’s status in life and even in the face of deprivation or persecution, the believer is to emulate the example of Jesus who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

**FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS AND GOOD CITIZENS**  
1 Peter 2:11-14

Christians belong to two worlds. Our natural birth makes us members of human society, while the new birth grants us citizenship in the kingdom of God. There are certain relationships and responsibilities associated with both realms. Consequently, believers should be good citizens as well as good Christians.

**Strangers and Pilgrims (verse 11).** Peter’s affection for the recipients of this epistle is seen in the expression *dearly beloved*, the Greek term for which is related to *agape*. Beseech is from a word which essentially means “to call alongside of,” and denotes an intensity of feeling, even a sense of urgency. The terms *strangers* and *pilgrims* are more or less synonymous. *Strangers* was noted in 1 Peter 1:1. It conveys the basic idea of being a temporary resident. As Christians we should not regard this present world as our permanent home, instead, we are just passing through en route to our eternal abode. *Pilgrims* is from a word which also denotes sojourning, and thus indicates that one is going on to another place. Peter wanted his readers to realize that earthly pursuits and relationships, important though they might be for this life, are temporal and will not continue beyond this present age. In view of this, one must not regard temporal matters more highly than eternal concerns.
**War: this engagement in conflict comes from within and continues within the conscious being of the child of God. We battle each day with the problems of life. Peter understands that, as strangers and pilgrims, we will have struggles not common to others. Our citizenship must be kept within the moral excellence of our Lord. Our warfare must be daily. Word Study #4754.**

### Warring Lusts (verse 11).

Even though believers continue to live, for a while at least, in this present world, they should not give in to “fleshly lusts” (verse 11). The word *fleshly*, as used here, refers to the depraved nature which everyone has from birth. *Lusts* is from a term which literally means “over desire” or “an especially intense desire.” Peter pointed out that fleshly lusts “war against the soul” (verse 11). The Greek word for *war* in this instance denotes a relentless campaign. Believers are constantly assaulted with temptations. Yielding to temptation will not cause one to lose his or her salvation, but it is likely to compromise his or her testimony before the world. The word *soul* is from *psyche*, from which comes *psyche*, *psychological* and related terms. The battle between the fleshly and the spiritual natures of a believer is a psychological conflict which occurs in one’s mind. By discerning a difference in the lives of believers, unsaved people are likely to conclude that there are valid reasons to become a Christian.

### A Life-style of Excellence (verse 12).

Even though salvation is received by grace through faith, good works have a proper role in the lives of believers. Good works do not produce salvation but are the product of salvation (Eph. 2:8-10). It is certainly important, therefore, for believers to have a “conversation [that is] honest among the Gentiles” (1 Peter 2:12). The Greek word for *conversation* literally means “a turning up and down.” It refers to one’s conduct or behavior. *Honest* is from a term that is generally rendered as *good*, thus conveying more the idea of excellence than truthfulness. Without question, truthfulness is an excellent quality. However, the excellence to which Peter referred is more extensive than being truthful. The word *Gentiles*, as used here, is a designation for unsaved people in general. Unbelievers are always eager to have a reason, whether valid or not, to accuse Christians of being evildoers. However, a life-style of excellence will render any such charges null and void.
The Day of Visitation (verse 12).

In the last part of this verse, Peter referred to the good works of his readers as an occasion by which unsaved people will glorify God “in the day of visitation” (verse 12). The Greek word for visitation essentially means “a looking over” or “an examination.” The time when the conduct of unsaved people will be looked over or examined will be at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). On that awesome occasion, God will call into evidence everything that will be a factor in His examination of the unsaved. The positive behavior and conduct of believers whose lives interacted and interfaced with the unsaved will be cited, and the unsaved will have to glorify God for such lives even though they disregarded the godly testimonies and continued to reject Jesus as Savior. Thus, the excellent conduct of believers glorifies God in this life at the Judgment Seat of Christ and at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Submitting to Civil Authority (verse 13). One of the ways in which Christians can pursue a life-style of excellence is by being good citizens. God has ordained civil government as the means by which order and stability can prevail in human societies (Rom. 13:1). God has not ordained any specific form

Every Ordinance of Man (1 Peter 2:13): Peter reminded his readers to conduct themselves so seriously and sincerely that their accusers would be totally disarmed and defenseless against Christianity. He specifically charged them to be law-abiding citizens, observing every ordinance with care, while holding in high regard every office in the local municipalities and greater governments. Perhaps the broadest sweep of this brush of submission would have also included the submission of the first century Christians not only to civil authorities but to all kinds of rules that the believers might have encountered such as submission in the workplace (1 Peter 2:18) and in the home (1 Peter 3:1) as well as in all areas of life (verse 9). This submission was derived from the military terminology to willingly align oneself under the authority of another. It was as much an attitude as it was a position.
of government, but He expects all people, and especially believers, to be submissive to the proper civil authorities. The Greek word for submit basically means “to set in array under.” One who submits recognizes the authority of another person. Peter’s reference to “the king” (1 Peter 2:13) in this verse actually denoted the ruler of the Roman empire. Note that the Roman emperor during much of the time of the early churches was Nero, who was one of the vilest in a procession of corrupt rulers. Aside from the practical benefits received when believers submit to the civil authorities, it was also important for other reasons. One reason was to counteract any criticisms that Christians were seditionists. Since Christians often publicly acknowledged God as their King, it was easy for some people to accuse them of not recognizing the civil authorities. However, believers are to “Render therefore to all their dues . . . fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Rom. 13:7).

**Punishment and Praise (verse 14).** In this verse, Peter continued his exhortation for believers to be obedient to the civil authorities. The Roman empire was divided into provinces which were ruled by governors. The pronoun him refers to the king in verse 13, which was the apostle’s designation for the Roman emperor. The governors of the provinces enforced the laws of the empire. They were expected above all else to maintain order in the provinces. The Roman authorities were so determined for order to prevail that any movement which threatened to upset the status quo was generally quickly—and often harshly—quelled. Thus, the Roman empire was able to maintain what came to be called Pax Romana, or “the Roman peace.” The provincial governors had wide latitude in promoting order and stability in their jurisdictions. The “punishment” which they meted out to “evildoers” and the “praise” which they gave to “them that do well” (verse 14) generally had the backing of the Roman authorities above the provincial level. The Greek word for punishment is usually rendered vengeance (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30). Evildoers is from the same Greek term as in 1 Peter 2:12. As used in this setting, the word praise essentially means “approval.” The term do well basically means “to do what is right.”
SERVANTS OF GOD AND SERVANTS OF MAN

Two groups of servants are mentioned in this passage. In Peter’s time it was entirely possible for someone to be a part of each group. Regardless of a believer’s status in the physical realm, he or she is expected by God to serve Him. Thus, it is possible for one to give God His due and to fulfill earthly responsibilities as well.

Silencing Foolish Men (verse 15).

The expression for so refers to the exhortations Peter gave in verses 12-14 regarding the responsibility of believers to be exemplary in their conduct as members of human society. This life-style is the will of God for His people. He wants Christians to be good neighbors, good employees and good citizens in general. This is not only the right thing to do, but it is also the best course of action for the cause of Christ. As Peter suggested in verse 12, many unbelievers are constantly watching believers and are eager to accuse them of some kind of misconduct or impropriety. The phrase well doing here is from the same Greek basic term as do well in verse 14. By doing what is right in all of life’s relationships and responsibilities, one is able to “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (verse 15). The Greek word for put to silence is translated muzzle in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18. Ignorance is from agnosia, which literally means “not knowing” or “without knowledge.” Agnosia is also the basis for agnostic, the term for one who questions the existence of God. The word foolish is from aphron, which essentially means “unaware” or “without understanding.” The criticism of foolish men is muted by appropriate Christian conduct.

Free To Serve God (verse 16).

Even though believers are to submit to the civil authorities, they should not regard themselves as being in bondage. Instead, they are to consider themselves “as free” (verse 16). This freedom is not a license to do as one pleases. The liberty one has in Christ does not set the believer free to do wrong. The Greek term for maliciousness is from a root which denotes in general that which is bad or evil. The expression, cloke of maliciousness, speaks of wrongful deeds done under a cover of deception. Believers are not free to conduct themselves in such a manner. In salvation, we are freed from the condemnation, guilt and bondage of sin. However, we are not only free from these matters, but we are also free to serve God—“as
the servants of God” (verse 16). The Greek word for **servants** is *doulos*, which actually means “bond slave.” In a sense believers have been delivered from the slavery of sin to be slaves of God. The slavery of sin is detrimental in every aspect, but to be a slave of God is beneficial in every way. Christian freedom does not mean that one is free to do as he or she pleases, but that one is free to do what pleases God. This means that believers are free to do as they ought to do in fulfilling the will of God for their lives.

**Proper Esteem for Everyone (verse 17).** In this verse, Peter specified with a fourfold exhortation how believers are to relate to various groups and personages so as to muzzle the mouths of foolish men.

*Honour all men.* The Greek word for the verb *honour* basically means “to show respect” or “to give esteem.” This is a sweeping exhortation that includes people of all sorts and classes. It is easy to show respect for some people, but believers should give appropriate honor to all others as well.

*Love the brotherhood.* The word *love* is the verb form of *agape*, the love that is based on principle. *Brotherhood* is from a term which literally means “in a brotherly relation.” Believers are to love all those with whom they are related through the experience of the new birth.

*Fear God.* As used in this setting, the word *fear* basically means “to be in awe of.” This fear is a recognition of the omnipotence and omniscience of God, plus a realization of His grace and mercy. Those who truly fear God will give Him faithful service and loving worship.

*Honour the king.* The word *honour* here is the same as in the phrase, *honour all men.* Rulers and other civil authorities are due special honor because of their position. The individuals themselves might not deserve such esteem, but their office entitles them to it. (Compare Romans 13:1-4.)

**Servants and Masters (verse 18).** Previously, Peter mentioned that believers are to regard themselves as slaves of God. Here, he referred to the earthly relationship of servants and masters. It should be noted that the Greek word for **servants** in this verse specifically denotes household servants. These servants might have been bond slaves, or they might have been indentured servants. Regardless of their status, they were considered members of the household in which they served. Some domestic servants who had become believers might have felt as if they were entitled to special treatment, especially if their masters were Christians also. However, Peter reminded them that, even though they had a spiritual relationship with God and other believers through the new birth, they still had the same earthly relationships and responsibilities as before. They were to acknowledge their masters and their subordination to them, whether they were “good and gentle” or “froward [literally, crooked or perverted]” (verse 18). This principle applies today in all situations in which there are subordinates and people in charge of them. Military personnel and employers and employees are some examples of situations in which people have to acknowledge their subjection to others.
SU FFERING WRONGFULLY AND SU FFERING RIGHTFULLY

These verses are a continuation of Peter’s exhortation for servants to be obedient to their masters, even those who were not good to them. The application can also be extended to all believers. To suffer wrongfully is not commendable. However, it is commendable, at least in God’s sight, to suffer rightfully.

Suffering Commendably (verse 19). The pronoun this refers to the response to suffering which is addressed in this verse. Thankworthy is from charis, a term which appears many times in the New Testament and is most generally translated grace. By the grace of God, Christian servants and other subordinates in particular and all believers in general can react properly to mistreatment. The key to this is seen in that such conduct is possible if done “for conscience toward God” (verse 19). The Greek word for conscience essentially means “a knowing with oneself.” One’s conscience is a reliable guide only if it is properly influenced. A weak conscience can be misleading (1 Cor. 8:7), and a “seared” conscience is certainly unreliable (1 Tim. 4:2). However, a conscience that is “toward God” (1 Peter 2:19), that is one that is open to His guidance, is trustworthy. When someone with such a conscience is faced with having to “endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (verse 19), he or she will find that the grace of God is sufficient for whatever might occur. The word grief denotes intense pain or suffering that is caused by mental, emotional or physical anguish. To suffer wrongfully is to experience any kind of mistreatment for no valid reason.

Suffering Justifiably (verse 20). In the first part of this verse, Peter referred to suffering that is justified. The Greek word for glory is kleos, which appears in the New Testament only in this instance. The term primarily means “fame” or “reputation,” and is thus related to praise or commendation. Buffeted is from a word which essentially means “to beat with the fist.” In Peter’s time servants, and possibly employees, were likely beaten with fists as punishment for any wrongdoing, whether actual or perceived. While this is not acceptable in today’s society, it was regarded then as an appropriate—if extreme—means of discipline, at least under certain circumstances. Thus, Peter told his readers that one who deserves the treatment he or she receives from a master, employer or supervisor should not expect to be commended for enduring it patiently. (Note: To take punishment patiently is to endure it without complaining or retaliating.) This is an example of justifiable suffering.

Suffering Acceptably (verse 20). In contrast to bearing up under punishment that is deserved is to suffer patiently for doing well. The Greek word for well denotes that which is good. Suffer is from the Greek term pascho, which basically means “to experience” or “to endure.” What is experienced or endured in suffering is some form of pain or anguish. To suffer patiently for doing well is “acceptable with God” (verse 20). The Greek word for acceptable reflects an interesting play on words. This term is from charis, which was pre-
viously noted as the word for thankful (verse 19). It was seen there that the grace of God helped believers to suffer wrongfully if they were called upon to do so. Here, Peter stated that when one endures such suffering, he or she is “graced,” so to speak, with God, or to express it somewhat differently, one finds favor with God. Through the grace, or favor, one finds with God, he or she can bear a testimony that honors Him and encourages believers.

THE SUPREME EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING  1 Peter 2:21-23

Peter continued in this passage to address servants and their submission to their masters. Suffering was a frequent experience for servants in that day, even for those who were Christians. Peter cited the sufferings of Jesus as the supreme example of how believers should endure unjust and cruel persecution.

The Call Regarding Suffering (verse 21). Many people have interpreted the statement, For even hereunto were ye called, to mean that believers are called to suffer. While it certainly is true that Christians generally can expect to be subjected to suffering for the cause of Christ, it does not follow necessarily that each believer is required to suffer for the Lord. The call regarding suffering is that when one does have to suffer, he or she should do so “patiently” (verse 20). For some believers, their circumstances are such that they are more likely than others to be subjected to suffering, while some, especially those living in the United States, probably will never have to endure any actual physical abuse. Regardless of the manner or degree of suffering which one might have to experience, God’s desire is for him or her to “take it patiently” (verse 20) without resorting to retaliation and without becoming bitter toward one’s persecutors or toward God for allowing such conditions to develop.

The Suffering Substitute (verse 21). For at least some of the Jewish recipients of this epistle Peter’s declaration that Christ also suffered for us (verse 21) served as a reminder of Isaiah’s prophecy of the sufferings of the Messiah (Isa. 53:4-11). However, the agonies which Christ experienced were endured by Him for believers of all times and places. He was subjected to many forms of suffering. He suffered physically from the beatings and other bodily abuse which He received. He also suffered emotionally through His betrayal by one of the disciples and His rejection by His own people. Most of all, He suffered spiritually by the disruption that occurred in the Godhead because of His assumption of the guilt and condemnation of mankind’s sin. (Compare Matthew 27:46.) Jesus’ sufferings were similar to His temptations in at least one respect. As He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), so did He endure every kind of suffering which we might have to experience. Example: when we were in elementary school, we were all given a line of letters called the alphabet and told to learn how to write them properly. These letters have arrows showing which direction to take your pencil and draw them easily. This is a clear example for the student. This is the example Christ left for us. A plain, clear, concise example that can be emulated in every way comes to us from Jesus. Word Study #5261.
The Example of Suffering (verse 21). The ideal standard for Christian suffering is seen in the statement that Christ left an example for us, “that ye should follow his steps” (verse 21). The Greek word for example indicates something which is to be followed by observing or adhering to an outline, such as a pattern or blueprint. The kind of suffering which Peter intended to convey in this statement is that which is deliberately inflicted on someone because of his or her association with Christ, His cause or His people. (Compare Matthew 5:10-12.) Such suffering involves at least three matters. First, it is unjust. Any suffering that is undeserved for any reason is not Christian suffering. Moreover, it is harsh. One who is merely inconvenienced or who experiences negligible consequences is not suffering as Christ suffered. In addition, it is divinely allowed. God does not specifically ordain Christian suffering, but He does permit it even as He allowed wicked men to crucify Christ.

The Sinless Christ (verse 22). In this verse, Peter specifically mentioned two things which emphasized the sinlessness of Christ: (1) He did not commit any sin, and (2) He did not speak any guile. Both of these matters are included in the last part of Isaiah 53:9 where the Scripture declares that the Messiah “had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” The Greek word which Peter used for sin is a term which essentially denotes a failure to reach an established standard or to miss the mark. The verb form of this word can be seen in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The glory of God is a standard which no human can reach. However, Jesus did not fail in any manner or to any degree to meet the demands or expectations of God. The fact that no “guile” (1 Peter 2:22) was spoken by Jesus emphasizes further His sinlessness. The Greek word for guile here is the same as in verse 1. This term goes beyond one's deeds and refers to his or her intentions and motivations. Jesus was without sin in every way. He did not do anything that was wrong, nor did He say anything that might have caused anyone to err.

The Submissive Christ (verse 23). Peter continued with these words to describe how Jesus did not commit any sins with His words. These statements
are also an allusion to the prophecy by Isaiah that, even when oppressed and afflicted, the Messiah “opened not his mouth,” and when He was brought to the point of death, “he openeth not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7). Peter specifically referred to the sufferings that were inflicted upon Jesus prior to His crucifixion. The Greek term for reviled has an intense connotation, being essentially synonymous with slander. Despite all the false and abusive charges that were made against Jesus, He refused to retaliate. He was beaten severely by the Temple security guards and by Roman soldiers as well, but He did not make any threats against any of His tormentors. The reason He reacted as He did was because He had “committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). That meant that Jesus left all retaliation to the Father. The Scripture declares, “Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord” (Heb. 10:30). Note that the Bible describes God as the One who “judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). Because He is omniscient, He can exercise judgment that is appropriate in every way.

DEAD TO SINS AND ALIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS 1 Peter 2:24

Death and life are matters that are addressed in this verse. The death of Jesus was implied by the allusion to His crucifixion, and the believers’ death to sins is specifically mentioned. The new life we have in Christ is seen in the exhortation that we should live unto righteousness.

He Bore Our Sins. The pronoun who refers back to Christ in verse 21. The phrase, his own self, emphasizes that the One who suffered and died for the sins of mankind was the Son of God, the Second Person in the Godhead. The statement, bare our sins, indicates that Christ assumed upon Himself the guilt and condemnation of the entire human race. The expression, in his own body, underscores the beatings, hammering of the nails into His hands and feet, and other physical sufferings He endured. The word tree denoted the cross. Christ experienced for all sinners all the sufferings mentioned here. He was not guilty of committing a single sin, but He died nonetheless because He died for us. The condemnation of death that was pronounced on Christ by the Jewish Sanhedrin was based on false charges, and the authorization of death that was issued by the Roman governor was motivated by political expediency. There was no basis for His death, but He willingly died.

Dead, Yet Alive. Believers are made “dead to sins” (verse 24) through their salvation experience. This does not mean that Christians can live perfect lives, nor does it mean that we can live without committing any sins after we become saved. To be dead to sins is to recognize that sin is no longer the main purpose for one’s life. Instead, we should realize that we are alive unto Christ. This is the new life believers have through salvation. Not only is it a wonderful privilege to have such a life, but a solemn responsibility is also involved, as indicated by the fact that we “should live unto righteousness” (verse 24). The Greek word for to and unto is gar, which is usually translated for or because. Believers should consider themselves dead for the purpose of sinful activities and pursuits, and alive in regard to righteous activities and pur-
suits. In the closing statement in this verse, Peter reiterated that, because of the sufferings (stripes) endured by Christ, believers can become spiritually whole (healed).

STRAYING SHEEP AND THE DIVINE SHEPHERD 1 Peter 2:25
Sheep are sometimes used in the Scriptures to symbolize believers (John 10:26-28). However, the analogy of sheep is also used to denote the plight of unsaved people (Isa. 53:6). Jesus is a loving, compassionate Shepherd who seeks the unsaved and cares for those who have trusted Him as Savior.

Sheep Gone Astray. In the first part of this verse, Peter described the condition of mankind by nature. As the prophet Isaiah declared, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isa. 53:6). Sheep that have no shepherd are likely to get into serious trouble, and individual sheep who are away from the flock and away from the shepherd are especially vulnerable. Except for the horns of the rams, sheep are practically defenseless, and young sheep are even more so. The hopelessness and helplessness of sheep that have strayed are an apt picture of the condition of unsaved people. Satan is able to manipulate them and lead them even further away from the truth, and their associations with other unbelievers are often more detrimental than beneficial to them. If unbelievers do not turn to Jesus, who depicted Himself as the “door” of the sheepfold (John 10:9), they will remain in their state of condemnation and face an eternity without God or hope.

The Believers’ Shepherd and Bishop. This verse concludes on a positive note. Peter mentioned two matters regarding the relationship believers have with Jesus. First, He is depicted as a Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He is also the Great Shepherd who as the resurrected Lord cares for His sheep (Heb. 13:20). As the Chief Shepherd, He will return for His undershepherds and all other believers (1 Peter 5:4). The other term used by Peter is Bishop, which is from the Greek word episkopos, which basically means “overseer.” Bishop is also used to denote the pastor of a church (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1). The apostle called Jesus a Bishop because He watches over those who have trusted Him as Savior. The terms shepherd and bishop are integrally related in that they both indicate a function of caring for something. Shepherd speaks of the hands-on, up close responsibility, while bishop indicates a broader view of such duties.

LIVING FOR CHRIST BEFORE THE WORLD 1 Peter 2:11-25
A Christlike life is the fruit of genuine faith in Jesus as one’s Savior. A key verse in this matter is, “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15). To live for Christ before this present world requires one to be a good citizen and a good Christian. Jesus serves not only as the believer’s signpost pointing the way in which he or she should go, but also as the power to convey one over the paths into which the divine will directs.
These verses are actually a continuation of the passage that was begun in 1 Peter 2:18. In addition to servants, Peter went on to address wives, husbands and all the Christian members of a household in general. Believers have a special relationship with one another that goes beyond any family ties or other associations. That relationship also entails certain responsibilities. It was noted in the preceding lesson that Christian servants, or other subordinates, are to be in submission to those who are over them. This principle of respecting and honoring one another’s position applies to all members of the home.

THE WIVES’ SUBMISSION 1 Peter 3:1, 2

There is no other relationship in human society like marriage. It is a sacred union between a man and a woman that gives great joy when the biblical principles of marriage are properly observed. However, when they are not, indescribable grief and misery are likely to prevail. The situation for Christian wives especially was likely to be challenging.

The Exhortation (verse 1). The word likewise links this exhortation with a similar one that preceded it. As Christian servants were to be submissive to their masters, even those who were not believers, so are Christian wives to be submissive to their husbands, whether or not they are believers. It goes without saying, of course, that no woman is obligated to remain in an abusive situation. However, it is possible, generally speaking, for a woman who has become a Christian to continue to live with a man who is an unbeliever. This might not be an ideal situation, but it is not necessarily an untenable one. The sanctity of the home needs to be maintained if at all possible, especially if there are children. However, even if no children are involved, the principle of wifely submission is valid. In the culture that prevailed when the New Testament was written, wives who became Christians sometimes had an especially difficult time balancing their relationships.

The Explanation (verse 1). Often the most effective witness for the saving grace of God is the visible change that occurs in the believer’s life-style. Peter told the Christian wives about this in this epistle. An unsaved husband might not be moved by a man who preached or taught from the Word of God, but the example of a loving wife whose daily life reflected her relationship with God could convince him that he needed to experience salvation for him-
A man might be able to ignore or disregard the Word that was proclaimed, but he could not ignore or disregard the Word that was portrayed by his wife. The obedience which Peter mentioned in this verse refers to the response of faith that must be made for one to be saved. (Compare John 6:28, 29.) The Greek word for won speaks of something which is gained by reception rather than something that is achieved through intense effort. Conversation is from a term which denotes one’s daily activities, or the manner in which one lives each day.

The Confirmation (verse 2). This verse concludes the explanation for Peter’s exhortation regarding the wives’ submission to their husbands, even those who are unsaved. The pronoun they refers to husbands in verse 1. The verb behold indicates an observation done by one who is a spectator and not a participant. Unsaved people cannot live a Christian life, but they can observe one. This is how it should be in a marriage in which one of the spouses is saved but the other one is not. The

**Subjection:** this uncomfortable word in our day simply means “to be arranged in proper order under someone.” It was used in the first century to speak of being subordinate to a properly placed authority. It is not a demeaning term. A wife is to be subject to her husband in the manner in which God ordained it. The subjection is to be in grace and love not oppression and obsession. Word Study #5293.

THE WIVES’ ADORNING

Physical beauty was esteemed as highly in Bible times as it is now. In fact, some scholars suggest that, since women in those days had such limited
opportunities for any meaningful involvement in business and social matters, they often devoted themselves unduly to personal adornment. It is not wrong for women to want to look attractive. It is wrong, however, for one to regard physical beauty as the most important thing in life.

**The Negative Side (verse 3).** The word *adorning* is from *kosmeo*, which is from a basic term that essentially denotes an orderly arrangement. The English word *cosmetic* and related terms are also from this root term. Physical adornment has always been a matter of great importance in human society. On the surface it might seem as though Peter forbade physical adornment. However, what he warned against was an improper emphasis on the “outward adorning” (verse 3). Three kinds of such adorning were specifically mentioned.

**Plaiting the hair.** A woman’s hair is part of her feminine glory (1 Cor. 11:15). However, she should not feel as though her hair is the essence of her glory. Beautiful hair is no assurance that the woman has noble character.

**Wearing of gold.** Gold ornaments and other jewelry were often part of a woman’s dowry which she received when she left her father’s house. Sometimes, husbands also lavished jewelry on their wives. Flashy stones and metal can easily become shallow, showy displays.

**Putting on of apparel.** This refers to expensive, elaborate clothing. It is certainly appropriate for women—and for men as well—to be well-groomed and tastefully clothed. To be dressed in ostentatious (conspicuous) clothing, however, is often an attempt to gain attention.

**The Positive Side (verse 4).** Instead of giving so much attention and emphasis to one’s “outward adorning” (verse 3) the wives—and husbands also—should be more concerned about the adorning of the “hidden man [person] of the heart” (verse 4). The contrasts mentioned by Peter are reminiscent of the
two natures of believers. The fleshly nature is overly preoccupied, if not consumed, with outward adorning, while the spiritual nature is more concerned with the things of the heart. (Compare Philippians 4:7, 8.) These matters are “not corruptible” (1 Peter 3:4), that is, they are not subject to decay or decomposition, as are the things mentioned in verse 3. The most appealing adornment for any woman, especially in regard to her relationship with her husband, is a “meek and quiet spirit” (verse 4). This is the essence of what Peter meant by his exhortation that wives should be in subjection to their husbands. Meekness is not an indication of weakness. Instead, it is a recognition and acceptance of one’s status in regard to others. The Greek word for quiet primarily means “mild,” “tranquil” or “gentle.” It is rendered peaceable in 1 Timothy 2:2. A meek and quiet spirit is precious—“of great price” (1 Peter 2:4)—in God’s sight.

THE WIVES’ EXAMPLES

Peter mentioned to the wives whom he addressed some examples of women who adorned themselves properly and lived in submission to their husbands. The apostle specifically cited the example of Sarah. Women who follow these examples are to be commended by all godly people even though the world would probably ridicule them.

Holy Women in the Past (verse 5). The expression, after this manner, refers to the kind of adornment which Peter described in verses 3 and 4. The phrase, in the old time, essentially indicates a former time or a time in the past. The time to which the apostle referred was the Old Testament era. The designation holy women was a reflection of the fact “they trusted in God” (verse 5). The manner in which those women adorned themselves was in keeping with Peter’s exhortation regarding the adornment of the “hidden man [person] of the heart . . . even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit” (verse 4). Peter specifically mentioned the women whom he held up for examples were in subjection to their husbands. Some women of the Old Testament who could have been cited as examples for the wives that were addressed by Peter could have included such godly women as Rebekah, the wife of Isaac (Gen. 24:58-67), Leah and Rachel, who were the wives of Jacob (Gen.31:14-16), Hannah, the wife of Elkanah and mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:21-23; 2:20, 21) and Abigail, who became one of the wives of David (1 Sam. 25:39-42). The positive examples of the holy women in the past are applicable even for women of this day.

Sarah and Her Daughters (verse 6). In verse 5, Peter referred generally to the godly women who lived during the time of the Old Testament. Here he noted a specific example, that of Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Her subjection to Abraham was emphasized by the fact that the apostle mentioned how
she “obeyed” (verse 6) her husband and called him “lord” (verse 6). The Greek word for obey literally means “to hear under.” It indicates that one hears and heeds. The essence of disobedience is that one hears or understands what he or she is to do, but refuses to do it. Sarah submitted to Abraham and did his will. (Compare Ephesians 5:22; Titus 2:5.) Peter also mentioned that Sarah called Abraham “lord” (Gen. 18:12), a term commonly used in both the Old and New Testament to indicate any man who was in charge of anyone or anything. In many instances the word denotes God Himself. Women who follow the example of Sarah were said to be her daughters, a designation that can include Gentile women as well as Jewish women. In the expression, are not afraid with any amazement, the Greek word for amazement is essentially synonymous with the term for afraid. Christian women should not be afraid to accept God’s plan regarding the relationship of wives and husbands.

THE HUSBANDS’ RESPONSIBILITIES

Although six verses were used to describe the responsibilities of wives in marriage, Peter had some things to say to husbands also. They are to give all honor to their wives, and they are to be considerate of the wives’ position. The ideal relationship between husbands and wives is realized when they are able to join in effective prayer.

Dwell According to Knowledge. The Greek word for likewise in this verse is the same as in verse 1. It is a connecting word which indicates an association between the wives’ responsibility of submission and the husbands’ response to such submission. They are to dwell with their wives in the knowledge of the divine order regarding the marital relationship. Husbands who understand that God has placed them as the head of the family will treat their wives properly because they realize that they have a solemn responsibility not only toward their wives but also toward God Himself. Husbands will have to answer to God for the manner in which they have fulfilled their role as the head of the home. The wives’ submission to their husbands is only one side of the equation. The other part has to do with how husbands conduct themselves with such knowledge.

Give Honor to Wives. The Greek word for giving is from a term which essentially means “assigning” or “apportioning.” Honour is from a word which conveys the idea of recognizing worth or value. The honor which husbands are to bestow upon their wives is an acknowledgment of their worth or value in the divine plan for marriage. Woman was created to make man complete, as
Genesis 2:18 indicates, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [suitable, complementary] for him.” Peter’s designation of the wife as “the weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7) has caused much discussion. Generally speaking, women are physically weaker than men, but that is not what this statement means as used in this setting. The weakness of the wife is one of relationship rather than ability. The wife might be the physically stronger of the two; however, she is still the weaker vessel in regard to position.

**Heirs of the Grace of Life.** The expression *heirs together* is in marked contrast to Peter’s description of the wife as the weaker vessel. An *heir* is one who shares in an inheritance, and *heirs together* share equally, as suggested by the Greek word, which is rendered *fellowheirs* (Eph. 3:6) and *joint-heirs* (Rom. 8:17). The phrase, *the grace of life*, refers to how people receive what they have in life—whether it is material goods, spiritual matters or status in a relationship. In the ultimate sense, what one has is due to the grace of God, if not directly so, at least because of His permissive will. Since wives and husbands owe what they have and what they are to the grace of God, they should be willing to accept it as His will for them, realizing that they will each have to give an account to Him in judgment. This realization will keep one from abusing any position, power or possession he might have.

**Unhindered Prayer (1 Peter 3:7):** Failure in the home resulted in a forfeiture with the Father! When the husband chose not to honor his wife, he also made a deliberate decision regarding his prayer life. Scripture has always provided for an accessible God—Psalm 121:1-4, “…he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” And, yet, historically, there have been occasions when that same keeper of Israel has said there were boundaries to answered prayer—“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). The prophet concurred with the psalmist when he said, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).
Unhindered Prayers. Husbands and wives who each recognize their proper role in God’s plan for the home will be able to pray effectively. Those who fail to acknowledge the proper marital relationship will find their prayer life hindered. The Greek word for hindered basically means “cut off.” The implication from this is that marital discord will generally cause husbands and wives not to pray together. If strife is in the home, or even indifference to the respective roles for husbands and wives, prayer will likely be ignored. Thus, the family’s prayer life will probably become nonexistent. There is a common saying to the effect that prayer will drive sin out of one’s life, or sin will drive prayer out. The sin of refusing to acknowledge the divine plan for the relationship between husbands and wives will likely cause family prayers to become infrequent, if not completely missing.

SOME EXHORTATIONS FOR ALL 1 Peter 3:8, 9

In 1 Peter 2:13-17, Peter set forth the relationship of believers with civil government. Then in 1 Peter 2:18—3:7, he addressed three specific groups and relationships—servants, wives and husbands. In 1 Peter 3:8-12, the apostle turned to the obligations of all believers as they live and function in the world with one another and with unbelievers as well.

Be of One Mind (verse 8). The word finally indicates that Peter was ready to conclude the exhortation which he had given to the various groups and their respective relationships beginning in 1 Peter 2:13. Although the term all is inclusive, the apostle urged his readers to be of one mind suggesting this injunction applies primarily to the members of a congregation. Without question, it would be good for all believers everywhere to be of one mind, but it is much more critical for such unity to prevail within a church. The Greek word for the term one mind basically means “same-minded.” There certainly should be no divisions within a congregation, and believers in general should be in agreement on the essential matters pertaining to the cause of Christ. For believers to be of the same mind is greatly beneficial to the Lord’s work and favorably impressive to the world.

Have Compassion for One Another (verse 8). The word compassion is from sumpathes, which literally means “to suffer with.” We get sympathy and related words from this term. A dictionary definition of sympathy is “sameness of feeling.” People who are of the same mind will have sameness of feeling. The term compassion in this instance implies a kinship of feeling which enables one to understand and even to share the sorrow or other emotions which someone else is experiencing. Having compassion for one another can
also include rejoicing with others on occasions of victory and accomplishment. The lyricist who penned the words for the beloved hymn, *Blest Be the Tie*, captured the sense of Peter’s usage of compassion with this stanza, “We share our mutual woes, / Our mutual burdens bear; / And often for each other flows / The sympathizing tear.”

**Show Brotherly Love (verse 8).** The recipients of this epistle were enjoined to “love as brethren.” The Greek word for this expression is *philadelphia*. A closely related term is *philadelphia*, which essentially has the same meaning and is the name of a large city known as “The City of Brotherly Love.” The Greek root for these words is *phile*, which is a term for “love.” *Phile* denotes reciprocating love. Believers in general and church members in particular are to love each other reciprocally. This means there is to be a sharing, as the preceding exhortations—to be of one mind and to have compassion for one another—indicate. Each one has a responsibility to be fraternally affectionate toward one another. A fraternal relationship exists because of common parentage and bespeaks a family setting. To love as brethren means that we regard each other as being of equal standing in the congregation.

**Be Full of Pity (verse 8).** The phrase *be pitiful* does not mean that one should engage in conduct or activities that are of a pathetic nature. Instead, this phrase could be rendered, *be full of pity*. Peter did not intend for his readers to seek to arouse the pity of others, but always to be ready to extend pity to those who need it. The Greek word for *be pitiful* is translated *tenderhearted* in Ephesians 4:32. One can be disposed to being tenderhearted if he or she is of the same mind with others, is sympathetic toward them and has a keen sense of brotherly love for them. One’s pity, or tenderheartedness, for others will enable him or her to be accepting of failures and shortcomings on their part, and to be tolerant—and even long-suffering—regarding their faults. This attitude will be greatly beneficial in promoting and maintaining congregational harmony and unity.

**Be Courteous Toward Others (verse 8).** This is the final exhortation in this verse. The Greek word for *courteous* is *philophron*, which literally means “a mind of love.” The first part of this term is from *phile*, which is, as was noted previously, the word for reciprocating love. The last part of this term, *phron*, is derived from *phren*, the Greek word for “mind.” Christian courtesy wants the best for one’s brethren in the Lord—“in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). This trait costs little, and yet is invaluable. It blesses its grantor as much as, if not more than, its recipient. Courteous acts often make little noise yet are well-known to those who benefit from them. The purest happiness in this present world results from the performance of kindly deeds which are done simply for the sake of doing good with no thought of receiving any praise or profit.

**Be a Blessing to Others (verse 9).** Peter in this verse continued his exhortation for believers in general. First, he told his readers not to retaliate for evil. This admonition is especially applicable regarding one’s relationship with his fellow church members and other believers. Beyond the circle of the brother-
hood, one should generally not seek to pay back even unbelievers for any evil they might have suffered. It is best to allow God to dispense any retaliation. (Compare Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30.) The Greek word for railing essentially means “reviling.” To revile is to use abusive, contemptuous language, often with the deliberate intention of slandering or defaming someone. Instead of reviling others, Christians should bless them, that is, we should speak well of them. The word blessing in this instance is from the Greek term from which comes eulogy, which basically means “a good word.”

**Be Blessed by God (verse 9).** Believers who are a blessing to others by speaking well of them will be blessed by God. In fact, Peter said we are called by God to “inherit a blessing” (verse 9). The word inherit literally means “to obtain by lot.” It points back to the manner in which the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel (Num. 26:52-56). The term blessing here is from the same Greek word as in the previous instance. Those who reject the temptation to repay evil with evil and refuse to rail against others even when provoked will be remembered by God. As surely as God will take vengeance upon those who deserve such, so will He give a blessing, that is a eulogy or a good word, to those believers who have spoken kindly to and about others. If one is to be entitled to a commendation from God, such as “well done, thou good and faithful servant,” he or she must be a blessing to others. (Compare Matthew 25:21, 23.)

**A WORTHWHILE LIFE**

These verses are based on Psalm 34:12-16. Both Peter and the psalmist described how one can live a life that is worthwhile in this present world. Believers should guard against speaking evil and dishonesty and pursue righteousness and peace. This is good for the cause of Christ and for all mankind as well.

**Love Life and See Good Days (verse 10).** Practically everyone, whether saved or unsaved, wants to have a life that is enjoyable and meaningful. People who indulge in sin might think they are living the good life, but some reflection on what they are accomplishing by such conduct will probably convince them that they are actually pursuing an empty life. The word love is the verb form of agape. As used in this setting, life denotes one's earthly existence. This life certainly will be much more meaningful if one has experienced the new birth, thus receiving the gift of eternal life. (Compare John 10:10.) The phrase, see good days, expresses the desire of practically everyone. Whether one is young or old, he or she wants a life that is good in the sense of being enjoyable and a life that is beneficial to others. One of the most notable characteristics of Jesus’ earthly life was that He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

**Speak No Evil or Guile (verse 10).** One who truly wants to live an enjoyable and worthwhile life must guard his or her tongue. A mere slip—whether intentional or not—here or there in what one says can cause untold heartache
for many people and great detriment to the cause of Christ. The Greek word for *refrain* is generally translated *cease* in the New Testament. It denotes a deliberate, intentional action. Believers need to be conscientious in guarding their tongue. (Compare James 1:26; 3:3-5.) Peter expanded his exhortation in this matter by urging his readers to keep their lips from speaking guile. The word *guile* is from a Greek term that refers to bait used for catching fish or setting a trap. Not only are believers to refrain from speaking badly about others, but they are to resist the temptation to speak deceitfully, especially for the purpose of causing people to go astray.

**Shun Evil and Do Good (verse 11).** Previously, Peter exhorted his readers to speak no evil. Here the apostle instructed them to eschew evil. *Eschew* is from *ekklinó*, which is rendered *avoid* in Romans 16:17, and *gone out of the way* in Romans 3:12. To eschew evil, as stipulated here, is to avoid it, or to stay completely away from it. Believers should not engage in any activities that are obviously sinful, or as Paul instructed, we should “abstain from all appearance [form, kind] of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22). The positive side of this exhortation is to “do good” (1 Peter 3:11). There are many ways in which one can do good. Peter mentioned previously that believers are to be good citizens. He instructed servants, or other subordinates, to submit to those who are over them. He also discussed the respective roles of wives and husbands. In all of these matters one does good by doing the will of God.

**Seek and Pursue Peace (verse 11).** This concludes Peter’s explanation of how one can love life and see good days. Strife and contention cause much heartache in today’s society. Churches, families, neighborhoods and nations are blessed by those of their number who seek and pursue peace. The term *seek* indicates a determination to discover or discern something. One can seek treasure, or he or she can seek knowledge. In either case there is a strong motivation for what one seeks. One of the most commendable pursuits in life is to seek peace. This is not the peace that one receives in salvation, but peace among his or her family, fellow church members, neighbors and other associates. (Compare Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14.) One is to ensue such peace. The Greek word for *ensue* is *dikio*, which is also the term for *persecute*. To ensue peace is to pursue it with determination and passion.

**The Lord’s Watchful Eyes (verse 12).** Three things are mentioned in this verse regarding the divine care for the righteous. The first of these is “the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous” (verse 12). God watches over His people, not only to guide them in the paths He wants them to go but also to protect them. The psalmist recognized this and expressed it with simple elegance in Psalm 34:15, a Scripture which Peter quoted in his epistle. There are those who want to do harm to believers, but the ever watchful eyes of the Omniscient God are always alert and vigilant. Even when God chooses to permit harm—or even death—to befall a believer, He continues to be with him or her, providing grace and strength for the time and a glorious homecoming in the event of death. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4).
The Lord’s Attentive Ears (verse 12). “His ears are open unto their prayers” (verse 12). God is always mindful of the prayers of His people. He does not answer every prayer in the manner we might desire, but He is aware of them nonetheless, and He knows our needs even better than do we. The psalmist declared, “his ears are open unto their cry” (Psalm 34:15). Divine omniscience not only enables God to be aware of any and all threats or dangers that might beset believers but to hear petitions for help and deliverance as well. Through His omniscience, God also knows how best to respond to one’s needs. No believer should ever assume that God has turned a deaf ear to him or her in a time of need. Instead, we should keep praying and seeking His will in the full assurance that He will give the right answer in the right manner and at the right time. His ears are always attentive.

The Lord’s Protective Face (verse 12). Peter’s final point regarding the care which God provides for His own is the fact that “the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (verse 12). This is a quote from the first part of Psalm 34:16. The expression, the face of the Lord, indicates approval or disapproval. If His face is upon someone, He is favorable toward him. (Compare Psalm 31:16.) However, if His face is against someone, He disapproves of that person or his actions. (Compare Psalm 143:7.) God is certainly against those who oppress His people and who otherwise engage in ungodly actions or conduct. However, He is also against any believer who persists in sinful paths and pursuits. (Compare Isaiah 59:2.) In all times and places, God’s people have been assured that He has a special care and a paternal affection for them. He always watches over believers and hears the prayers of faithful saints.

LIVING FOR CHRIST IN THE HOME 1 Peter 3:1-12

The home is the basic unit in practically every aspect of human society. No community can be a desirable place in which to live unless its constituent homes are solid. Godly homes make strong, effective churches. Good homes are also essential for effective schools and a secure nation. In the passage considered in this lesson, Peter set forth the proper roles for the two most important people in a home, wives and husbands. Wives and husbands who are in the proper relationship will be able to maintain godly and strong homes.
Living for Christ in Persecution

1 Peter 3:13-22

From the time of Lucifer’s fall, ungodliness has consistently opposed godli-ness. Satan has used many tactics in his efforts to hinder and stop the cause of goodness. One such tactic has been persecution. Jesus warned His disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). The tribulation of which He spoke refers to opposition to the cause of Christ led by Satan. Persecution can be subtle and indirect as well as overt and direct. Millions of Christian martyrs have confirmed their faith in their own blood.

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE 1 Peter 3:13, 14

Not all the suffering which believers experience can be considered Christian suffering. Some people suffer because they exercise poor judgment or make unwise decisions. In these verses, Peter emphasized that those who suffer for righteousness’ sake will be blessed and should not fear their persecutors.

The Implied Danger (verse 13). In this verse, Peter asked the rhetorical question, “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (verse 13). The answer to such a question is that, generally speaking, no one is harmed for doing good. However, the overall tenor of this verse and its context implies that some people are so evil that they actually do the unthinkable—they try to harm people who are pursuing good, decent and honorable lives. We live in a world in which people do not always act reasonably, rationally and responsibly. Even when one does good, he or she might be subjected to harm. Although standards of decency and morality are usually respected, to some extent at least, by unsaved people, this is not always the case. Because the good example of believers is an indictment of the wicked life-style of some people, Christians are sometimes harmed for doing good.
The Implied Promise (verse 13). If there is an implied threat of persecution, there is also an offsetting implication of a divine promise in this verse. Thus, if the threat, while certainly possible, is the exception to the rule, one can logically conclude that he or she will likely not be harmed for doing good. The Greek word for will harm is translated entreat evil in Acts 7:6, 19, vex in Acts 12:1 and evil affected in Acts 14:2. The term for followers, which is the basis for the word mimic, essentially means “imitators.” The Greek word for the phrase, that which is good, is a term which denotes “excellence.” Those who would “be followers of that which is good” (1 Peter 3:13) should be encouraged by the fact that they probably will not be harmed for their good conduct by any unsaved people. Believers should not allow any possible exceptions to this to keep them from doing what God wants them to do.

Suffering for Righteousness’ Sake (verse 14). In the opening statement of this verse, Peter stated the possibility of Christian suffering. To “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (verse 14) is to suffer because of one’s testimony for, or identification with, Christ. The word righteousness denotes the state or condition of being righteous. One who is righteous is in right standing with God, and such a relationship should be evident in one’s daily life. Thus, the cause of righteousness is readily associated with Jesus Christ, His work and His people. Those who suffer for Him or His cause are said to be “happy” (verse 14). This word is from makarios, which is rendered blessed in the Beatitudes, in one of which Jesus declared, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matt. 5:10). When the apostles were beaten for having preached about Jesus, they rejoiced for the reason they had been persecuted (Acts. 5:40, 41).

Unafraid of Persecutors (verse 14). The last part of this verse is based on Isaiah 8:12. There is also a play on words in Peter’s statement, as the words afraid and terror are from the same basic Greek term. Satan’s purpose in persecuting Christians is to intimidate them so they will not declare or demonstrate their identity with Jesus Christ. However, those who persecute Christians are actually fearful themselves. Down deep in their hearts they have some degree of realization that there is a God, and they also sense that at some time and in some manner they will have to stand before Him in judgment. Believers who are faced with persecution might be fearful of what could happen to them, but they should not have the same kind of fear that their persecutors have. In the closing words of this verse the word troubled basically means “disturbed” or “agitated.”

THE HOPE OF BELIEVERS 1 Peter 3:15, 16

Instead of being fearful of meeting God or disturbed by the threats of persecutors, Christians should be resolute in their testimony for Christ because of the assurance He has given them. We should be able by a good conscience that is based on our good conduct to refute any charges of evil doing.

Sanctify God in Your Heart (verse 15). The word sanctify primarily means “set apart.” It is from the Greek term hagiazo, which is the verb form
Sanctify: we are to set apart by the grace of God in our lives. We are to examine our lives and find what is profane and make our lives holy. When we sanctify something, we take the normal and make it useful for the holy. This is a process of grace and faith. We are to set apart and separate ourselves into vessels of value for use by the Master. Word Study #37.

Answer: our word in English here is apology. The idea is a verbal defense, not saying, “I am sorry about something.” Children of God should live in a manner that his or her words give an oral defense of the character of God who lives within them. We should be able to defend our God, our faith and our conduct. This should be done with truth spoken and lived by love. Word Study #627.

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of hagios, from which come holy (Rom. 12:1), saints (Rom. 1:7) and sanctuary (Heb. 13:11). The basic idea common to all these terms is that of being set apart for a specific use or purpose. As believers, we can sanctify God in our hearts by recognizing the following realities:

1. God is holy, especially in the sense that He cannot be affected by sin in any manner or to any extent.
2. We also are holy by virtue of our salvation experience, which means that for the rest of our lives we are set apart to live for God, serve Him and worship Him.
3. We acknowledge God for who and what He is, and we also acknowledge the role we are to fill in accomplishing His purposes.

The Reason for the Hope (verse 15). In addition to sanctifying God in their hearts, the recipients of Peter’s epistle were urged to be prepared at all times to explain the reason for their hope. The hope to which Peter referred is the hope he mentioned previously in this epistle (1 Peter 1:21). This hope is the believer’s assurance of victory over death and the grave. This is what the apostle Paul called “that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). When threatened with persecution, Christians can face whatever might happen with the knowledge that, if God chooses not to deliver them from their circumstances, He will be with them through their ordeals, even to the point of raising them from the dead with glorified bodies. When one is asked how he or she can have such a sense of calm assurance, the response should be given “with meek-

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Be Ready To Give an Answer (1 Peter 3:15): The dedication to which Peter alluded when he spoke of sanctifying the Lord God in one’s heart would have well prepared the believer for a greater education but would not have provided that education. An apologetic defense such as was suggested in the word answer demanded some form of academic training. Originally, this answer was a speech made by a prisoner in his own defense. Later, it came to be a treatise in defense of the Christian faith. Not only was there to be an academic training of the Christian mind, there was to be a systematic training of the Christian life. Peter urged them to “be ready” (verse 15) to provide an academic defense. This readiness did not result only from teaching but from training as well. Teaching without training produced only intellectualism and arrogance. The institute of higher learning must be married to the graduate school of obedience!
ness [acceptance of the divine will] and fear [reverential awe of divine power]” (1 Peter 3:15).

**A Good Conscience (verse 16).** As noted earlier, the word conscience essentially means “a knowing with oneself” (1 Peter 2:19). A good conscience is one that is a reliable guide. An improperly taught conscience—whether it is “weak” (1 Cor. 8:7) or “seared” (1 Tim. 4:2)—is not reliable. A believer who has a good conscience will not be convicted by it when he or she is accused falsely of being an evildoer. The Greek word for speak evil primarily means “to speak against.” It denotes harsh charges or outlandish accusations that ungodly people sometimes bring against Christians to cast them in the worst light possible. The matter of accusing believers of being evildoers was mentioned previously in this epistle (1 Peter 2:14). This is a frequent tactic by Satan and his followers. Believers should always live so as to be assured that their conduct will refute any false charges.

**A Christian Life-style (verse 16).** Peter’s reference to one’s “good conversation in Christ” (verse 16) is another designation for a Christian life-style. The Greek term for may be ashamed is a strong word, meaning essentially “to be utterly ashamed.” The word for falsely accuse also indicates an intense action, as it indicates the purpose for the accusations is to insult, harass or injure someone. The same term is translated despitefully use in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:28. The word conversation refers to the actions or conduct that characterize someone’s life. Believers who live in such a manner as to be undeserving of any accusations of wrongdoing cause shame for those who make malicious, unfounded charges against them. The best response for such accusations is a life-style that is consistent with the example which was set by Christ Himself. This conduct will be commended by God even if men do not do so.

**GOD’S WILL REGARDING SUFFERING**

The ultimate cause for all suffering is sin. If sin were not in the world, there would not be any suffering of any kind. Sometimes, suffering is the direct result of sin, but that is not always the case. Any suffering by believers is due to the permissive will of God, but that does not necessarily mean that He specifically wills the suffering.

**Suffering for Doing Well.** Some Christians have experienced suffering from the hands of the forces of evil despite the fact they are maintaining a commendable life-style that is above reproach. This is what Peter meant by his reference to those who “suffer for well doing” (verse 17). The expression well doing basically denotes conduct in which one does the right thing for the right reason. The Greek term for well speaks of excellence. What is involved here is not a questionable life-style or borderline actions. Instead, it is conduct that would be described as commendable by any honest person. Despite such an exemplary way of life, it is entirely possible that persecution could be experienced, and if so, it would be because “the will of God” (verse 17) permits it. The Omniscient, Omnipotent God sometimes chooses to allow the most devout saints to suffer abuse from the hands of wicked, ungodly people.
Suffering for Doing Evil. The closing statement in this verse indicates that sometimes suffering is the consequence of “evil doing” (verse 17). This kind of suffering can happen to believers and unbelievers. If someone breaks the law and is punished for doing so, that is an example of suffering for evil-doing. No believer who suffers in this manner should try to dignify what he or she has done by claiming to be suffering unjustly. Another manner in which people suffer for doing evil is when one experiences the logical and natural consequence for misconduct or poor judgment. If, for example, someone is injured in an auto accident while exceeding the speed limit and passing in a no passing zone, he or she cannot claim to be suffering from any satanic attacks. This kind of suffering is not directed by God, and it certainly does not fall under the scope of suffering for doing well.

THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST 1 Peter 3:18

As the ideal example of suffering, Peter referred his readers to Jesus Christ. If anyone ever suffered for doing well, generally speaking, it was He. More specifically, if anyone ever suffered for the right reason, it was He. Moreover, if anyone ever conducted Himself properly when subjected to suffering, it was He.

He Suffered Once for Sins. This verse begins with a reference to the sufferings of Christ which culminated in His crucifixion. The tense of the Greek verb suffered indicates that what Christ experienced was a once-for-all matter. He suffered once, and the sufferings He endured were sufficient for the salvation of people of all times and places. Crucifixes depicting Jesus hanging on a cross declaring Christ continues to suffer are misleading and unscriptural. The most widely recognized symbol of the Christian faith is an empty cross, and this is as it should be. While the cross was the instrument of suffering and death for Christ, His suffering is a thing of the past. He suffered once for sins, and any teachings of any subsequent suffering “put him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6).

He Suffered for the Unjust. In regard to the once-for-all suffering of Christ, Peter stated that “the just [suffered] for the unjust” 1 Peter 3:18). The word just denotes Christ, the sinless Son of God, while unjust describes mankind as a whole. The Greek term for just is dikaios, which is also translated righteous in many instances. The word unjust is from a Greek term which essentially means “unrighteous.” One who is righteous is in a right relationship with God—or with man, as the case might be—while one who is unrighteous is out of relationship. Christ was in the right relationship with the Father because of His nature. By the same token, unbelievers are not in right relationship with God because of their nature. The One who is just suffered from no fault of His own and in so doing made it possible for those who are unjust to be made just. Through justification, believers become righteous because of the righteousness of Christ. He who knew no sin became sin for us “that we might be made the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

He Died in the Flesh. The purpose of Christ’s suffering and death was so “he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). This was in keeping with the divine
plan which was established in eternity past when the Father and the Son agreed upon the manner of redemption for mankind. The Son would give His life, shedding His blood for our sins, and the Father would accept that sacrifice as the atonement for mankind. (Compare 1 Peter 1:18-21.) To make this divine plan effective, Christ had to die. Consequently, He was “put to death in the flesh” (1 Peter 3:18). Because Christ is God, He is eternal in His existence. However, He had a fleshly manifestation that began when He was born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary. He lived on earth as a Man for about thirty-three years, and then was nailed to the cross. When He had fulfilled all that was demanded of Him for the redemption of mankind, Jesus willed His death by commending His spirit into the hands of the Father (Luke 23:46). It was the human part of Jesus that died.

He Was Quickened by the Spirit. Christ died in the flesh, and what was made alive was also His fleshly being because His spiritual nature continued to live even though He had died physically. He was made alive by being “quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). The Greek word for quickened literally means “made alive.” The same term is used in Romans 8:11 to teach the certainty of the resurrection of believers. The quickening of Jesus’ body was by the Holy Spirit, and that will be true as well for the bodies of believers. The body Jesus had following His resurrection was a glorified body. Since Jesus’ body was in the grave three days and three nights, the process of decomposition might have already begun. (Compare John 11:39.) However, the Omnipotent Spirit, the Third Person in the divine Godhead, raised His body in a perfect and glorified condition, and He will do likewise for all believers when we are resurrected.

SPIRITS IN PRISON

The identity of the spirits in prison and the meaning of their prison, along with when Jesus preached to them and what He said, have been matters of intense debate among Bible scholars for centuries. Space will not permit a thorough discussion of these matters, but some general observations are certainly in order.
Preaching to the Spirits in Prison (verse 19). The pronoun which refers to the noun Spirit in verse 18; he refers to Christ. The verb preached is from kerusso, which essentially means “to herald,” “to proclaim” or “to announce.” This is not the term that is related to the Greek word for gospel even though kerusso often denotes the proclamation of the gospel (Matt. 4:17, 23). Kerusso is rendered proclaimed in Luke 12:3, and publish in Mark 1:45; 5:20; 7:36. The Greek word for prison denotes a place of confinement, or a place where someone—or something—is held or guarded. More will be noted about “the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19) subsequently, but here it is important to understand that Jesus made an announcement or proclamation to some spirits that were being held or confined.

In the Days of Noah (verse 20). The spirits mentioned in verse 19 were described as “sometime were disobedient.” The time of their disobedience was noted further as being “when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah” (verse 19). Those who were particularly disobedient during the time of Noah were those who refused to heed the patriarch’s warnings about the coming flood. The long-suffering of God evidently was the time during which the ark was being built, a period which seemingly extended for one hundred twenty years. (Compare Genesis 6:3.) Noah undoubtedly warned of the coming judgment by word and by his example of obedience in building the ark. However, the people of that generation rejected his message. When the flood came, they were drowned, and their spirits went to sheol (the Hebrew term) or hades (the Greek term), both of which refer to the unseen realm of departed spirits. That region then evidently housed the spirits of both the righteous and the unrighteous, with a great gulf dividing the two sections (Luke 16:26). While His body lay in the tomb, Jesus seems to have gone to hades and proclaimed to the spirits of the unsaved—or those who had been disobedient because of their rejection of His divine offer of mercy—that they were not going to get a second chance to be saved. He also may have announced to those in the paradise section of hades that they would be moved into the presence of God where they now await the resurrection of their bodies. (Compare Ephesians 4:8-10.) Quite likely, the people of Noah’s day were singled out as
examples of all those who have rejected God's offer of mercy because the horrible consequence of their rejection overtook them so swiftly.

**The Souls Saved by Water (verse 20).** The only survivors of the flood that engulfed the entire world during Noah's time were he and his wife and their three sons and daughters-in-law. Those eight people were spared from drowning because they were in the ark, which was the divinely appointed place of refuge from the flood. The word *soul* is from *psychē*, which refers to one's life. Sometimes *psychē* indicates the spiritual part of an individual, but that is not always so, as this verse clearly indicates. Noah and his family were saved “by water” (verse 20) in the sense that they were delivered from the wicked society of that time by virtue of the flood. Everyone else died, and that is how Noah and his family were saved. They were saved, or delivered, by an act of divine judgment which was inflicted by water. To try to make this teach that the salvation of the soul is made possible, whether in whole or in part, by baptism is to distort completely the teaching of salvation and baptism.

**BAPTISM AND SALVATION**

If baptism is not the means of salvation, what is the relationship between the two matters, one might wonder, especially in view of Peter's statement that “baptism doth also now save us” (verse 21). There is a definite relationship between salvation and baptism, and this realization helps one appreciate his or her salvation even more.

**Baptism in a Figure (verse 21).** The opening statement in this verse, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us,” has been widely debated by students of the Scriptures. The term *like figure* is from *antitupos*, from which comes antitype. The word *whereunto* refers is to the water, or the flood (verse 20). In this analogy the flood is the type, and baptism is the antitype. The flood saved Noah and his family in the sense that they were delivered by it from the wickedness of that ungodly society. Baptism saves us, figuratively speaking, by identifying us with Jesus Christ who is the Savior of all who trust Him, and also by identifying us with other believers, particularly those who are our fellow church members. As Noah and his family had to be in the ark for the flood to save them, so must one be in Christ for him or her to be benefitted by baptism.

**The Filth of the Flesh and a Good Conscience (verse 21).** A commentary on baptism is included in the parenthetical statement in this verse—“not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God” (verse 21). The baptism which Peter mentioned has no cleansing efficacy. The phrase, *the filth of the flesh*, denotes the defilement of the sinful
nature, which is the condition of every individual by birth. Baptism does not cleanse anyone from the guilt or condemnation of sin. Instead, baptism is a means by which a believer can be assured that he or she is living for God in a manner that is pleasing to Him. The Greek word for answer basically means “request” or “appeal.” When one is baptized, he or she is, in effect, asking for divine approval of his or her profession of faith. Jesus would not begin His public ministry until He had been baptized (Matt. 3:15). Likewise, one who has been saved should want a divinely sanctioned means of confirming his or her salvation experience.

The Resurrection of Christ (verse 21). This verse concludes with a reference to the resurrection of Christ. If the parenthetical statement is removed, one is left with “baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Christ” (verse 21). Baptism is a depiction of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. (See Romans 6:3, 4; Compare 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4.) The resurrection of Christ demonstrated unmistakably and indisputably that His sacrifice for the sins of mankind was approved and accepted by the Father. His resurrection also denoted His victory over death and the grave (1 Cor. 15:54-57). The apostle Paul recognized the importance of Christ’s resurrection in the lives of believers when he wrote of “the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:10). The resurrection of Christ was not only an important fact in the message of the apostles, but a significant factor in the ministry of the early churches; a critical doctrine became a vital dynamic, and so it continues today for churches and believers.

The Ascension of Christ (verse 22). Following the resurrection of Christ, there was a period of forty days, during which He appeared from time to time to various individuals and groups (Acts 1:3). On His final appearance, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives, from which He ascended to Heaven (Acts 1:4-9). With the ascension of Christ, His earthly ministry came to a close. The Father’s approval of all that was done on earth by the
Son is seen in that He “is on the right hand of God” (1 Peter 3:22). The position of being on the right hand of a ruler or important person was the highest honor that could be bestowed in biblical times. Paul described the exaltation of the ascended Christ as being “highly exalted” with “a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9). The exaltation of Christ by the Father should remind believers of their responsibility to exalt Him in all that they do and say.

The Authority of Christ (verse 22). The closing statement in this verse notes that “angels and authorities and powers [are] being made subject unto him [Jesus Christ]” (verse 22). This speaks of the present time. Among the angelic hosts there is complete submission to Christ. The words authorities (Greek, exousia) and powers (Greek, dunamis) denote spiritual beings. Within their own sphere of responsibility, angelic creatures exercise great authority and perform remarkable feats as God directs them. They recognize, however, their subjection to Christ, and all that they do is in perfect harmony with the divine will. Unfortunately, the authority of Christ is not always acknowledged on earth, even sometimes by churches and individual believers. We should always remember that Matthew’s account of the Great Commission is prefaced with Jesus’ statement, “All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18).

LIVING FOR CHRIST IN PERSECUTION

When Peter penned this epistle, persecution was a real threat for the early churches and believers. Rumblings of the awful storm which would exhibit itself in Emperor Nero’s terrible atrocities against Christians were beginning to be heard. For many of the recipients of this letter, the question was not if they were persecuted, as it was when. Any suffering for them was to be for doing good, not evil. Peter wanted his readers to be prepared for their ordeals by remembering the example of Christ and the sufferings He endured.
When one trusts Christ as Savior, he or she experiences the new birth and becomes a new creature in Christ. What one has received inwardly can be seen only by God. The believer’s family members, friends and other associates can observe only his or her conduct. This is why it is so important for those who profess to be Christians to live in a Christlike manner. One’s daily life for Christ should include faithful service to Him. One who claims to be a child of God should not be involved in serving the devil.

**LIVING FOR THE WILL OF GOD**  
1 Peter 4:1, 2

One of the reasons why Jesus came to earth was to do the will of the Father. (See John 6:38; Compare Hebrews 10:7.) Each believer should also be determined to do the will of God. To do so, one needs to have the mind of Christ and live victoriously over the temptations of the flesh and Satan.

The Mind of Christ (verse 1). Previously in this epistle, Peter referred to Christ who suffered for the sins of mankind (1 Peter 2:21; 3:18). Here the apostle mentioned that Christ suffered “for us in the flesh” (verse 1). In His incarnation, Christ the Word “was made flesh” (John 1:14), thus becoming the God-Man. He was divine and He was also human. It was the human part of Christ that suffered and died. Peter’s admonition to “arm yourselves” (1 Peter 4:1) reminds one of the conflict between the two natures believers have following their new birth experience. Because the flesh is constantly fighting against the spirit, one needs to have the mind, or attitude, that Christ had in His acceptance of the divine plan to come to earth and assume a human form to make it possible for the purposes of God to be fulfilled. (Compare Philippians 2:5-8.) With such an attitude one’s Christian service will be more readily acceptable to God.
Ceasing from Sin (verse 1). On the surface it might seem as if the pronoun he in the last part of this verse refers to Christ. A closer examination of the overall context indicates, however, that the one whom Peter intended in this instance is a believer who is committed to the will of God, as the comments on the succeeding verses will indicate. The suffering which Peter mentioned here is associated with the suffering which Christ endured. There are at least two common points in such suffering. First, for both Christ and the believer, the suffering is experienced in the flesh. In addition, the suffering must be a consequence of one’s submission to the will of God. One who is committed to the divine purposes will renounce sin as a way of life. He or she will not engage in sinful pursuits and practices in his or her daily conduct. For this reason those who have the mind of Christ will cease from living sinfully.

Rejecting Fleshly Lusts (verse 2). The expression, the rest of his time in the flesh, refers to one’s earthly life following his or her salvation experience. The phrase, the lusts of men, indicates the desires and passions that are characteristic of the fleshly nature. The Greek word for lusts is a term which literally means “over desire.” The lusts of the flesh are strong, intense desires which, if yielded to, will cause one to sin. (Compare James 1:14, 15.) Those who have ceased from a sinful life-style will reject fleshly lusts. These two matters work together. By resisting the temptation to commit sinful deeds, one will be better able to renounce the fleshly nature, and, by renouncing the flesh, he or she grows stronger spiritually, thus better enabling him or her to resist temptation. God does not want believers to be enslaved to sin. Instead, He wants us to “be ceased from sin” (1 Peter 4:1).

Doing the Will of God (verse 2). God does not want believers to yield to the temptation to indulge their fleshly lusts. Instead, He wants each of us to do “the will of God” (verse 2). Much speculation—and no little consternation—has been expressed through the centuries regarding one’s discernment of the will of God for his or her life and how one should accomplish the divine will. While no one can tell another person what God’s will for him or her is, there are some unmistakable guideposts that can always be followed by anyone seeking to determine His will. First, God desires the salvation of each individual (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Moreover, God will not lead anyone to disobey the Scriptures for any reason. (Compare 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.) Finally, God’s will is always consistent with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially as He works in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. (Compare John 14:26.)

REJECTING THE WILL OF UNBELIEVERS

In the opening verses of this chapter, Peter stressed the need for believers to live in accordance with the will of God. In this passage, he taught that Christians are not to live after the manner of unsaved people. Several matters are addressed in these verses that are descriptive of the lives of wicked people.

The Believer’s Past Life (verse 3). The expression, the time past of our life, denotes the time prior to one’s salvation. The term may suffice indicates
that one should be fully satisfied to put his or her manner of life as an unbeliever once for all in the past. The Greek word for wrought is an emphatic term which implies strong action or concerted effort. The phrase, the will of the Gentiles, refers to the life-style of unbelievers. Since the Jewish people considered themselves to be the people of God, even though they did not always exhibit godly conduct, they generally associated the manner in which Gentiles lived as being ungodly. For a Jew to accuse another Jew of living like a Gentile was indeed an insult. Peter used that widespread attitude to urge his readers to renounce their way of life before they were saved.

**Living an Unbeliever’s Lifestyle (verse 3).** In the last part of this verse the apostle listed six things that should not be characteristic of a believer’s daily life.

- **Lasciviousness.** The Greek term is essentially synonymous with lust. Both words denote desires that are not restrained. The term for lasciviousness is also rendered wantonness (Rom. 13:13) and filthy (2 Peter 2:7), and often indicates gross sexual immorality.

- **Lusts.** As noted previously, this word refers to intense desires. It also goes without saying that lust denotes improper or inappropriate desires. Believers who give in to lusts are acting like unsaved people.

- **Drunkenness.** “Excess of wine” (verse 3) results in drunkenness. The abuse of alcohol has been a problem in practically every culture and society. This vice is seemingly getting worse with each generation. Drunkards are among those whom Paul mentioned as being unfit to “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:10). A lifestyle that includes drunkenness does not reflect a salvation experience.

- **Revellings.** This term refers to tumultuous, unrestrained activities and conduct. The Greek word is translated rioting in Romans 13:13. Revelling is demonstrated in sexual promiscuity, in drunkenness, in unrestrained gambling and in many other ways by people who have no desire to throttle their lustful desires.

- **Gluttony.** The result of gluttony, indicated here as “banquetings” (1 Peter 4:3), can be seen in the constantly increasing number of people who are morbidly obese. Overeating, along with other abuses to the body, is sinful, especially for believers, because our bodies are temples in which the Holy Spirit resides following our salvation. (Compare 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.)
Idolatries. The preceding vices were characteristic of pagan idolatrous practices. People who engaged in these sins gave support, to some extent at least, to the worship of false gods. In this day, those who participate in the vices listed by Peter declare, in effect, that they do not have any respect for godliness.

Running in Riotous Excess (verse 4). The pronouns they and them refer to the Gentiles mentioned in verse 3. As used in this instance, Gentiles was Peter's designation for unbelievers, especially those whose conduct was notably sinful. Unsaved people consider it "strange" (literally, "foreign" or "unnatural") that believers do not participate with them in the ungodly activities described in verse 3. The phrase, run with them, indicates that many wicked people avidly pursue their sinful passions and try to persuade others to do likewise. The expression, the same excess of riot, denotes the intensity of the godless conduct of many unbelievers. The Greek word for excess basically means "out pouring" or "overflowing." Riot is from a term which essentially denotes "unbridled extravagance." This word was used in adjective form to describe the prodigal son’s profligate conduct (Luke 15:13). The godly conduct of believers is often ridiculed and even maligned by wicked people.

Standing Before the Judge (verse 5). In this verse, Peter indicated that those who pursue sinful practices and urge others—especially believers—to join them will be judged. They will have to give an accounting of all their actions to Him, that is, to God Himself. Peter also mentioned that those who are saved will be judged as well, as seen in that God will judge "the quick and the dead" (verse 5). The term quick is from zao, which essentially means "living" or "alive." The word quick is used in the Scriptures to refer to believers because they have been made spiritually alive through the new birth. Along this same line
of thought, *dead* denotes those who are unsaved because they are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5). Believers will be judged prior to the establishment of the Millennium at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10), while the unsaved will not be judged until after the Millennium when they stand before the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

LIVING TO GOD 1 Peter 4:6

This verse has been misapplied by some who believe that everyone will ultimately be saved and teach that those who die without having trusted Christ as Savior will, after their death, have an additional opportunity to trust Him. This false teaching is sometimes called universalism, the advocates of which insist that somehow or another God will make it possible for everyone to be saved, and that consequently no one will be eternally condemned. This verse does not teach such a doctrine. Instead, it teaches that God wants the gospel preached to those who are spiritually dead so they can live unto Him.

**Preaching the Gospel.** In the opening statement of this verse, the verb *preached* is from *euaggelizo*, which basically means “to declare good news.” This and related terms are commonly used in the New Testament to denote the preaching of the gospel. The word gospel essentially means “good news” or “glad tidings.” The gospel is the good news about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word *dead* in this verse, as in verse 5, refers to those who are unsaved. Peter’s reference to the preaching of the gospel to the dead has to do with the proclamation to unbelievers of the good news about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unbelievers are physically alive, but spiritually dead because they have not been made spiritually alive.

**Judging According to Men.** The presumption here is that people who hear the gospel will respond favorably and become saved. They will continue to live on earth, but they will do so as believers instead of unbelievers. While they live “in the flesh” (verse 6) their actions and activities will be judged by other people, especially unbelievers, according “to men” (verse 6) that is in keeping with human standards and evaluations. The only validity of such judgment is in regard to how effective one’s testimony as a Christian might be among unbelievers. This principle is seen in Paul’s statement, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Rom. 14:7). No believer should be unduly concerned about unfair, overly critical comments from unbelievers. However, we certainly should be concerned about having an effective testimony for Christ.
Living According to God. Despite what the world does or does not think about believers, their primary concern should be to live “according to God” (1 Peter 4:6) that is according to the way He wants them to live. Even though this refers to the earthly life following one’s salvation, it is a life that is lived “in the spirit” (verse 6) because it is lived in accordance with spiritual principles and goals. As used here, the word spirit probably refers both to the Holy Spirit and the believer’s spirit as well. Life in the spirit—through the Holy Spirit and experienced by the believer’s spirit—is pointedly set forth in Romans 8. It is a life that is based on spiritual freedom (Rom. 8:1-4), and involves filial obligation (verses 12-17). Moreover, it provides a blessed assurance (verses 18-30), and guarantees eternal security (verses 31-39).

ANTICIPATING THE END 1 Peter 4:7-9

It has been said that the true indication of a believer’s spirituality is how he or she would live if it were known for certain that Christ would return within twenty-four hours. Because no one knows for certain when Christ will return, we should conduct ourselves as we would want Him to find us when He does return, especially in regard to our relationships with one another.

The End Is at Hand (verse 7). In verse 5, Peter referred to the fact that both believers and unbelievers will be judged, with the clear implication that the Judge will be God Himself. Judgment is among the many matters associated with the end times. The most notable of the end-time events include the return of Christ for His saints, the Tribulation Period during which the anti-Christ will appear, the coming of Christ in power and glory and the millennial reign of Christ. From this it is evident that the phrase, the end of all things, denotes a process of many events rather than a single incident. The term at hand indicates imminence. For believers the most important matter in “the end of all things” (verse 7) is the return of Christ for them. Even though nearly two thousand years have elapsed since Peter made this prophecy, the end is still at hand in the sense that nothing has to happen before it occurs. Since the return of Christ for believers is the beginning of the end of all things, the “end” (verse 7) was as much at hand in the time of the apostles as it is now, and so it will be until Christ comes for us.

The Need for Vigilance (verse 7). The apostle Peter followed his announcement that “the end of all things is at hand” (verse 7) with an exhortation for his readers to be sober, watchful and prayerful. The Greek word for sober essentially means “of a sound mind.” The same term is rendered right mind in Mark 5:15 and Luke 8:35. Watch is from a word that is often translated sober. Not only do believers need to be of a sound mind, but we need to have clarity of mind as well in our Christian service and testimony. This vigilance will certainly help one to realize the need for prayer, especially when there is the likelihood of satanic activity. While in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus exhorted His disciples to “watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Mark 14:38). Perhaps, when he penned this epistle, Peter recalled that exhortation, and his tragic failure to heed it.
The Place of Love (verse 8). The term, above all things, essentially means “before all else.” The exhortations of verse 7 direct believers to be introspective and mindful of how they should be on guard as they anticipate the return of Christ. In verse 8, however, Peter told his readers that even more important than looking to oneself is the matter of their relationships with other Christians. Thus, there is a need for “fervent charity among yourselves” (verse 8) even beyond the need for constant vigilance. The Greek word for fervent does not indicate ardor as much as constancy. The same term is translated without ceasing in Acts 12:5. Charity is from agape, which is love that is based on principle rather than feelings or emotions. Divine love is the model for such love. The place of agape love toward one another is above all other things.

The Importance of Love (verse 8). The reason agape love among fellow-believers is to be regarded above all things is because it “shall cover the multitude of sins” (verse 8). Fellowship and edification for one another cannot exist without love because each believer continues to have a fleshly nature even after he or she has been saved. Any relationship is likely to be sabotaged because of sin. Someone is likely to say or do something—even unwittingly or unintentionally—that offends another person. On these occasions and in such situations, love keeps the relationship intact and moving forward. The Greek word for cover essentially conveys the idea of hiding, as can be seen in James 5:20 where the same term is so translated. One should always remember that because of the salvation experience all of his or her sins are covered by the blood of Christ. (Compare Romans 4:7.)

The Importance of Hospitality (verse 9). Hospitality was an important feature of the biblical culture, dating from the days of the earliest patriarchs and continuing through the apostolic era. During the time of the early churches, Christians were expected especially to open their hearts and homes to fel-

Fervent Charity: believers should have a godly, gracious love that is willing to stretch out for another beyond measure. This is a love with great intent and earnestness. We think of love more as an emotion. In reality, gracious love comes from a well intentioned and committed heart. It is more of a decision than it is an emotion. We love based on truth. Word Studies #1618 and #26.
low-believers. Traveling was a difficult undertaking in those days, even under the best of circumstances. Christians often found this to be true even more so because of persecution and animosity toward them. Thus, the duty of hospitality toward one's fellow-believers was even more incumbent. Peter exhorted the recipients of his epistle to practice hospitality “without grudging” (verse 9). The Greek word for grudging is also rendered murmuring (Acts 6:1; Phil. 2:14), and denotes complaints expressed in a resentful tone. Christian hospitality was a critical matter then, and it is today as well.

EXERCISING GOOD STEWARDSHIP 1 Peter 4:10

Following the ascension of Christ, the writings that eventually constituted the New Testament were begun. The four gospels along with the epistles of Paul and other apostles were written over a period of about sixty-five to seventy years. During the time when the churches and believers did not have the completed Scriptures, spiritual gifts were given (1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28-31; Eph. 4:11-16). Several different gifts were given, and each of them was temporary in duration, except for faith, hope and charity, or love (1 Cor. 13:8-13). During the time those gifts were given, the recipients of them were expected to exercise good stewardship of them.

Receiving the Gift. The Greek word for gift is charisma, which in turn is related to charis, the term for grace. Charisma denotes a gift that is received by the grace of God. It cannot be earned; it is bestowed through divine sovereignty. In Romans 12:6, Paul explained that the various gifts that were given were received “according to the grace that is given to us.” Even though those gifts were given to individual believers, they were not given to the individual as his own personal possession. Any gift which one might have received was given for the benefit of everyone, that is for everyone in the congregation. Since none of the spiritual gifts could be earned, none were to be regarded as
a special accomplishment or acquisition by any individual. The gifts were received because God gave them.

**Ministering the Gift.** The verb *minister* is from a word which essentially means “to serve.” *Deacon* is from the noun form of that term. What is emphasized here is the service that is rendered by one who had received a spiritual gift from God. Note that the gift was to be ministered “one to another” (1 Peter 4:10). The purpose of the spiritual gifts which Peter had in mind was the mutual edification of the members of a congregation. No one was to boast about his gift, nor was he to seek to profit in any manner personally from it. The overall guideline for ministering a gift was “as good stewards” (verse 10). A steward is someone who has been entrusted with something of importance or value. A “good” (verse 10) steward is a faithful steward. In fact, faithfulness is the most important requirement for stewardship (1 Cor. 4:1-5).

**The Manifold Grace of God.** This expression refers to the diversity of the spiritual gifts that were given during the time of the early churches. Through the “manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10), many gifts were given, as can be seen in Romans 12:6-8 where seven gifts are mentioned, in 1 Corinthians 12:5-10 where nine gifts are listed, in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 where eight gifts are recorded, in 1 Corinthians 13:8, 13 where six gifts are mentioned and in Ephesians 4:11 where five gifts are related. The total gifts in these references is 35; however, some gifts are repeated. It appears that there were twenty-eight different spiritual gifts given during the apostolic era, with three gifts—faith, hope and charity (love)—remaining today. Whatever need existed among the early churches could be met by one or another of these spiritual gifts.

**GLORIFYING GOD IN ALL THINGS**

1 Peter 4:11

The overriding purpose of the spiritual gifts was that God might be glorified in all things. This same principle is valid today. We do not have spiritual gifts as did people during Peter’s time, but we do have talents and abilities that are given by God. We are to develop what we have received and use them to glorify God.

**Speaking the Oracles of God.** As used in the New Testament, the word *oracles* denotes the inspired Scriptures (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2). During the apost-
tolic era there were several spiritual gifts that involved speaking, such as prophesying, teaching, exhorting and so forth. A man who exercised any of those gifts needed to be careful to speak in complete agreement with the Scriptures. As long as he allowed the Holy Spirit to direct him, he would be certain to speak in harmony with the oracles of God. However, as was evident by the confusion that was caused by the abuse of the gift of tongues in the church in Corinth, spiritual gifts—or what might appear to be a spiritual gift—could be used improperly, or even selfishly. (Compare 1 Corinthians 14:1-5), and that was the reason for Peter’s exhortation here. The same principle is equally valid today for preachers, teachers and any others who proclaim the Word in any manner.

Ministering As God Provides. What Peter exhorted regarding one’s use of a speaking gift was also true for the exercise of any of the several spiritual gifts that provided some kind of ministry to others. One who ministered in any manner was to do so “as of the ability which God giveth” (1 Peter 4:11). The Greek word for ability is ischus, which basically denotes strength. The strength to minister, or accomplish any of the spiritual gifts, came from God. Anyone who attempted through his own strength to duplicate any of the gifts failed miserably. Likewise, any service rendered to, or on behalf of God by believers of this day must be done as He provides the ability to do so. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” The other side of this matter can be seen in the statement by Jesus, “Without me [that is, apart from me] ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Glorifying God in All Things. Everything that is done by believers is to be done so “that God in all things may be glorified” (1 Peter 4:11). In whatever capacity or manner one serves—“if any man speak . . . if any man minister”—he is to do so to give glory to God (verse 11). Those who seek glory for themselves are motivated by a spirit of Pharisaism, and can look forward only to receiving the hypocrite’s reward. (Compare Matthew 6:2, 5, 16.) Note that God is “glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11). When Christ is honored, God is glorified. Any individual or group that refuses to honor Christ fails also to glorify God. In many religious circles today, God is accorded high praise and great honor, but Christ is not, and in some instances He is actually denigrated. This does not please God, nor does it honor Him. The phrase, praise and dominion for ever and ever, refers to Christ. Glory given to the Son is passed on to the Father.

LIVING FOR CHRIST IN SERVICE 1 Peter 4:1-11

Christians should be acutely concerned about living for God. Along this line, Peter mentioned some things that believers should do and some things that they should not do. Two important guidelines were included in this lesson, as the apostle reminded his readers that the end of all things is near and that, while awaiting the end, we should be good stewards of all that has been entrusted to us. In all, and above all, we are to give glory to God, an exhortation also declared by Paul, “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).
Suffering is a common theme in this epistle. In some manner it is mentioned fifteen times. In the passage selected for this lesson, Peter told his readers how to suffer and how not to suffer. He also warned about impending judgment and the certainty of divine judgment upon everyone, believers as well as unbelievers. In view of all that is involved in the Christian’s daily life, one needs to live by faith. With faith one does not need to know all about the future, he or she merely needs to know who holds the future.

**FIERY TRIALS**

Many of the recipients of this epistle had already experienced persecution and other forms of suffering. However, even more intense ordeals were on the way. Those to whom Peter wrote needed to be reminded that, despite the severity of what might befall them, there was nothing particularly unusual about their difficulties.

**Fiery Trials Will Come.** The Greek word for beloved is the same as for dearly beloved in 1 Peter 2:11. Peter in both instances wanted his readers to be assured of his love for them, especially in view of the difficult matter that he needed to address. Strange is from xenos, which also appears in the second part of this verse and will be discussed in the subsequent comments. The expression fiery trial is from a term that is rendered burning in Revelation 18:9, 18. A “fiery trial” (1 Peter 4:12) for individuals is an intense
experience to which one is subjected. For believers it denotes the adversities which they have to endure because of their testimony for Christ or their identification with Him or His cause. In Peter’s time Nero, the Roman emperor, was beginning to intensify his anti-Christian campaigns. In the eyes of some people, those who professed to be followers of Jesus were considered enemies of the state. To a certain extent it is human nature to dislike, resent, mistrust and regard with suspicion anyone who is different. Christians are necessarily different from people of the world. Consequently, fiery trials will come, sooner or later, in some manner or another.

**Fiery Trials are Not Unusual.** In both instances in this verse, the word *strange* is related to *xenos* which denotes that which is foreign. The English prefix *xeno* is used to refer to foreign people and other matters related to foreigners. For example, *xenophobia* means “fear of foreigners,” while *xenophile* indicates “love for foreigners.” Because *xenos* speaks of people or things which are different, it also can refer to anything that is unnatural or unusual. It is not unnatural or unusual for believers to be subjected to adversities which are caused in some manner or another by their identity with Christ. Persecution is a test, or a trial. Generally speaking, only a real Christian will be persecuted. Those who compromise their testimony or try to accommodate it to worldly standards are usually left alone by unbelievers. A steadfast Christian is like a conscience for any group or society with which he or she is involved. Any claim by an individual or family to belong to Jesus Christ will inevitably cause others to examine themselves in the light of such a testimony. Unfortunately, this makes some people uncomfortable, and they respond by ridiculing believers, or with even more adverse measures.

**CHRIST’S SUFFERINGS AND GLORY**

As difficult as persecution or any kind of suffering might be for believers, there are some positive effects. The apostle Paul promised that those who suffer with Christ will be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17), and that those who suffer for His cause are assured of the privilege of reigning with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).

**Partaking of His Sufferings.** When believers are persecuted for their Christian testimony, they should not be surprised or astonished as if something rare or unusual occurred. Instead, they should rejoice. Jesus taught this in the Sermon on the Mount when He included among the Beatitudes the fact that those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake are blessed, that is they are made indescribably joyful because of their association with the faithful prophets of old and even the Savior Himself (Matt. 5:10-12). Another cause of
rejoicing is the realization that Christian suffering is also an opportunity for believers to be “partakers of Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:13). The Greek word for partakers essentially means “those who have something in common.” Believers cannot suffer on behalf of others as Christ did when He became “sin for us,” but when we suffer because of the hatred of evil men toward God and His purposes, we are suffering for the cause of Christ, and, in that sense and to that degree, we become partakers of His sufferings. The apostles clearly understood this, and that is why they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41).

**Rejoicing in His Glory.** If suffering for the Lord brings joy in this life, one can only imagine the great joy to be realized in the life to come by believers who have suffered for Him, as the second part of this verse indicates. The time when “his glory shall be revealed” is when Jesus returns to the earth at the close of the Tribulation Period and defeats the anti-Christ and his forces at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21). Also associated with the coming of Christ in glory is the Judgment of Nations (Matt. 25:31, 32), which seemingly will be one of the first orders of business when Christ establishes His millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-6). Believers of this dispensation will rule with Christ during the Millennium, and that will be when they share in His glory. Among the ways in which this will be experienced is through the rewards that will have been given to faithful Christians. One such reward will be the crown of life, which will be awarded to those who have suffered for Christ (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). This crown is not salvation, but an enhanced understanding of and appreciation for life by those whose lives were threatened—and possibly even lost—for Christ.

**REPROACHED FOR CHRIST**

1 Peter 4:14

After projecting the attention of his readers into the glorious future, Peter then reminded them of present realities. It is certainly encouraging to anticipate the future and all that it holds for believers, but the fact remains that one has to live, witness, work and worship in the present, whether the circumstances are pleasant or not.

**Blessed Are the Persecuted.** Previously, Peter had mentioned that those who are called upon to suffer for righteousness’ sake should consider them-
selves “happy,” or blessed (1 Peter 3:14). The same thought is expressed in the opening statement of this verse, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye” (1 Peter 4:14). In both instances the Greek word for happy is makarios, which is rendered blessed in the Beatitudes and elsewhere (Matt. 5:3-12). The word for reproached denotes an intense action. The same term is translated revile (Matt. 5:11), upbraid (Matt. 11:20) and cast in his teeth (Matt. 27:44). Note that Peter emphasized that the blessing to which he referred in this verse is only for those who are reproached “for the name of Christ” (1 Peter 4:14). To be persecuted is not pleasant under the best of circumstances, and no one should intentionally seek any such experiences. However, should it become one’s lot to encounter persecution, he or she should be humbly grateful that God has seen fit to allow him or her to suffer with Christ.

The Spirit of Glory and of God. The reason those who are reproached for the name of Christ can be joyful is because “the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon” them (verse 14). The spirit to which Peter referred is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the divine Godhead. He is described as the spirit of glory, a phrase that according to some scholars would be better rendered as the spirit of the glory. If this is so, then the term the glory is reminiscent of the Shekinah glory which was evident when the presence of God hovered on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:16) and later filled the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), and still later filled the Temple (1 Kings 8:10, 11). The glow that denotes the special presence of God was seemingly evident in the face of Stephen when he gave his defense before the Sanhedrin Court (Acts 6:15). This manifestation might not be visibly apparent in this day, but the special presence of God providing comfort, assurance and strength will be with believers who are called upon to suffer persecution for their Savior and His cause. This is undoubtedly one of the functions provided by the Holy Spirit in His ministry to churches and believers during this dispensation. (Compare John 14:17).

Speaking Evil of God. Peter mentioned in the last part of this verse two groups of people—those who speak evil of God and those who glorify Him. Those who speak evil of God are those who persecute His followers. The term, on their part, refers to the plans, purposes and actions of those who inflict persecution on believers. The pronoun he most likely refers to God. It could refer to the Holy Spirit because He is described as “the spirit of glory and of God” (1 Peter 4:14) in the statement immediately preceding the one under consideration here. However, it is highly unlikely that the enemies of God have enough understanding of the Godhead to make such a distinction. Thus, the pronoun he most likely refers to the general concept of God that is practically universal. The phrase, evil spoken of, denotes blasphemous speech by those who persecute believers. These ungodly people might say they believe in God, and they might even claim to love Him, but, in their hearts, they do not love Him even if they acknowledge His existence.

Giving Glory to God. The closing statement in this verse—“on your part he is glorified” (verse 14)—gives the opposite view of those who speak evil of God. The expression, on your part, denotes the attitude and conduct of faith-
ful Christians, especially by those who remain faithful to God in the face of persecution. The pronoun *he*, as in the statement immediately preceding, likely refers to God in general rather than to a specific person of the Godhead. The term *glorified* indicates the giving of honor, praise and exaltation. Believers who experience persecution glorify God by showing themselves to be resigned to the will of God in a courageous manner. The three companions of Daniel demonstrated such fortitude when they were brought before the Babylonian emperor for their refusal to worship the image he had erected in Babylon (Dan. 3:8-18). In a respectful, but resolute manner they declared that they believed their God could deliver them from the fiery death that threatened them. The result of that event was that Nebuchadnezzar praised God and ordered all his subjects to do likewise (Dan. 3:28, 29).

**SUFFERING RIGHTLY AND WRONGLY**

1 Peter 4:15, 16

While there is honor in suffering for the cause of Christ, there is no honor in suffering justly for any wrongs that one might commit. To suffer as an evil-doer is to suffer rightly because such suffering is justified. To suffer as a Christian is to suffer wrongly because it is suffering that is undeserved.

**Suffering Rightly (verse 15).** In this verse, Peter listed some reasons someone might justly have to suffer. If anyone commits murder, he or she should suffer the appropriate penalty for such a horrible crime. The principle that was included in the Law of Moses regarding this matter is still valid. Anyone who takes another human life should lose his or her own life. The word *thief* is from *kleptes* and denotes the taking of what belongs to another person. Usually, the thievery of objects or goods is associated with this sin. However, it is also possible to steal someone’s good name, and even one’s identity, as many people have learned. The Greek word for *evildoer* is a general term which covers all kinds of sins. The word *busybody* describes a sin far more serious than gossiping or similar wrongs. It speaks of one who tries to foment (rouse) strife and cause divisions among people. In societies such as that of Peter’s day, believers are often falsely accused of crimes especially those mentioned in this verse. For that reason it is necessary that the followers of Christ always conduct themselves so that any false accusations would be readily apparent to be just that. However, anyone who is actually guilty of a crime, should fully expect to suffer the appropriate penalty.

**Suffering Wrongly (verse 16).** To suffer as a Christian is to suffer wrongly because no one deserves to be harmed or punished simply because of his or her identity with Christ. The word *Christian* appears only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28). Seemingly, the early Christians referred
Suffering as a Christian (1 Peter 4:16):
The term Christian suggested a certain level of persecution. Early in the church age the word Christian was a derisive term. The disciples of Christ (Acts 11:26) were considered divisive as well. Those who belonged to the household of Christ were seen as troublemakers and were even accused of having “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). The reputation of the early Christians was such that King Agrippa simply could not allow himself to submit to preaching of Paul and succumb to the conviction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 26:28). Christianity was considered a cult (“this sect”) in the Roman empire (Acts 28:22). In the days of Peter, if one was a Christian, one would have suffered. Christians were often grouped with the less desirables. Tacitus—a contemporary of the tyrannical Nero—thought of Christians as the “enemies of the human race” *(Tenney)*.


Christian: we are to suffer as one who has in their character and nature the qualities of Jesus the Messiah. Used to distinguish between the sons of Abraham and the followers of Jesus, this term sets us apart from the other religions and the world. We are expected to have the same attractive qualities in our lives that Jesus had in His. What a compliment to be referred to as a Christian. Word Study #5546.

to each other simply as disciples (Acts 1:15), believers (Acts 5:14) or people of this way (Acts 9:2; 22:4). Most likely, Christian was a title that was originally given by nonbelievers, possibly for derisive purposes. By the time Peter wrote this epistle, however, Christian had evidently come to be used and recognized widely as a term that aptly described the followers of Jesus Christ. Through the centuries the title Christian has become so popular, and so widely used, that many people who are not Christian in any sense of the word eagerly claim the designation. Anyone who is persecuted in any manner for his or her association with Christ or His cause should not be ashamed. The Greek word for ashamed basically means “disgraced.” Any believer who is justly punished for a crime suffers disgrace and the penalty for the wrongdoing. However, anyone who suffers as a Christian has no reason at all to feel any disgrace.

JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE OF GOD 1 Peter 4:17

A just and holy God cannot excuse, ignore or overlook sin. Sooner or later, in some manner or another, sin will be properly addressed by the Judge of all the earth. As far as the two principal groups of mankind are concerned—believers and unbelievers—divine judgment will first deal with those who belong to God.

Judgment at the House of God. The term, house of God, essentially refers to a church. (Compare 1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 6:10.) Since God unquestionably desires that each believer become a member of a church, it can be safely assumed that for some purposes the phrase, house of God, can be extended to include God’s desire for all believers becoming church members. The judgment mentioned by Peter in this passage is one such instance.
Judgment begins with believers in at least three respects. First, people who are saved should exercise self-judgment by examining their lives daily and confessing their sins to God. Moreover, believers are subject to the chastisement of God, especially when they refuse to exercise self-judgment. Finally, Christians will be judged for rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will be the first of the three major end-time judgments, with the other two judgments being the Judgment of Nations and the Great White Throne Judgment. Self-judgment is the most desirable, of course, because the exercise of such enables one to avoid the chastisement of God and assures him or her of receiving a full reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**Judgment on Those Who Disobey the Gospel.** To disobey the gospel is to refuse to trust Christ as Savior. One who does not accept Christ remains an unbeliever and is consequently under the condemnation of God. Unbelievers will be judged by God as surely as will those who have trusted Christ as Savior. In some instances unsaved people experience adverse consequences in their lives that can be directly attributed to their ungodliness. However, these are generally only the logical and natural results of a wicked life-style. The ultimate judgment that will befall those who disobey the gospel will occur at the Great White Throne Judgment when the unsaved of all times and places will appear before the righteous God (Rev. 20:11-15). This judgment will not be to see whether their good works are sufficient to permit them to avoid the lake of fire. Instead, the purpose of the Great White Throne Judgment will be to determine the degree of torment which unbelievers will have to suffer for eternity. There is no second chance for salvation after one experiences physical death.

**SUFFERING FOR THE WILL OF GOD**  
1 Peter 4:18, 19

Peter concluded in this passage his discussion of Christian suffering by emphasizing that all such suffering should be “according to the will of God” (verse 19) and not as a result of any wrongdoing by believers. Because we serve a just and holy God, we should have no hesitancy in committing ourselves fully to His will and purposes.

**Those Who Are Scarcely Saved (verse 18).** In the first part of this verse, Peter referred to some believers who will “scarcely be saved” (verse 18). What is meant by this statement has been widely discussed through the centuries. It should be emphasized that the expression, *scarcely be saved*, does not indicate that one has to do anything to earn or achieve salvation. What it means instead is that some saved people add nothing to their salvation in regard to rewards. (Compare 2 Peter 1:5-8.) Paul alluded to this same matter in 1 Corinthians 3:15 by his reference to those who will “be saved; yet so as by fire.” Those who earn no rewards for Christian service will be saved, but they will not receive any additional recognition. In that sense they are scarcely saved, and that they are saved so as by fire indicates that the Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal that in their lives as Christians nothing they have done survives the fires of judgment. It should be noted, even at the risk of repetition,
that neither Peter nor Paul taught that one has to do any kind or amount of works to be saved.

Those Who Are Not Saved (verse 18). The fact that the deeds and words of all believers are going to be judged by God should convince unsaved people that they too will face God in judgment. The answer to Peter’s question in the last part of this verse is that “the ungodly and the sinner” (verse 18) will appear before the Judge of all the earth and answer for what they did and said during their earthly lives. As noted earlier, this will occur at the Great White Throne Judgment, the purpose of which will be to determine the extent of one’s torment in the lake of fire. If believers are going to be judged for their works to ascertain the rewards they will receive, unbelievers cannot expect to escape the judgment of God. Every individual has an innate awareness of God. (Compare Romans 1:18-21.) Each person also is aware, to some degree at least, that at some time and in some manner he or she will have to give an accounting to God. Practically every civilization and culture has some concept of a final judgment, and, even though many of those ideas might be distorted somewhat, the element of truth exists in them.

Suffering for the Will of God (verse 19). In this verse, Peter returned to the matter of Christian suffering, which he described here as suffering “according to the will of God” (verse 19). The Greek term for according to is kата, which essentially means “by means of.” Note there are two aspects to the will of God. There is what God desires, which is reflected in His purposes, and what He permits, which is seen in what God allows to occur in everyday affairs. An example of what God specifically desires is noted in 2 Peter 3:9 where the Scripture teaches that He wants everyone to be saved. An example of what God permits, but does not specifically desire, is Christian suffering. God allows Christians to experience persecution because of the greater good that results from such suffering. Persecution has never been successful in deterring the spread of Christianity. Instead, it causes Christians to become even more resolved in their devotion to God and His cause. When the early churches were persecuted, believers were “scattered abroad [and] went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).
Commit: this word is translated commit the keeping. It means “to entrust or deposit.” Those who suffer are to understand that they are deposited into the will of God the Father. What better place could we be when in the midst of suffering than to know we are in the will of God? Look in Daniel 3 at the Hebrew children and the courage they had by depositing their care into the hands of God. Word Study #3908.

Committed to the Keeping of God (verse 19). In times of suffering, and under all other conditions as well, Christians should “commit the keeping of their souls to him [God] in well doing” (verse 19). Regardless of what might happen to a believer, he or she cannot do anything more beneficial or effective than to depend completely on God for whatever might be needed in any situation. The Greek word for commit the keeping of essentially denotes an entrusting of something to the care of another. While hanging on the cross, Jesus used the same term when He said, as He was ready to die, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). The word soul, as used by Peter in this instance, refers to one’s life. The term well doing refers to the believer’s conduct. (Compare Romans 2:7.) Peter’s reference to God as Creator underscores His omniscience and omnipotence. The One who created all things and declared what He had done to be good is certainly able to take care of believers during all their ordeals on earth, and, when their time comes to leave this earth, He will receive them unto Himself.

LIVING FOR CHRIST IN FAITH

1 Peter 4:12-19

Suffering is the lot of each person who has ever lived. The patriarch Job described one’s earthly life as being “full of trouble” (Job 14:1). In addition to having to endure the afflictions of the flesh, some people are persecuted for their association with the cause of Christ. Whatever the nature or cause of one’s afflictions, believers through the centuries have found a source of strength and solace in God. Faith in an all-loving, all-wise and all-powerful God gives assurance that God will care for believers throughout this life and into the life to come.

Manna

The Faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19): God is the Creator. He is also, by nature, faithful. God knew best the needs of His creation. God could be trusted by the Petrine disciples. He did not fail them. He delivered the believer amidst oppression and persecution. The first century Christian could trust God even more than he could trust all other early church advocates. When one committed his soul to Christ, regardless of what may have befallen him, he was going to be saved. The One who created the world and everything in it was still able to hold it all together (Col. 1:16, 17). God is a faithful Creator. He is faithful to His plan for humanity as well as to His purpose for the life of the believer.
In the closing chapter of this epistle, Peter gave particular directions to the elders, instructing them in how to behave themselves toward their flock. He also exhorted younger believers to be obedient and humble, and to cast all their cares on the One who always cares for them. In addition, the apostle urged all his readers to be watchful and vigilant against temptations and to be steadfast in the faith. In his concluding remarks, Peter gave a solemn doxology, mutual salutations and an apostolic benediction.

**THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS**

Peter singled out the elders of the churches to whom he wrote and charged them with the responsibility of feeding the members of their congregations and generally conducting themselves appropriately among them. These instructions would be especially helpful in times of persecution and adversity.

**The Office of Elder (verse 1).** In the early churches there were men who served as elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The Greek word for elder is presbuteros, which primarily denotes someone who has attained an advanced age. The Jews had elders who served in leadership positions. (Compare Numbers 11:16, 17.) The seventy elders who assisted Moses are considered by many scholars to be the basis for what later came to be known as the Sanhedrin Court. When the church was established, the office of elder was incorporated into it. Many religious groups use the title elder to designate some position in their ecclesiastical structure. However, the elders in the churches of the apostolic era were men who served as pastors of the churches. Peter regarded himself as simply an elder. The implication of this term is that one who serves as an elder in a church is a man who has sufficient age and experience to exercise sound judgment and the maturity to provide good leadership. The chronological age is not as important as the man’s attitude and demeanor.

**Elders:** literally the aged ones, but more to the point, those in position of leadership who have been set aside to provide counsel and wisdom by the congregation. We use the term as a synonym for pastor. The elder or elders were the pastors of the churches in their roles and functions as set forth in the Scripture. We look to them for spiritual wisdom and guidance. Word Study #4245.
The Sufferings and Glory of Christ (verse 1). In the last part of this verse, Peter mentioned that he not only was an elder, but he was also “a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and . . . a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (verse 1). The reference to the sufferings of Christ spoke of His crucifixion. In the four gospels nothing is said of Peter’s presence at the crucifixion. (Compare John 19:25-27.) However, Peter must have observed at least some of the proceedings of the crucifixion from a distance; otherwise, he could not have claimed to have been a witness to Christ’s sufferings. The glory of which Peter partook occurred at the transfiguration of Christ. Although Peter and the other disciples who were privileged to witness that event were not glorified as was Christ, they nonetheless were engulfed by the bright cloud that overshadowed them (Matt. 17:1-5). The dazzling appearance of Christ, along with Moses and Elijah, on that occasion was a preview of the glorified bodies that will emerge from the graves in the resurrection of believers.

Manna

Feed the Flock of God (1 Peter 5:2): The primary function of the shepherd was to feed the flock. Was he to lead? Yes. Was he to protect? Surely. Was he to provide? Absolutely. However, his top priority was to feed. Perhaps this was why Paul demanded that the pastor be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). When applied to the modern-day shepherd, the idea was to first teach the flock the Word of God, and, second, to tend to the flock of God. These duties of the shepherd included but were not limited to (1) leading the sheep to green pastures and still waters, (2) seeking and saving the sheep that were lost, (3) restoring the sheep to the fold that had strayed, protecting (at all costs) the sheep from wild animals, bandits, inclement weather and so forth, rewarding the sheep for obedience and faithfulness and (4) keeping the sheep separated from the goats.

Taking the Oversight (1 Peter 5:2): As the elder was to “feed the flock of God” (verse 2) thus making him, effectively, a shepherd, so was he commissioned in “taking the oversight” (verse 2) thus making him, for all practical purposes, a bishop—epitomizing the Greek word from which it was derived. Parallels or comparisons were noted regularly in the early church. In Acts 20:28, Luke recorded Paul’s words of instruction to the elders of Ephesus commanding them, as overseers, to “feed the church of God.” Earlier in 1 Peter, the comparison was much more bold and direct and specific. “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). The bishop was to balance his motives (2 Cor. 5:14) against methods and he was to equalize his compassion against his compulsion.

The Duties of Elders (verse 2). Two essential duties of elders of churches are mentioned in the first part of this verse. Those responsibilities are to feed the members of the congregation and exercise oversight over the church. The Greek word for feed denotes tending to, or caring for, livestock, especially sheep, goats or cattle. The same term appears in John 21:16 and Acts 20:28, and a related word is
translated pastor in Ephesians 4:11. Flock refers to a church or congregation. Elders are to feed their people with the Word of God. The expression, *which is among you*, indicates that a flock or church is entrusted to an elder’s care. The Greek word for oversight is from the same basic term as episcopal, which is also the basis for bishop. The fact that the elders were the bishops, or pastors, of local congregations is clearly seen in Acts 20:28, in which the elders of the church at Ephesus were specifically designated as overseers who were “to feed the church of God.” Also noteworthy is the statement that the Holy Spirit had put the elders in the office which they held.

**The Motivation for Elders (verse 2).** Elders are called by God to the positions which they hold. However, they are to answer that call and fulfill it for the right reason. In the last part of this verse, Peter mentioned some positive and negative motivations for elders. They are not to serve “by constraint” (verse 2). A man should not feel obligated to serve as an elder, but he should assume his responsibility willingly. In fact, he should desire, or eagerly want to do, the work to which God has called him. (Compare 1 Timothy 3:1.) Moreover, no man should serve for filthy lucre. The Greek word for filthy lucre primarily means “shameful gain.” Men who serve as elders merely to be recompensed do so for shameful gain, as do also those who serve only for the power or prestige their position might give. Instead of serving for filthy lucre, elders should serve “of a ready mind” (1 Peter 5:2). The Greek word for this phrase denotes a willingness—and even an eagerness—to serve. (Compare Romans 1:15.)

**THE REWARD FOR ELDERS**

In several places the Bible teaches that faithful Christian service will be rewarded by God. Some of the rewards that will be given are designated as a crown of some kind or another. For elders who faithfully perform their responsibilities there is the crown of glory which will be given by the Chief Shepherd.

**The Proper Attitude for Service (verse 3).** Even though elders have a measure of spiritual authority, they are not to abuse it. In taking the oversight of a congregation, elders must not act as if they are “lords over God’s heritage” (verse 3), but they are to serve instead as proper examples to the flock.

Note that a church was described by Peter as “God’s heritage” (verse 3). The Greek word for heritage basically means “that which is determined by lot.” It alludes to the manner in which the land of Canaan was allotted by God among the tribes of Israel after Joshua had led them to victory over the inhabitants of the land (Joshua 14:1-3). The land received by each tribe was to be held permanently by that tribe as an inheritance given by God. Similarly, an elder is placed in a church by
God Himself. The congregation is God’s heritage; it does not belong to the elder or to any other member of the church. Elders are to oversee their charge by ministering to the people in their congregation.

**The Appearance of the Chief Shepherd (verse 4).** The term *Chief Shepherd* refers to Christ. As the Chief Shepherd, He is over all His churches, and the elders are undershepherds who must learn how to be a shepherd from Him. The elders are also accountable to Christ for the manner in which they fulfill their responsibilities. This accountability implies a judgment, and the judgment of the elders will undoubtedly occur as part of the Judgment Seat of Christ when the service and conduct of all believers will be evaluated (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12-15). The Greek word for *shall appear* refers to the second coming of Christ (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2). The appearance, or manifestation, of Christ will occur when He assumes His rightful place as the King of kings and Lord of lords and establishes His millennial kingdom. The rewards that were assessed at the Judgment Seat of Christ will become effective as glorified believers rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

**The Crown of Glory (verse 4).**

The Scriptures mention several rewards that will be given to believers for their faithful service to God. Some of these rewards are designated as crowns. The following rewards and crowns are specifically indicated in the Bible: (1) a prophet’s reward (Matt. 10:41), (2) a righteous man’s reward (Matt. 10:41), (3) the crown of rejoicing, sometimes called the soul-winner’s crown (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19), (4) the crown of righteousness, awarded for diligent anticipation of Christ’s return (2 Tim. 4:8), (5) the crown of life, given to those who endure persecution (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10) and (6) the crown of glory, earned by ministers for their faithful service (1 Peter 5:4). Also mentioned is the incorruptible crown, which some people consider a separate reward, but others regard as being descriptive of the nature of all the crowns (1 Cor. 9:25). The crown of glory will be given to those who faithfully nurture the flock entrusted to them.

**SUBMISSION AND HUMILITY**

Peter addressed in this passage all the members of the churches, especially the younger people. Proper submission and a humble spirit toward all
groups and individuals will promote a harmonious spirit in each congregation. Believers need to allow God to honor and exalt them in His own time and way.

**An Exhortation to Young People (verse 5).** The word *likewise* is a connecting term; however, scholars are not in agreement as to what is connected by it. Most likely, this word refers to verse 3 and the apostle’s admonition for the elders to serve as proper examples to their flocks. In the same manner young people are to act appropriately and be submissive to the spiritual authority of their pastors. While the elders are not to act as lords over the congregations, younger people are not to despise their elders and act as if they amount to nothing. The Greek term for *submit* literally means “to place under,” and was commonly used to denote an acknowledgment of proper authority, such as that of a soldier submitting to a superior officer. While all church members should recognize the authority given to elders, that Peter specifically directed this exhortation to the younger people suggests that they might be less inclined than older people to accept the spiritual authority of the elders.

**An Exhortation to Everyone (verse 5).** Not only are young people to be submissive to their pastors, but all church members are to be subject to one another. The Greek word for *subject* is the same as for *submit* in the first part of this verse. The way in which the members of a congregation can be in submission to one another is if each is “clothed with humility” (verse 5). The expression *be clothed with* is from a term which refers to an article of clothing that is tied on, such as an apron or a piece of clothing a servant or manual worker would wear. This is probably what Jesus did the night He washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:4) and what Peter later did when he girded his fisher’s coat about him (John 21:7). Peter quite possibly thought about those incidents when he wrote these words in this epistle. Jesus provided the supreme example of humility when He washed the feet of the disciples, and Peter later tied on his fisher’s coat because he did not want Christ to see him inaccurately dressed. The term for *humility* essentially means “lowliness of mind.”

**Humbled and Exalted (verse 6).** Because God resists the proud and favors the humble with grace (verse 5), believers should choose to be blessed
with His favor rather than judged with His chastisement. Genuine humility is a difficult trait to define or describe; however, it is a choice one can make by submitting to the will of God. To humble oneself under God is to recognize Him for who and what He is and to acknowledge oneself for who and what He or she is. The expression, mighty hand of God, speaks of His omnipotence. Some people might feel as if a humble attitude could cause others to take advantage of them and even mistreat them. However, one who is truly humble is yielded fully to God, and such an one can fully trust God always to take care of him or her. Humility will certainly be followed by exaltation. Exaltation is God's responsibility, however. In His own time and way, He will see that each believer who has humbled himself or herself is properly recognized and rewarded.

God's Care for Believers (verse 7). In this verse, Peter reiterated that believers can fully trust God to take care of them when they humble themselves under His “mighty hand” (verse 6). The participle casting is from a Greek word which denotes deliberate, determined action. The same basic term is used to denote people being “cast down,” or laid at the feet of Jesus for healing (Matt. 15:30) and Judas’ action when He “cast down” the thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 27:5). The Greek word for care essentially means “that which distracts.” The root term was used by Jesus in His rebuke to Martha for being “careful [distracted] and troubled about many things” (Luke 10:41), and by Paul when he exhorted his readers to “be careful for nothing [do not be distracted by anything]” (Phil. 4:6). The verb careth is from a word which basically means “to be concerned for one's well-being.” The play on the words care and careth that seem so obvious in English is not as apparent in the Greek text. However, the thought certainly is there.

RESIST THE DEVIL

1 Peter 5:8, 9

After giving assurance of God's care for believers, Peter mentioned why such care is necessary. The devil is a formidable adversary for any and every believer. He is never satisfied, or satiated, but keeps looking for more and more victims until he has devoured everyone whom he can ensnare.

The Believer’s Adversary (verse 8). Peter’s exhortation at the beginning of this verse is similar to what he had stated earlier (1 Peter 4:7). The Greek terms used in both instances are practically synonymous, as sober in 1 Peter 5:8 and watch in 1 Peter 4:7 are from the same word, while be vigilant is from a word that basically means “be alert.” Believers must constantly be on the watch for satanic opposition. Adversary is from a legal term and denotes an opponent in a legal proceeding. This adversary is gener-
ally designated in the Scriptures by one of two names: the devil and Satan. The Greek word for devil is diabolos. Dia, a preposition, means “through,” and bolos is from the verb ballo which means “to cast” or “to throw.” Thus, diabolos essentially means “one who thrusts through” (Note: In 2 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 2:3 diabolos is translated false accusers.) The word Satan is actually a carryover from the Hebrew and denotes the general idea of an enemy or an opponent (Zech. 3:1, 2).

**The Devil’s Threat (verse 8).** Satan poses a real threat to believers, as can be seen in Peter’s description that he is “a roaring lion” (verse 8). For centuries lions have been widely known and feared as ferocious beasts who live by killing other animals. Because they are natural killers, their only reason to attack is to kill. Similarly, Satan causes wanton destruction whenever he has the opportunity to do so. The term walketh about indicates constant, repetitive activity. The devil is constantly going about on the earth “seeking whom he may [that is, might be able to] devour” (verse 8). One should not conclude from this that the devil is able to cause a believer to lose his or her salvation. Despite his awesome power, Satan cannot get the soul of a Christian. There are some things about believers which he can devour, however. Perhaps the most critical of these matters is that the devil can take our influence and testimony. He can also take one’s time, money and good name.

**The Believer’s Resistance (verse 9).** Although the devil is a formidable foe, believers are directed to “resist [him] steadfast in the faith” (verse 9). Even though Satan might cause others to attack Christians with falsehoods, and even physical persecution, believers are to stand firmly against him and all his forces. This can be an extremely difficult thing to do, and one can do it only by living close to God each day and by being in His Word consistently. The term the faith, as used here, refers to the system of doctrines and practices that are set forth in the Scriptures for believers to follow. A similar exhortation is found in James 4:7, with the assurance that, if Satan is resisted, he will leave the believer alone, at least for a while. This is generally true; however, it should be understood that there have been times when believers have had to resist “unto blood” (Heb. 12:4), and have even lost their lives in doing so. The degree to which one
can resist the devil is directly related to his or her vigilance (1 Peter 5:8).

**The Prevalence of the Threat (verse 9).** Unfortunately, the threat of satanic persecution against believers is constant and universal. Believers of all times and places are subjected to the adversities which confronted the recipients of Peter’s epistle. There have been times, such as the Dark Ages, and there are places, such as in many Muslim-dominated countries, when Christians have been more likely to be persecuted. When such afflictions occur, however, no one should regard it as if it is a new experience that has to be endured. The first martyr for his faith was Abel, who lived in the earliest time of human existence on the earth. Modern day believers in the United States have little cause to fear physical persecution. However, various forms of indirect persecution are often inflicted, ranging from social ostracism to legal restrictions. Regardless of the nature or degree of the threat, the response should be the same everywhere—resist the devil steadfastly in the faith.

**THE DIVINE GLORY** 1 Peter 5:10, 11

Persecution can be frustrating and even excruciating, but victory is certain. The ultimate experience of such victory will be to share in the divine glory. The eternal glory to which believers are called will not be realized, however, until they have been made complete and fully settled by the God of all grace.

**Called unto Glory (verse 10).** Peter described in the opening phrase in this verse God as “the God of all grace” (verse 10). He is the source of all grace, as the Scriptures clearly indicate. Salvation in its entirety, from beginning to end, is completely dependent on the grace of God. *Grace* has been defined as “the unmerited love and favor of God toward mankind.” Perhaps the best scriptural description of *grace* is seen in Titus 3:4-7. The God of all grace has called believers “unto his eternal glory” (1 Peter 5:10). Regardless of what one might have to experience or endure during the earthly life, he or she can look forward to a glorious eternity. This expectation will be realized in part by the glorified body which believers will receive in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:43). Beyond that, however, is that faithful Christian service will be acknowledged with appropriate rewards. The salvation that ultimately leads to glory is made available through one’s faith in Christ as Savior.

**Completed and Established (verse 10).** The eternal glory to which believers are called will be not be realized during this life, but will occur “after that ye have suffered a while” (verse 10). This expression refers to the time when all those who have been saved will have been resurrected with glorified bodies. That will be when believers fully and finally will have been made per-
fect, established, strengthened and settled. However, even in this life, we can experience to some degree these matters of being perfected, established, strengthened and settled. To be perfected is to be brought to maturity or fulfillment. The Greek word for *stablish* essentially means “to make firm” or “to confirm.” *Strengthen* is from a term which is basically synonymous with the word for *stablish*. The term for *settle* is related to the laying of a foundation. Persecution and other adversities of one’s earthly life can be used by God to promote the qualities Peter mentioned in the last part of this verse, thus enabling the believer to have a settled and peaceable attitude with which he or she can serve and worship God effectively.

**Glory and Dominion Forever (verse 11).** This verse is a doxology in which Peter ascribed to God “glory and dominion for ever and ever” (verse 11). Glory is intrinsic with God. When Isaiah received his vision of divine glory, he saw the Temple filled with God’s glory and heard the seraphim proclaiming, “the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3). Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin Court, acclaimed Jehovah as “The God of glory” (Acts 7:2). Not only is God all-glorious in all that He is, but He is also all-powerful in all that He does. The Greek word for *dominion* is *kratos*, which basically means “might, power or strength.” As all authority in Heaven and earth ultimately comes from God, so is He the primal source of all power. Peter concluded his doxology with *Amen*. This word, which is the same in every language, basically stresses the truth and validity of a saying or statement. When used after a declaration or at the close of a prayer, the term essentially means “so be it.”

**THE CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In closing this epistle Peter referred to two of his associates in the ministry and to the church from which he wrote this letter. Moreover, the apostle encouraged his readers to greet one another with “a kiss of charity” (verse 14), after which he wished for them the blessing of the peace that comes through one’s relationship with Christ.

**Silvanus, a Faithful Brother (verse 12).** The name *Silvanus* is a variant of *Silas*, by which he probably is better known to most students of the Scriptures. Luke, a Gentile, used the shorter form of the name in writing the book of Acts. (Compare Acts 15:22, 32-34, 39-41.) Paul and Peter, both of whom were Jews, used the longer version. (Compare 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.) Silas, along with his companion, Judas, was described by Luke as among the “chief men among the brethren” in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:22). As an associate with Paul in Philippi, Silas was imprisoned and beaten severely (Acts 16:19-25). Peter stated that he had written this epistle by (Greek, *dia*, meaning “by means of”) Silvanus. Some scholars believe Silvanus also delivered this epistle to the churches since he did not include any greeting from himself to the recipients, whereas, a greeting from Marcus was specifically included (1 Peter 5:13). The expression, *as I suppose*, refers to Peter’s estimate of Silvanus. Peter supposed—or considered—him to be a faithful brother. Peter also regarded this epistle as a brief one—“I have written briefly” (verse 12).
Stand in the Grace of God (verse 12). In the last part of this verse the apostle declared the overall theme of this epistle to be “the true grace of God wherein ye stand” (verse 12). Peter acknowledged in this statement that believers serve God through the grace of God, as can be seen that the term wherein refers to the grace of God. In Romans 5:2, Paul wrote that we stand before God in grace, meaning that we are saved by grace. Moreover, the unmerited favor of God not only makes it possible for sinners to be saved, but also for believers to serve Him. Thus, we also serve God by grace. A Christian is not to live under the Law but is to live under grace (Rom. 6:14). Paul exhorted the Galatian churches to serve God through the same means by which they had been saved (Gal. 3:1-3). Divine grace enables believers to stand firmly for the Lord and His cause in the hour of trial without becoming distracted by temptations or discouraged by suffering and persecution.

The Church at Babylon (verse 13). Peter’s reference in the opening statement of this verse to “the church that is at Babylon” (verse 13) has perplexed students of the Bible for centuries. Many people have taught that this designation is figurative, and that Peter actually meant the church at Rome. Others have suggested that he used Babylon as a symbol for Jerusalem. Both cities were strongholds for religious error in Peter’s time, with Rome being the center of paganism and Jerusalem the center of Judaism. However, there is no valid reason to conclude that Babylon denoted anything. In the book of Revelation John’s use of Babylon in chapters 17 and 18 is obviously symbolic, but nowhere else in the Epistle of 1 Peter is there any such usage of symbolism. Peter certainly used figurative language, such as comparing the devil to “a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8) and the persecution of believers as a “fiery trial” (1 Peter 4:12), but he did not cite a specific lion or a particular fire. This writer believes that a church was formed in Babylon, probably begun by Jewish Christians, and Peter, accompanied by Silvanus and Marcus, was making an apostolic visit to that congregation.

Marcus, Another Faithful Brother (verse 13). The designation Marcus is widely held to refer to John Mark—or Mark, as he is more commonly known. Mark seemingly was from a fairly well-to-do family in Jerusalem whose house was large enough to accommodate prayer meetings and possibly other gatherings of that first church (Acts 12:12). Mark was related to Barnabas, who became one of the leaders in the church in Jerusalem and later a leader in the church at Antioch (Colossians 4:10; compare Acts 12:25.) Most likely, the relationship between Mark and Barnabas was the primary reason he was selected to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 13). Later, Mark worked with Barnabas (Acts 15:36-39), and also became associated with Peter. Eventually, Paul was reconciled with Mark (2 Tim. 4:9-11), and God used him to write the second gospel.

The Kiss of Charity (verse 14). After sending greetings from Marcus, his missionary associate, and the church from which this epistle was sent, Peter encouraged his readers to greet one another with “a kiss of charity” (verse 14). The Greek word for charity is agape, which is descriptive of divine love, or love
that is based on principle and not merely on feelings or emotion. In the culture of Peter's time, it was customary for people to greet one another with a kiss. Presently, especially in western societies, many people are not comfortable with social kissing. Handshakes are more generally acceptable. Regardless of which form of greeting is preferred, the purpose is to promote spiritual fellowship and affection. Although Paul used the term *holy kiss* (1 Thess. 5:26) and Peter called it *the kiss of charity*, many believers in today's churches might prefer to exchange sanctified handshakes with one another.

**Peace to All (verse 14).** In the closing words of this epistle, Peter expressed the desire that peace would be with all the recipients of his epistle, that is “all that are in Christ Jesus” (verse 14). At the beginning of this letter Peter wanted grace and peace to be multiplied for his readers. (Review comments on 1 Peter 1:2, Lesson 1.) In view of all the difficulties and uncertainties that awaited the believers in the regions addressed by Peter, the peace of God in their hearts and minds would certainly be a wonderful blessing, and such a benediction was certainly in order. The peace of God is far greater than all the troubles and distresses that can be bought to bear by the weaknesses of the flesh, the opposition of the world, any threats from evil men and harassment from the devil. Peter concluded with another *amen*, a clear indication of his sincerity and expectations regarding his beloved readers.

**LIVING FOR CHRIST IN HUMILITY**

In the final chapter of this epistle, Peter had a special word for the elders of the churches. They were to be diligent, but gentle undershepherds over the flocks that had been divinely placed under their care. The apostle exhorted his readers as a whole to clothe themselves with humility toward one another and toward God who would exalt them at the proper time. Moreover, they were to resist Satan, their great adversary, in the sure knowledge that their calling to God's eternal glory in Christ will be realized.
Some Bible scholars have called the Epistle of 2 Peter one of the most neglected books of the New Testament because it is one which few Christians can acknowledge having read and fewer still have studied to any extent. In this passage, Peter reminded his readers of the blessings that had been bestowed upon them through the righteousness of God. He also reminded them of the importance of growing in grace and the possibility of entering “abundantly into the everlasting kingdom” (2 Peter 1:11).

THE APOSTOLIC GREETING

2 Peter 1:1, 2

This greeting is consistent with the literary custom and style of Peter’s day. Aside from that, however, is the fact that, what Peter said about himself and the recipients of this epistle was important and pertinent to the purpose for his letter.

A Servant and an Apostle (verse 1). Simon Peter was the name by which Peter was best known by the Jewish believers. Simon was the Greek form of Simeon, a name that came from the second of Jacob’s sons (Gen. 29:33). Note that Peter did not include the name Simon in his greeting in his first epistle. Peter was the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic Cephas, both of which mean “rock” or “stone.” (Compare John 1:42.) It should be emphasized that Peter is from petros, while the rock upon which Jesus is building His church is from petra, a term which denotes a huge, massive rock as opposed to a smaller rock, petros. (Compare a related term in Matthew 13:5, 20; Mark 4:5, 16.) Peter also designated himself as a servant (literally, slave) and an apostle (literally, “one who is sent”) of Jesus Christ. Like Paul and others of his time, Peter was not his own man, but he belonged to Christ and lived only to do His will. He had been redeemed from the slave market of sin by “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19). He considered himself to be obligated to the One who had purchased his spiritual freedom. He became an apostle by divine selection (Luke 6:13).

Like Precious Faith (verse 1). Peter sent this epistle “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us” (verse 1). In 2 Peter 3:1, it is implied that Peter wrote “this second epistle” to the same people as the previous letter, which would have been the members of churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. (Review comments on 1 Peter 1:1, in Lesson 1.)
The Greek word for obtained basically means “received.” (Compare Acts 1:17.) The expression, like precious faith, essentially means “a faith of the same kind as ours.” The faith to which Peter referred is saving faith. Each believer is saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, saving faith is faith of the same kind for each individual, whether rich or poor, young or old, Jew or Gentile, educated or unlearned. This faith is received “through the righteousness of God and . . . Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). The Greek word for through is en, which is basically the equivalent of the English preposition in. The term righteousness of God speaks of His nature and also His actions. He does what is right because He is right in every regard. Because of who God is and what He does, one can trust Him fully to be true to all His promises. Since this is so, the faith that one exercises by trusting Christ as Savior is said to be from God Himself.

Grace and Peace Multiplied (verse 2). As he did in his first epistle, Peter wished for his readers that grace and peace would be multiplied for them. (Review comments on 1 Peter 1:2, Lesson 1.) However, the apostle added something here, as he stated that the grace and peace would be “through (Greek, en) the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (verse 2). The knowledge one has of God and of Jesus provides the grace and peace that are under consideration in this verse. As one learns more about the person and purposes of God, he or she becomes increasingly aware of the divine grace by which one serves (compare 2 Corinthians 12:9) and the peace of God which calms one’s heart and sustains the mind. (Compare Philippians 4:7.) The Greek word for knowledge gives a good insight into this matter. The term used here is epignosis, which could be interpreted as knowledge that is constantly progressing toward what one seeks to know. Gnosis is the general word for knowledge, and the preposition epi intensifies the word to which it is attached. Ideally, one’s knowledge of God, His salvation and the service which is to be rendered for Him should steadily increase day by day.

THE DIVINE POWER 2 Peter 1:3

The all-powerful God is extremely involved with the daily lives of believers. Through His omnipotence God has given us everything necessary for eternal life and piety. When we comprehend all that we can do and become because of His divine power, we will readily accept His call to glory and virtue.

Things Pertaining to Life and Godliness. The phrase according as is from hos, a term that generally is simply rendered as. The expression divine power speaks of the ability of God to do whatever He chooses to do. Power is from dunamis, a Greek term commonly used to denote strength, force or abil-
The English words dynamite, dynamo, dynamic and related terms are from dynamis. Grace and peace can be multiplied to believers regardless of their situation or circumstances because divine power provides them with “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” The word life in this instance refers to spiritual life and all that is involved with it. It includes what the apostle John meant by his reference to the life which Jesus gives and the more abundant life that is possible because of that gift of life (John 10:10). The word godliness is from eusebeia, which essentially means “piety.” The term is often associated with worship. As used by Peter on this occasion it has the sense of a godly life. Because of the power of God, believers experience the new birth, through which they have spiritual life and by which they can live a victorious, overcoming life. The life and godliness that are available through divine power assure believers that God is with them at all times.

**Called to Glory and Virtue.** Because of divine power, we have all that we need to live for God and also to live like Him. It is impossible for any believer to live through the energies of the flesh the kind of life God wants him or her to live. The Greek word for knowledge is epignosis, which was noted in verse 2 as knowledge that is steadily increasing and improving. As one continues to learn more about God, he or she wants to become more like Him. This is the “called” that is mentioned in this verse. The preposition to is from dia, which basically means “by” or “with.” Glory speaks of the splendor of God and that He is worthy of praise. The word virtue is from a term which essentially means “excellence.” The exceeding glory and excellence of God, which are part of His innate nature, lead believers to desire glory and excellence in their own lives. Thus, God calls us by His own glory and virtue to live in such a manner as to exhibit glory and virtue in our own lives. The Bible has numer-
ous examples of men and women—such as Abraham, Samuel and Daniel, along with Hannah, Eunice and Lois—whose lives were characterized by the glory and virtue which they sought to emulate as they worshiped and served the true God and witnessed for Him.

**EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES**  
2 Peter 1:4

Peter began this epistle by referring to “like precious faith” (verse 1). Here he mentions that “exceeding great and precious promises” (verse 4) have been given to believers. Through these promises, we can demonstrate in our daily lives the divine nature we have received and the fact we can be delivered from the defilement of worldly lusts.

**Receiving the Promises.** The term *whereby* at the beginning of this verse essentially means “by which,” and refers to the “glory and virtue” mentioned at the close of verse 3. By means of the divine glory and virtue, believers are given “exceeding great and precious promises” (verse 4). The term *exceeding great* is from *megistos*, which denotes greatness that cannot be measured or comprehended. A related word is rendered *exceeding greatness* in Ephesians 1:19. The Greek word for *precious* essentially indicates honor, from which comes such concepts as value and worth. The promises to which Peter referred are of such great worth that their value cannot be determined. What those promises are is not indicated. However, it can be safely assumed that Peter had in mind the promises involved in the manner in which God helps believers to become more like Christ in their daily lives. Five things have been mentioned by Peter thus far on which the exceeding great and precious promises are based—divine grace, peace, knowledge, power and calling.

**Partaking of the Divine Nature.** The pronoun *these* refers to the promises mentioned in the first part of this verse. *Partakers* is from the same Greek word as in 1 Peter 5:1, and is from a related term that appears in 1 Peter 4:13. (Review comments on this verse in Lesson 8.) We partake of the divine nature through our experience of the new birth. Because of salvation, believers have
a dual nature. We continue to have the fleshly nature which we received through the physical birth, but we also have the spiritual, or divine nature. The spiritual nature is the part of the believer that grows in grace and in the likeness of Christ. The fleshly nature resists such development, however, and thus a warfare is waged within the mind of each believer. The spirit and the flesh are the combatants. Sometimes a believer will yield to the temptation to please the flesh, while at other times he or she will be able to resist such temptations. This ongoing conflict was addressed by Paul in Romans 7, especially in verses 15-25. Even though the inward man wants to please God, the flesh often prevails.

**Escaping the Corruption of the World.** By becoming increasingly more like Christ in one’s daily life, the believer will escape “the corruption that is in the world” (2 Peter 1:4). The key to such a victory is to partake more and more of the divine nature by yielding to the Spirit and resisting the temptations of the flesh. The Greek verb for having escaped literally means “to flee away from.” Corruption is from a term which denotes rottenness, destruction and even perdition. Note that the corruption about which Peter warned is in, that is in connection with, the world. The corruption of the world is the consequence of one’s yielding to the temptation to sin. Once again, the apostle reminded his readers of the conflict each believer experiences constantly, with the fleshly nature wanting one to indulge in sin, while the spiritual nature encourages the individual to resist the temptation. The world and all that it has to offer will soon pass away (1 John 2:17). However, what is offered by God will endure for all time and into eternity.

**GIVING ALL DILIGENCE**

Because of all that God has done for believers, we should want to have a positive testimony for Him in our daily lives. For this to be possible, one must add some things to his or her salvation. Salvation is the beginning point, but the most effective testimony also includes virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity.

**Giving All Diligence (verse 5).** Christian growth and development do not occur accidently or coincidentally. Following the new birth experience, one must give attention to the manner in which he or she pursues the daily Christian life. This is readily apparent in the phrase and beside this. The Greek words for this expression essentially mean “and this thing also.” Because believers have received such wonderful promises and are partakers of the divine nature and can escape the corruption that results from yielding to worldly lusts, they can—and should—become increasingly more like Christ in their daily lives. This is not something that just happens, but it results from “giving all diligence” (1 Peter 1:5). The Greek word for diligence is spoude, which basically refers to doing something speedily. However, this term also conveys the idea of fervent zeal, and that appears to be what Peter intended with the exhortation of this verse. If one is zealous in an undertaking, he or she must be focused intently on the matter. Accordingly, Peter wanted his readers to be fully committed to what they should do to realize the conditions mentioned in verse 4.
Faith, Virtue and Knowledge (verse 5). If believers are to be what God wants them to be, there are some things that must be added. The Greek term for add essentially means “to furnish abundantly.”

Faith. Peter’s reference to faith speaks of one’s salvation, which is received by faith in Christ as Savior. This is the base or foundation on which the seven qualities mentioned in this verse are to be added. Salvation cannot be earned or achieved. It is the foundation which can be laid only by Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11). Anyone who tries to build on an inadequate foundation will certainly fail. (Compare Matthew 7:26, 27.)

Virtue. This is the first quality mentioned by Peter. Virtue is from a term which primarily means “excellence” and especially conveys the idea of surpassing goodness or merit. Believers have been made good through salvation, and they should be good because of the salvation which they have received.

Knowledge. For one to use what God provides, he or she needs knowledge. The Greek word for knowledge suggests more than an awareness of something but an understanding or perception as well. Believers need to know God’s will and how they should respond to the divine will.

Temperance, Patience and Godliness (verse 6). To one’s faith, virtue and knowledge should be added the matters of temperance, patience and godliness.

Temperance. This term is generally associated with restraint regarding alcohol abuse. However, the implication is much broader. Believers are to be temperate in all areas of life. Self-restraint and self-control are necessary if one is to be temperate. However, to maintain self-restraint and exercise self-control most effectively, one must be under the complete control of God.

Patience. This word is from a Greek term which literally means “remaining under.” With the help of God, believers can patiently endure, without retreating or reacting improperly, the most difficult of situations and circumstances. Even in the face of persecution, one can continue to be true to God, His Word and His people.

Godliness. This matter was previously noted in verse 3. Preachers and teachers have sometimes defined godliness as “God-likeness.” While this is certainly correct, the full sense of this word goes deeper still. The Greek term conveys the idea of a piety that causes people to think of God. One’s God-likeness is the result of his or her being God-minded.

Brotherly Kindness and Charity (verse 7). The final qualities that a believer should add to his or her faith are those which involve our relationships with other people.

Brotherly kindness. The Greek word for this term is philadelphia, which literally means “brotherly love.” God loves everyone and Christians likewise are to love everyone, but God has a special love for His children and so should we. Believers constitute a unique family, and these ties should be evident by
brotherly love. The apostle Paul gave a practical exhortation regarding the implications of *agape* and *philadelphia* in Galatians 6:10, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men [because of *agape*], especially unto them who are of the household of faith [because of *philadelphia*].”

**Charity.** This word is from *agape*, the love of intelligence which is based on principle or purpose. This is often described as divine love, and indeed it is through *agape* that God deals with the world and all those who are of the world. As believers, we too are to have *agape* love toward the world and its people. This love has compassion on the sinner without condoning the sin. The capstone of the qualities which are to be added by Christians, *agape*, affects our relationship with believers and unbelievers as well. (Compare James 5:20; 1 Peter 4:8).

**EFFECTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE**  
2 Peter 1:8, 9

Peter explained in these verses the reason for the exhortation given in verses 5-7. God wants believers to be effective and productive in their Christian service and testimony. One who lacks the things which are to be added to his or her faith is not useful to the cause of Christ, and he or she certainly is not a happy Christian.

**Neither Barren nor Unfruitful (verse 8).** The term these things refers to the seven matters addressed in verses 5-7. *Abound* is from a word which denotes intensity, thus indicating an overabundance. A believer who has added virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love and charity to his or her salvation will vividly demonstrate these qualities in daily living. The Greek word for *barren* is *argos*, which basically means “not working” and conveys the sense of idleness. *Unfruitful* denotes the condition of being nonproductive. To be unfruitful, or nonproductive, is the consequence of being idle. Believers who are not actively serving God do not bear any fruit for Him. On the other hand, however, those who have added the things mentioned in verses 5-7 will be actively involved in all that God wants them to do, and such actions will result in the bearing of “fruit,” “more fruit” and even “much fruit” for the Lord and His cause. (See John 15:1-8.) The expression, *in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, does not refer to knowledge as much about Christ as to the knowledge which one receives from Him as a result of his or her Christian growth.

**Spiritual Blindness (verse 9).** As in verse 8, the term, these things, points back to the qualities mentioned in verses 5-7. Any believer who has not added these things is described as being “blind” and unable to “see afar off” (verse 9). Scriptural references to blindness indicate total blindness, that is one who is described in the Bible as being blind has no sight in either eye. The blindness mentioned in this verse is spiritual blindness. The expression, *cannot see afar*
Forgotten He Was Purged (2 Peter 1:9): The possibility, not the probability, existed that one might suffer from spiritual amnesia. The believer who failed to employ spiritual virtues would have had no confidence regarding his profession of faith. The believer may have possessed the benefits of salvation as noted in verses 3, 4 but simply did not boast of the great qualities of salvation (verses 5-7), thus, was bewildered by doubt and fear. This backslider would have soon forgotten the intricacy and intimacy of a relationship with Jesus Christ. His tendencies would have dragged him back into the life he left when he came to Christ—“his old sins” (verse 9).

Cannot See Afar Off: if you do not have the qualities of holiness, then you are short sighted. You will not be able to see clearly. A person without spiritual vision is near-sighted, and often the things that can be seen are fuzzy. It might seem as if Peter has contradicted himself with these metaphors. Someone might argue that anyone who is completely blind cannot even see things that are close to him or her. However, what the apostle meant by these descriptive terms is that a believer who has not added the matters mentioned in verses 5-7 is unable to grasp spiritual truths because he or she is blind and is likely to be deceived by religious error because he or she cannot see afar off. One who has no spiritual perception is likely to be a victim of spiritual deception.

Spiritual Amnesia (verse 9). The believer described in verse 8 not only is plagued with spiritual blindness, but he or she is beset with spiritual amnesia as well. Note that such a person does not lose his or her salvation. This is a matter that is determined when one trusts Christ as Savior, and it is also a matter that cannot be undone or forfeited for whatever reason. However, the lack of spiritual growth and maturity can cause a believer not only to experience spiritual blindness but even to forget that he or she was ever saved. Although this is one of the most miserable conditions that a saved person can ever experience, it is a distinct possibility as Peter warned in this epistle. The Greek word for purged essentially means “cleansed” or “purified.” Peter learned this from a first-hand experience when he was told by God that what He had “cleansed” was clean indeed (Acts 10:15). Thus, salvation includes cleansing as well as renewal. (Compare Titus 3:5.) People who are not certain as to whether or not they have actually been saved are not effective witnesses for God, nor can they render any kind of meaningful service for Him.

AN ABUNDANT ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM
2 Peter 1:10, 11
In these verses, Peter concluded the exhortation he began in verse 5. The diligence which he urged upon his readers was not an encouragement for them to work for their salvation but for them to give evidence of their salva-
The concern is not on being admitted into the kingdom but on an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

**Christian Calling and Election (verse 10).** The term *wherefore* essentially means “on account of which” and links what follows in this verse with what was included in verse 9. Because it is possible for believers to be afflicted with spiritual blindness and spiritual amnesia, we need to be zealous in our efforts to make our salvation apparent to those who see us in our daily activities. The calling which believers receive is twofold—first, there is the call to salvation, followed by the call to Christian service. This is seen in the call Jesus gave in Matthew 11:28, 29. In verse 28, He calls people to salvation, as the invitation is extended to “all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” Then in verse 29, He calls people to service, as He urged, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.” What one needs to be certain about is not so much that he or she has received these calls, but whether or not one has responded properly to the call. All unsaved people are called to salvation, and every believer is called to service. The “election” to which Peter referred speaks of the divine purpose, a matter which was noted in 1 Peter 1:2. (Review comments on this verse in Lesson 1.) God has determined that all those who trust Christ as Savior will be saved and will eventually become conformed to His image. (Compare Romans 8:29.)

**An Abundant Entrance into the Kingdom (verse 11).** Believers who add to their salvation the qualities mentioned in verses 5-7 will not only have effective and productive lives (verse 8), but they will also

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**Manna**

Make Your Calling and Election Sure (2 Peter 1:10): Archery was a common sport in biblical antiquity. The theme of bows and arrows dated back to Genesis and the days of Abraham with a young man named Ishmael (Gen. 21:16, 20). Isaac once asked Esau to take his bow into the field in hopes of hunting some venison (Gen. 27:3). The biblical theme of bows and arrows even found a way into the life of the coming anti-Christ (Rev. 6:2). Partly because of the history of archery in antiquity, it has remained an Olympic sport and a recreational activity even today. Archery has always been a viable option for feeding the family. Peter used the analogy of the archer when he challenged the Christian to make his calling and election sure—aiming at and successfully hitting the bull’s-eye.

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Abundant Entrance to the Everlasting Kingdom (2 Peter 1:11): The word *abundantly* suggested to some that there were differing degrees of rewards in Heaven. It was true that some had inherited the kingdom (Matt. 25:34) and others had not (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21). The argument then arose that some would inherit the wealth and riches of Heaven while others would only inherit life in Heaven. It was, however, likely that Peter had in mind the pursuing of the listed characteristics—faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity—(2 Peter 1:5-7) and the rewards subsequently that followed. The prophetic proposition was one of “exceeding great and precious promises” (verse 4).
be active and fruitful in their Christian service (verse 9). Moreover, they will be certain of their salvation and service and will give clear evidence of such assurance (verse 10). Such believers will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of Christ. It is one thing to be in the kingdom and yet another matter to be given special recognition in the kingdom. One becomes part of the kingdom of God by the new birth (John 3:3), but rewards and other recognition are determined by one’s Christian service which will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The kingdom of God includes all believers; however, not all believers will be recognized equally in the kingdom. The expression, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, refers to the Millennium, the time when Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords for a thousand years. The fact that the believers’ abundant entrance into the kingdom is associated with the Millennium indicates that the effective realization of rewards earned by Christians will occur during Christ’s reign.

LIVING FOR CHRIST BY HIS POWER

In the opening verses of this epistle, Peter stressed the need for each believer to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The best antidote for error is a clear understanding of the truth. Accordingly, Peter reminded his readers of the “great and precious promises” (verse 4) that are theirs because of their calling to faith in Christ. Believers have been called away from the corruption of the world to conformity with Christ. Moreover, believers are encouraged to build a testimony of Christian qualities which will gain them recognition now and in the life to come.
When Peter wrote this letter, he evidently felt as if his departure from this earth could be imminent (2 Peter 1:14). He reminded his readers of the riches of their position in Christ and their responsibility to hold fast to the truth. Leaving this epistle as a written legacy, Peter pointed out his privilege to be an eyewitness to the transfiguration of Christ. He also affirmed the authority and reliability of the prophetic Word, and gave a clear, biblical description of the divine-human involvement in the process of inspiration (verse 21).

**Established in the Truth**

Peter emphasized in the first part of this chapter the importance of Christian growth, and he reminded his readers that faithful service will be properly recognized by God. For one to grow and serve acceptably, he or she must be well established in the truth by being reminded of what is known and taught and what needs to be known.

*The Ready Reminder (verse 12).* The conjunction *wherefore* is from the Greek *dio*, which literally means “on account of which.” This term points back to the promise in verse 11 of the possibility of an abundant entrance into the kingdom. The Greek word for *negligent* essentially means “without care.” Peter was concerned about the spiritual well-being of his readers, and he was determined not to fail in fulfilling his responsibility to teach them properly. The expression, *always in remembrance*, is a reiteration that, because of the fleshly nature, believers need to be reminded frequently of what they have learned about God and His work. The term *these things* is general and inclusive, referring back to all that Peter told his readers in verses 1-11. Because of who and what God is and the relationship believers have with Him, we have “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (verse 3). We also have a solemn responsibility to build upon all that God has done for us and all He promises to do for us in such a way as to enhance our own spiritual growth and to advance His kingdom’s work, thus assuring us of an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

*Established in the Truth (verse 12).* In the last part of this verse, Peter mentioned that his readers knew the things about which he intended to remind them, and that they were established in “the present truth.” It is one thing to know something in the sense of being aware of it, and yet, another...
Established in the Present Truth (2 Peter 1:12): Arguments have flourished for centuries regarding the truth about truth. Debate over truth originated millennia earlier but found a notable and intellectual audience in the minds of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and others of that sort. Some have argued for absolute truth and others against it, saying that truth has always been relative. The skeptics have demanded that nothing has ever been absolute. Peter suggested that truth was not only absolute, or to use his word sure, he also insisted that it was applicable. The truth of these things—the things of “the everlasting kingdom” (verse 11)—are certain, sure, and absolute thus “established in the present truth” (verse 12). Essential to salvation was this present truth that Peter not only preached but promised to be faithful in demonstrating.

A Stirring Reminder (verse 13). The apostle did not apologize in any way for reiterating the things which his readers knew. The expression, Yea, I think it meet, could be rendered, Indeed, I consider it fitting or appropriate. As far as Peter was concerned, the repetition of what had been mentioned previously was entirely because of the gravity of the situation. By stating “as long as I am in this tabernacle” (verse 13) the apostle implied that his time on earth might be not be for much longer. Tabernacle is from a term which essentially means “dwelling you.” Peter wanted the recipients of his epistle to recall the things which they had learned and reinforce them in their minds so they would not forget them or become negligent in acting upon them.

This Tabernacle (2 Peter 1:13): Actually, the Tabernacle was a tent. Peter used the metaphor of a covered dwelling place to identify his earthly existence. This was common among Bible writers. Paul used the same metaphor when he paralleled the human body to that of a tabernacle (covering) (2 Cor. 5:1, 4). John, when he alluded to Jesus as the Word who was made flesh (John 1:14), made a passing reference to the same. John noted that Jesus “dwell among us” and in so doing used the same Greek root (σκηνους) as was used in the previously noted texts. In other words, Jesus tabernacled or pitched his tent amidst the human race. The Hebrew writer identified the genesis of this word picture when he related, “By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Heb. 11:9).
place.” The verb *dwelt* in John 1:14 is from the same basic word. Thus, the Scripture literally states that through the incarnation Jesus tabernacled among us. The Jews were familiar with the Tabernacle and that it was a tent in which God had dwelled among His people. The Jews also knew that the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple, thus making the word *tabernacle* symbolic of a temporary dwelling place. The Greek word for *stir up* denotes the idea of arousing or awakening rather than agitating. Peter’s readers were aware of what they needed to know, but they needed to be reminded.

**THE FLESHLY TABERNACLE**

The apostle Paul spoke of the believer’s natural body as an “earthly house of this tabernacle” which shall be replaced with “a building of God” (2 Cor. 5:1). He and Peter both realized that the body was a temporary dwelling place for the believer’s spirit. The earthly life and body are important, but not as important as eternal life and the body that will be provided for believers when they are resurrected.

*The Fleshly Tabernacle* (verse 14). Peter continued in this verse to describe his fleshly body as a tabernacle, and he indicated that he felt as if he would not abide much longer in his tent of flesh—“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle” (verse 14). The Greek word for *knowing* is *oida*, which essentially means “to be aware of.” *Shortly* is from a term that denotes suddenness or swiftness. Most likely, what Peter meant by this reference was that he expected to die fairly soon. Because he did not know anything about the manner in which he would die, he evidently felt that his death probably was not far off. The Scriptures have much to say about the brevity of one’s physical life. (See Job 7:6; 8:9; 9:25; 14:1, 2.) The Greek term for *put off* basically means “to put aside” or “to put away from.” It denotes the experience of one’s physical death. Peter described death as the putting aside, or taking down a tent. In Bible times tents were used by sojourners, people who had no permanent place to live but traveled from place to place. (Compare Hebrews 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11.) The earthly life is a time of sojourning. It is not a permanent existence, but a time in which preparation is to be made for eternity.

*Peter’s Death Foretold* (verse 14). Although Peter did not know when he would put off his tabernacle of flesh, he did know something about his physical state prior to his death, as Jesus had told him that he would become physically infirm and dependent upon others, “as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” (Compare John 21:18, 19.) Perhaps Peter was already beginning to suffer from ailments which indicated that soon he would be unable to take care of himself: For whatever time he had left, he wanted to encourage believers, such as the recipients of this epistle, to grow in grace and to be fruitful in their service for God. Peter had mentioned to his readers their entrance into the kingdom of Christ (verse 11), it is possible that he was thinking of his own entrance to that kingdom. There has been much speculation about the place and manner of Peter’s death. Tradition holds that he was executed in Rome
by being crucified upside down at his own insistence because he did not feel himself worthy to die in the same manner as had his Lord. It should be emphasized that this is tradition. Nothing is known for certain about when, where or how Peter put off his fleshly tabernacle.

**Always in Remembrance (verse 15).**

In verse 12, Peter urged his readers to remember the things which they already knew. In verse 13, he added a personal concern by mentioning the time he still had left on the earth, during which he would continue to encourage believers to hold to what they knew. In verse 14, he emphasized that his death might occur soon—which is something that can be said for anyone—and then expressed in verse 15 how his concern for his readers extended beyond his own decease. The word *endeavour* is from the same basic Greek term as *diligence* in verses 5 and 10. Thus, the phrase, *I will endeavour*, denotes Peter’s determination to be so emphatic in his reiteration of what he wanted the recipients of his letter to remember and understand that they would maintain a good grasp of those things even after he had died. The word *decease* is from *exodos*, which appears also in Luke 9:31 in connection with the transfiguration of Christ and the implication of his approaching death. *Exodos* basically means “departure.” After Peter departed this life and went to be with the Lord, he wanted believers “to have these things always in remembrance” (see verses 1-11) (2 Peter 1:15).

**WITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY**

Peter followed up in this verse on his reference to the kingdom of Christ with a word about the majesty of Christ. That majesty will be fully revealed when He comes in power and glory destroying the forces of the anti-Christ, assumes the throne of His father David and rules over the entire earth for a thousand years.

**No Cunningly Devised Fables.** One of the reasons Peter wrote this epistle was to reinforce the truth of the second coming of Christ. Even in that day there were people who doubted this doctrine and ridiculed those who believed it (2 Peter 3:3, 4). Evidently, some of the naysayers accused Peter and others who taught about the second coming of fabricating a teaching and trying to pass it off as a valid religious doctrine. Peter rebutted that charge by declaring emphatically that “we have not followed cunningly devised fables” 2 Peter 1:16). The Greek word for *followed* primarily means “to follow out,” and denotes a determination to follow an argument to its logical end. The same
term appears in 2 Peter 2:2, 15. *Cunningly devised* is from *sophizo*, which in turn is from *sophia*, the basic term for *wisdom*. *Sophia* can be used either for divine wisdom (Luke 2:52) or human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4). The Greek word for *fables* is *mithos*, from which comes *myth*. Peter denied that the teaching about the second coming of Christ was a myth that had been developed through human sophistry.

**The Power and Coming of Christ.** The doctrine of the second coming of Christ is real. It will be accomplished through “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:16). The word *power* is from *dunamis*, which denotes “strength,” “force” or “ability.” *Coming* is from *parousia*, which basically means “presence.” The same term is translated *presence* in 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:12. The apostle John recorded his vision of the power and coming of Christ in Revelation 19:11, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” The teaching of the second coming of Christ is not something which Peter or any of the other apostles concocted. Instead, it is part of the divine plan and it will occur when the time for it arrives on God’s calendar. This will be when the power of God is demonstrated against the anti-Christ and his forces, and when the devil is bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, during which Christ will reign over all the earth (Rev. 19:11—20:6).

**Witnesses of His Majesty.** For Peter and the other apostles to be certain of the power and coming of Christ, they were given some eyewitness experiences of His majesty. The first of those occurred when Christ was transfigured, a matter which will be considered in the comments on verses 17 and 18. Only three of the apostles—Peter, James and John—observed that incident. Instead, it is part of the divine plan and it will occur when the time for it arrives on God’s calendar. This will be when the power of God is demonstrated against the anti-Christ and his forces, and when the devil is bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, during which Christ will reign over all the earth (Rev. 19:11—20:6).
“greatness.” As one of the persons in the divine Godhead, Christ is great because of who He is, and also because of what He has done—and shall do.

**THE EXCELLENT GLORY**

In these verses, Peter explained more fully the time when Christ was glorified in His transfiguration experience, an event which only he and two other apostles—the brothers James and John—were privileged to observe. Heaven and earth were intricately involved in that demonstration of divine glory.

**Honor and Glory from the Father (verse 17).** Christ received honor and glory from the Father on several occasions during His life on the earth. On three occasions the Father spoke audibly from Heaven in commendation of the Son—at His baptism (Mark 1:9-11), at His transfiguration (Mark 9:7) and shortly before His crucifixion (John 12:20-30). The Father also demonstrated His approval of the Son by raising Him from the dead and receiving Him back to Heaven (Phil. 2:8, 9). Peter focused in this instance on the honor and glory which Christ received when He experienced the transfiguration, as will be seen subsequently. Note that honor and glory were received from the Father. He is the source of true honor and glory. The approval and commendation one might receive from other men pales in comparison to that which God gives. Human honors will eventually fade, but the honor which God bestows will not. The glory which Christ demonstrated when He was transfigured will never dim or be diminished in any manner or to any degree.

**The Excellent Glory (verse 17).** In the last part of this verse, Peter identified the occasion when Christ received honor and glory from the Father as being the time of His transfiguration, an event that is recorded in three of the four gospels. (See Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.) The voice to which Peter referred was that of God the Father Himself. The term *excellent glory* denotes the source of the voice, which according to the account in each of the gospels, was the cloud that overshadowed the mountain top and enveloped all those who were there. The description given by Luke is especially significant, as he directly and specifically associated the voice with the cloud, thus indicating that the brilliant cloud denoted the presence of God. That is why the cloud was described by Peter as “the excellent glory” (2 Peter 1:17). The word *excellent* in this instance is from a Greek term that appears in the New Testament only this one time. The word conveys the sense of “greatness” or “nobility,” the fullest demonstration of which was Jesus in His glory and splendor. The Father Himself is the excellent glory, and there is none that can claim to be as glorious as He.

**The Holy Mountain (verse 18).** The site of the transfiguration of Christ and all that occurred on that occasion was designated by Peter as “the holy mount” (verse 18). The word *holy* is from *hagios*, which basically means “separate” or “set apart.” The Greek term is also rendered *saints* (Rom. 1:7), and related words are translated *hallowed* (Matt. 6:9) and *sanctify* (John 17:17). The mount of transfiguration was a holy mountain because it was chosen by God and used by Him for a specific purpose. While no one knows for certain
which of the mountains was the scene of the transfiguration, many Bible scholars believe it was Mount Hermon. This mountain, with an elevation of over nine thousand feet, is the highest peak in all of Palestine. It is situated west of Damascus on the border of modern-day Syria and Lebanon. In Old Testament times that site was part of the allotment to the half tribe of Manasseh which settled east of the Jordan River (1 Chron. 5:23). In New Testament times it was northeast of Galilee near the city of Caesarea Philippi. Snow covers the top of the mountain year-round, thus constantly giving it a dazzling, glistening appearance, especially on sunny days.

A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

In verses 19-21, Peter addressed the matter of the inspired Word, the holy Scriptures. He contrasted in this verse the voice which they heard on the mount of transfiguration with “a more sure word of prophecy” (verse 19). Both messages, the word spoken on the mountain and the prophetic word, are from God.

A More Sure Word of Prophecy. In addition to the experience Peter and others received on the holy mount, the apostle referred to “a more sure word of prophecy” (verse 19) both of which had to do with the majesty and splendor of Christ, especially His coming in power and glory. The term more sure is the same as for sure in verse 10. The same word is translated of force in Hebrews 9:17, and confirming in Mark 16:20. This word conveys the sense of validating, confirming or assuring. Thus, Peter declared that the prophetic word, or “word of prophecy” (verse 19) was confirmed, or made more sure, by the transfiguration of Jesus. The prophetic word to which Peter referred was the prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah, especially His power and glory. Note when the transfiguration occurred (Mark 9:1, 2). The prophecies of the messianic kingdom which were declared by the prophets prior to the first coming of Christ were confirmed by Him on the holy mount, and in doing so He assured the disciples that the kingdom shall come in power and glory.
**A Light Shining in a Dark Place.** In the second part of this verse, Peter exhorted his readers to heed what he had told them about how the prophecies of the second coming were confirmed by the transfiguration of Christ. The term *whereunto* essentially means “concerning which.” What the apostle wanted his readers to heed was the word of prophecy to which he had referred in the first part of this verse. The assurance that Christ will come in power and glory was described by the Peter as “a light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19). What Peter meant by this metaphor is that the hope of the second coming of Christ is a beam of light that offers encouragement to believers in a world that is darkened by sin and Satan. The effects of sin are felt throughout the universe, and as this age draws to a close those consequences are going to become even more pronounced. The final seven years of this dispensation will be the Tribulation Period, the conclusion of which will be the darkest time ever known to mankind. The prophetic Word will especially be a beacon of light to the Tribulation saints.

**The Rising of the Day Star.** As Peter continued with his descriptive language, he modified his metaphor somewhat and looked beyond the present darkness to time when a new day shall dawn with the rising of the “day star” (verse 19). The new day to which the apostle referred will be the Millennium, which will be the brightest period of time ever known to mankind, and will thus be in direct contrast to the spiritual and moral darkness that will have engulfed the world at the close of the Tribulation. Satan will be bound for a thousand years, which will result in a tremendous restraint on sin and its effects. The term *day star* is from *phosphoros*, which basically means “light bearer.” *Phos* is the Greek word for “light,” and *phoros* is the noun form of the verb *phoreo*, which means “to bear or carry,” or “to wear.” This word refers to an item of clothing or a piece of equipment that distinguishes an individual. (Compare Matt. 11:8; John 19:5.) Jesus Christ is the day star, the Light of the world, whose second coming will herald the dawning of a new day for His people and all the world.

**MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Peter continued in these verses to address the matter of the prophetic Word, and what he said regarding this matter applies to all the Scriptures. The apostle especially provided a keen insight into the manner in which the Bible was inspired by God. The Scriptures did not originate with man but with God Himself.

**Not of Private Interpretation (verse 20).** The expression, *knowing this first*, indicates that what follows is of great importance to what preceded it. Thus, Peter emphasized that the Word of prophecy which was confirmed by the transfiguration of Christ is part of a greater entity. The apostle went on to declare that “no prophecy of the scripture” (verse 20)—whether a prophecy of the second coming of Christ or of some other matter—“is of any private inter-
pretation” (verse 20). What Peter intended by the phrase private interpretation has been a source of debate through the centuries. For many generations the Roman Catholic Church taught that this term meant that laymen were not to study the Scriptures on their own but were to depend entirely on the clergy to tell them what the Bible means. The Greek word for private is idios, which essentially means “its own” or “own’s own.” Thus, what Peter actually said was that no Scripture is to be interpreted on its own, or isolated from its context. During the years people have misled millions of people by pulling Bible passages from their setting and applying them in an arbitrary manner. Scripture is to be interpreted and applied in connection to other Scriptures.

Not by the Will of Man (verse 21). Peter told in this verse how the prophetic Word and the rest of the Scriptures came into being. In the first half of this verse he gave the negative side of this matter—“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (verse 21). The phrase, in old time, denotes a time in the past. The Scriptures that were in existence at the time Peter penned this epistle were the writings of the Old Testament. The expression, not . . . by the will of man, refers in a negative sense to the manner in which the Bible came into being. The Scriptures were not willed by any human being. They did not originate with man, even though man was the means by which the Bible was written. Moses, David and other men wrote the various books of the Old Testament, while Peter, Paul and others wrote the New Testament. However, none of those men wrote anything on his own volition. They were each used by God to write one or more portions of the Scriptures, but none of them wrote anything on his own. An interesting example of this can be seen in how the Epistle of Jude came to be written. Jude originally intend-
ed to write about “the common salvation,” but when he actually wrote his letter, he was constrained by God to write about the need for contending “for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

**Moved by the Holy Spirit (verse 21).** In the last part of this verse, Peter gave an illustration of how God inspired the men whom He used to write the Scriptures. The men whom He chose were “holy men” (verse 21) in that they were specifically set aside by Him for that purpose. They were also “men of God” (verse 21), that is, they were men who trusted God and were submissive to His will. They spoke or wrote “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (verse 21). The verb were moved is from a word which essentially means “to be carried [or brought] along.” The same term is translated bring in 2 Timothy 4:13. The men whom God used to write the Scriptures were brought along by the Holy Spirit. Each one was permitted to write in his own individual style, but the Holy Spirit oversaw him and even overshadowed him, so that he wrote exactly what God wanted him to write. The Bible from beginning to end is the revelation of God to men through the Holy Spirit.

**LIVING FOR CHRIST BY THE BOOK**

Peter mentioned in this passage three important matters. First, he reminded his readers of his—and their—mortality. Each of us is tabernacling in a tent of flesh which will soon be put away. In addition, Peter wrote about the majesty of Christ which he, along with James and John, was privileged to witness at the transfiguration of Jesus on the holy mount. Finally, he gave some valuable insight regarding the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible is the Word of God which has come from Him through human instrumentality.
In the last part of chapter 1, Peter exalted the Scriptures. He warned in this chapter about false teachers who deny the Scriptures and seek to lead people into religious error. He gave an extended description of the characteristics of false teachers. These people are doomed for judgment. Unfortunately, however, they lead many people astray even though their teachings and life-style reek of arrogance and selfishness. This chapter has much in common with the Epistle of Jude.

A WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS

The early churches should have expected false teachers to arise because in every generation there have been those who try to lead God’s people astray. In the Old Testament false prophets arose among the Jews, and so it was in Peter’s day and so it continues today.

Their Predecessors (verse 1). The false teachers who were attempting to mislead the churches in the time of the apostles were following in the footsteps of the false prophets of the Old Testament era. Those false prophets were men who claimed to have been sent by God with a message for the Jewish people. These men were not godly men who were sincerely mistaken in their understanding of the divine will, but they were wicked men who were determined to undermine the message and ministry of the true prophets. The false prophets were more interested in gaining popularity than in proclaiming the truth. Their policy was to tell the people what they thought the people wanted to hear. When the false prophets were heeded, the people suffered dire consequences as can be seen in Moses’ day (Num. 16:28-50) and also in the time of Jeremiah (Jer. 27:12-18).

Their Teachings (verse 1). The false teachers against whom Peter warned were dangerous because they “privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (verse
1). The Greek word for the phrase, *privily shall bring in*, essentially means “to bring in sideways,” and conveys such meanings as “secretly,” “clandestinely” or “surreptitiously.” False teachers are not honest or open regarding their motives or intentions. The word for *damnable* refers to destruction or great loss. *Heresies* is from *hairesis*, which literally means “a choice.” The Scriptures use this term to denote wrong or harmful choices. The worst of the “damnable heresies” (verse 1) was the fact that those false teachers denied Christ, mankind’s only hope for salvation. They also denied the teaching of blood redemption. With such denials the only way one can be saved is through good works, and that was the sum and substance of the teachings of the false teachers.

**Their Destiny (verse 1).** The destiny awaiting false teachers is seen in the expression they “bring upon themselves swift destruction” (verse 1). It should also be mentioned that those who follow the doctrines of false teachers will suffer the same destiny. No one can blame anyone but himself or herself for the destruction he or she might suffer. When someone turns to anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ for salvation, only one destiny is possible: condemnation to the flames of hell forever. (Compare John 3:18; Revelation 20:15.) The Greek word for *destruction* is the same as for damnable which appeared earlier in this verse. This term is also translated *perdition* (2 Thess. 2:3), thus indicating a sense of final and total loss and ruin. The destruction of false teachers and their followers is swift because it is experienced the moment one dies and slips into eternity. There is no purgatory or second chance for salvation.

**Their Followers (verse 2).** Because human nature is under the curse of sin, error always has an appeal to the flesh. The first person to be deceived by false religion was Cain. His worship was not accepted by God, and he evidently influenced many people to follow in his error. False teachers have many who follow their “pernicious ways” (verse 2). The fact that many will follow false teachers reminds one of Jesus’ statement that the broad way which leads to destruction has many who travel on it (Matt. 7:13). The most popular teaching is not necessarily one that is true. In fact, what is most popular is likely to be the least truthful. The Greek term for *pernicious way* is the same as for *destruction* and *damnable* in 2 Peter 2:1. The teachings of false teachers lead to utter ruin and destruction, and, because of them and their followers, “the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (verse 2). The way of truth is in marked contrast to the pernicious ways of false teachers. The phrase, *evil spoken of*, is from the Greek word for *blaspheme*. False teachers malign the truth and those who embrace it.
Their Danger (verse 3). The threat posed by false teachers and their teachings is seen in that they “shall . . . make merchandise of you” (verse 3). The term make merchandise is from emporeuomai, from which comes emporium, which is a marketplace or trading center. False teachers seek to profit in some manner from their followers, as can be seen by the term through covetousness. Covetousness is an inordinate desire to have more of something than what one is properly entitled to have. Because of their covetousness, false teachers often exploit their followers. In many cases they seek money or other forms of material gain, while in other instances they want to receive popularity from their followers or they desire to exercise influence over them. False teachers try to conceal their motives, however. They use “feigned words” (verse 3), that is, words that are specifically tailored to achieve their purpose. Feigned words are lies even though they are presented as the truth from God Himself.

THE JUDGMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS 2 Peter 2:3-6

The judgment of false teachers is certain. Some people might not think that such judgment is soon enough. However, the fact remains that no one can dilute, distort or deny the truth without having to give an accounting to God. The Bible contains many examples of how divine judgment has been exercised by a just and holy God.

The Certainty of Judgment (verse 3). In the last part of verse 3, Peter wrote, “whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” In a time and manner of His own choosing, God will deal with false teachers, if not in this life, then certainly in the life to come. The Greek word for lingereth is from the same basic term that is rendered barren in 2 Peter 1:8, both of which convey the idea of being idle. Divine judgment on false teachers is not an idle threat. Even though they might escape judgment during their earthly lives, they should not assume that they will not be judged. The word damnation denotes total ruin and is yet another instance of the Greek term that is translated pernicious way in verse 2, and destruction and damnable in verse 1. The phrase slumbereth not reiterates that divine judgment on false teachers is certain. Those who contribute to the eternal condemnation of their followers will pay dearly.

The Judgment of Rebellious Angels (verse 4). The rebellion of the angels mentioned in this verse evidently occurred before the creation of man and even prior to the creation of Heaven and earth. The Epistle of Jude refers to some angels who did not remain in their “first

Hell: in the mind of the first century Greek this word depicted the dwelling place of the wicked. It was where they lived after death, and it was a dark place of torture for the wicked deeds done here on earth. Once again, the Bible warns people of the dangers of a place where they will be punished for their failure to trust in the person of Jesus. They go there because of their failures not because God did not provide the opportunity for them to be in Heaven. Word Study #5020.
estate” (literally, *beginning*, or *original status*) and are consequently reserved for “the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). Those angels were cast down to hell. The entire phrase, *cast down to hell*, is from *tartaroo*, which is the only time this term appears in the New Testament. The noun form of *tartaroo* is *tartarus*, which, along with *hades* and *sheol*, is part of the unseen realm of wicked spirit beings. The term, *chains of darkness*, speaks of their condemnation to judgment. These chains are figurative, however, so the fallen angels, who are better known as *demons*, are active on earth, except for the demons that were expelled from people by Jesus. Those evil spirits were sent to the bottomless pit, from which they evidently will not be released until their judgment. (Compare Luke 8:31.) The initial judgment on the rebellious angels occurred when they lost their status as holy angels and were cast down into the underworld. Their final judgment will most likely be in conjunction with the Great White Throne Judgment. (Compare Revelation 20:14.)

**The Judgment of a Wicked Civilization (verse 5).** The second example of divine judgment mentioned by Peter was the destruction of the antediluvian world. The apostle referred to that civilization as “the old world” (verse 5), which was destroyed by the flood. The only people who escaped the judgment waters were Noah and his family. Noah was “the eighth person” (verse 5) in that he and seven others were saved from the flood. (Compare 1 Peter 3:20.) Peter called Noah “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), which means that he proclaimed to an ungodly generation the righteousness of God. From the time God declared His intention to send the flood until the rain began falling was one hundred twenty years, during which Noah undoubtedly preached to the people of that day. The closing statement in this verse indicates that the flood was due to the direct action of God. Many Bible scholars believe that was the first time for any heavy rain to fall on the earth. (Compare Genesis 2:6.)

**The Judgment of Two Ungodly Cities (verse 6).** As yet another example of God’s judgment on those who oppose Him, Peter cited the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those cities were large and powerful in the time of Abraham, but they were destroyed by God because of their ungodliness. The account of their judgment is given in Genesis 19:24, 25. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by brimstone and fire which God rained upon them. The Greek word for *condemned* in this instance is *katakrino*, which essentially combines the idea of a sentence of judgment with the penalty for the sin or crime. *Overthrow* is from *katastrophe*, from which comes *catastrophe*. The specific sin for which those cities were overthrown was the sexual perversion of homosexuality. *Sodomy* and related terms come from *Sodom*. Many people try to defend homosexuality as an alternate life-style, using the euphemistic term *gay* to mask its true character. Homosexuality is still as repugnant to God as it was in Lot’s time, however. (Compare Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9.)

**A RIGHTEOUS MAN DELIVERED**

In contrast to the examples of judgment mentioned in the preceding passage, Peter reminded his readers of Lot who was spared even though he had
become a resident of Sodom. God was not pleased with what Lot had done, but He wanted to emphasize that, in judgment, He makes a distinction between the righteous and the ungodly.

**The Example of Lot (verse 7).**

Lot was the nephew of Abraham. He probably had been adopted by Abraham and was considered by the patriarch as his heir. However, Lot wanted to separate himself from his uncle and, in doing so, chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:1-13). Lot, evidently, continued moving ever closer to Sodom until he became a resident of that place and even became one of the leaders of the city. (Compare Genesis 19:1-3.) Peter mentioned that Lot was “vexed” (2 Peter 2:7) (literally, “worn down”) with the “filthy conversation” (verse 7) (that is, lascivious life-style) of the Sodomites, but he continued to live among them. When the time came for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God directed Lot and his family to leave the city (Gen. 19:12-15). Having been told to flee to the mountains, Lot asked instead to be allowed to go to Zoar, a smaller town. The angels who had been sent by God to Sodom agreed and told Lot that he, his wife and their two daughters needed to leave immediately because God would not do anything until they were safely in Zoar (verses 17-22).

**His Righteous Soul Vexed (verse 8).** Even though this verse is enclosed in parentheses in the King James Version of the Bible, it is not an afterthought, nor does it convey information that is of any lesser importance. Instead, it gives a clear example of the tragic consequences that can result when a believer repeatedly and unnecessarily exposes himself or herself to the ungodly actions of unbelievers. Peter’s reference to Lot as a “righteous man” (verse 8) spoke more of his spiritual nature than his outward conduct. He was righteous in God’s sight but evidently was not considered as such by the people of Sodom, as can be seen in...
the fact that his testimony was completely discounted when he tried to persuade his sons-in-law to flee the city (Gen. 19:14). What Lot saw and heard each day “vexed” (2 Peter 2:8) his righteous soul. The Greek word for *vexed* in this verse is different from the one in verse 7. Here the word denotes pain or torment. (Compare Matthew 4:24; Luke 16:24, 25.) What Lot saw and heard day after day in Sodom pained him grievously; however, the longer he stayed there the more worn down he became.

**God’s Deliverance of the Godly (verse 9).** In the first part of this verse is the emphatic statement, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (verse 9). In the examples that Peter cited, God delivered Noah from the judgment of the flood and Lot from the judgment on Sodom. In both of those references the judgment that was inflicted is designated in verse 9 as “temptations.” The word *temptation* can refer to a time or instance of testing as well as a solicitation to do evil. The judgment of the flood and the judgment on Sodom were tests for Noah and Lot. By accepting the deliverance God provided, these godly men and their families escaped the destruction that others suffered. An example of what would have happened to anyone who rejected God’s deliverance can be seen in the case of Lot’s wife who disobeyed the angel’s instruction and became a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26; Luke 17:32).

**The Unjust Reserved for Punishment (verse 9).** In contrast to God’s deliverance of the godly is the fact that He knows how to “reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment” (verse 9). The Greek word for *reserve* is generally translated *keep*. The term *the unjust* denotes unsaved people, and *the day of judgment* refers to the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). When an unsaved person dies, he or she is destined to appear before the Judge of all mankind and receive the sentence that will be carried out in the lake of fire. However, between the time of an unbeliever’s physical death and his or her appearance at the Great White Throne Judgment, the soul is kept in the tormenting flames of hell awaiting the resurrection of the unjust. In the account of the rich man and Lazarus, when the rich man died, his body was buried, but his soul immediately went to hell to await the day of judgment (Luke 16:22, 23).

**THE SIN OF SELF-WILL**

Self-will is the root of sin. When Adam was deciding whether to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he chose to do what he wanted instead of what God had told him to do. Self-will rejects proper authority, and, in doing so, brings in the certainty of judgment upon himself or herself and possibly others as well.

**Despisers of Authority (verse 10).** Mentioned specifically in this verse are two characteristics of a self-willed person. First, he or she will “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness” (verse 10). The word *flesh* refers to the fleshly—or carnal—nature. To walk after the flesh is to allow all of one’s energies, attention and activities to be dominated by that which appeals to the carnal nature. In the expression, *lust of uncleanness*, the word *lust* denotes inor-
dinate, uncontrolled desires, and uncleanliness refers to that which defiles. In addition to being controlled by fleshly lusts, self-willed people “despise government” (verse 10). To despise someone is to have a haughty or arrogant contempt for him or her. The Greek word for government is from the basic term kurios, which essentially means “lord” or “master.” Those who despise government have contempt for those who hold positions of authority. God does not approve of anarchy. Even a bad government is better than no government. While God is not pleased with the abuse of power by governmental authorities, He is even more displeased with those who despise authority.

**Respect for Authority (verse 11).** In contrast to the self-willed conduct described in verse 10 is that of the holy angels who always demonstrate proper respect for authority, whether human or spiritual. Even though angels are “greater in power and might” (verse 11) than any human, they do not abuse their power. The Greek word for power is ischus, which basically means “strength” or “force.” Might is from dunamis, which essentially means “strength” or “ability,” and is more or less synonymous with ischus. Railing is from blasphemos, and accusations is from the term for judgment. To speak a “railing accusation” (verse 11) is to make harsh, intentionally hurtful charges against someone, whether they are true or not. An example of this is when Satan made railing accusations before the Lord against Job by accusing him of being godly for profit (Job 1:8-11; 2:3-5). An example of angelic respect for authority is the reaction of Michael, the archangel, when he and Satan disputed over the body of Moses (Jude 9). Michael would not bring a railing accusation even against Satan.

**Judgment upon Self-Will (verse 12).** What a devastating description this verse gives of the nature and destiny of self-willed people. They are depicted as “natural brute beasts” (verse 12). The Greek word for brute basically means “without logic.” Self-willed people act like animals in the sense that they do not use any higher reasoning as the motive for their conduct. They are determined to do what they want to do, regardless of the consequences of their actions. Because they act like animals, they are destined “to be taken [literally, captured] and destroyed [brought to ruin]” (verse 12) by the judgment of God. Such people “speak evil of [that is, blaspheme] the things that they understand not” (verse 12) because they are concerned only with themselves and what they want. Their ultimate destiny is seen in the fact that they “shall utterly perish in their own corruption” (verse 12). The words destroy, perish and corruption are all from the same basic term, which essentially means “to be brought to ruin.” Self-willed people who continue in their rebellious attitude toward God will utterly perish in eternal ruin.

**The Reward of Unrighteousness (verse 13).** The word reward refers to pay or wages that are appropriate for the service one renders. The term can be used in a positive (1 Cor. 3:14) or a negative sense (Acts 1:18). Those whom Peter described in this context will receive the reward of unrighteousness because they are so brazen and flagrant in their ungodly conduct that they “count it pleasure to riot in the day time” (2 Peter 2:13) as opposed to doing
so under the cover of darkness. The Greek word for *riot* does not necessarily indicate violent activities, but the gratification of lustful desires. These people are called “spots [that is, stains that defile]” and “blemishes [things that obviously are worthy of blame]” (verse 13). The term *sporting themselves* is from the same basic word as *riot*, and conveys the idea of reveling. The most incriminating charge is that those against whom Peter warned were cynically hypocritical because they tried to act as if they were sincere Christians by attending the love feasts of the churches.

**Addicted to Sin (verse 14).** Peter continued his graphic description of the nature and conduct of ungodly people. Their eyes are “full of adultery” (verse 14), an expression which indicates that one is obsessed with sexual gratification. The phrase, *cannot cease from sin*, denotes an addiction to sin. An addiction causes people to spend inordinate amounts of money, time and energy on something that enslaves them, and they also abuse other people, as can be seen in the phrase, *beguiling unstable souls*. The Greek word for *beguiling* speaks of entrapment by using deception. People who are sold out to Satan, the father of lies, should not be expected to be truthful, especially when they are trying to persuade others to do something. Moreover, their hearts—the center of affection and emotion—are completely given over to covetousness. It is little wonder that Peter calls the ungodly “cursed children” (verse 14). They are the children of the devil because they have chosen to follow him so devotedly. (Compare John 8:44.) They are cursed because they are condemned.

**THE FUTILITY AND FATALITY OF SELF-WILL 2 Peter 2:15-19**

In this passage Peter continued to address the ungodly in general and self-willed people in particular. As a warning the apostle reminded his readers of Balaam, an Old Testament character, and he also mentioned some additional metaphors which expose the evil nature and conduct of the ungodly.

**They Have Gone Astray (verse 15).** In the first part of this verse two statements describe the actions of the ungodly.

*They have forsaken the right way.* The Greek word for *forsaken* in this instance denotes a complete abandonment or rejection. This forsaking is not the result of ignorance or negligence, but is a deliberate, intentional departure from what is good and true. The term *right way* speaks of the way which God has established. It is a way of truth and goodness and leads to peace and joy and ultimately to life everlasting. (Compare Matthew 7:14.)

*They have gone astray.* This is the inevitable result of forsaking the right way. *Astray* is from a word which essentially means “to be out of the way.” The same word is used in 1 Peter 2:25 to describe the plight of unsaved people. Those who forsake the right way choose to remain under the condemnation of God. (Compare John 3:18, 19, 36.) The more they rebel against God, the further astray they go, and the further astray they go, the more deeply and firmly entrenched in sin they become.
They Way of Balaam (verses 15, 16). Those who forsake the right way and become deeply set in their rebellious paths were compared to Balaam, an Old Testament character, who became completely overwhelmed with greed. Balaam was a seer who evidently had been used by God on some occasions but became unfaithful to the Lord. Balak, the king of Moab, offered Balaam a huge sum of money and great honor, “the wages of unrighteousness” (verse 15), to curse the Israelites (Num. 22:1-21). God told Balaam not to accept Balak’s offer, but Balaam was determined to do so anyway. As Balaam rode his donkey to meet Balak, an angel confronted him. At first Balaam could not see the angel, but the donkey could and would not go forward (verses 22-27). After Balaam had beaten his donkey the third time, his beast spoke, following which God opened Balaam’s eyes and allowed him to see what the donkey had seen previously (verses 28-35). God rebuked Balaam for his obstinance (2 Peter 2:16). Note that Peter said that the words of the donkey had kept Balaam from his “madness” (verse 16). The Greek word for madness literally means “wrong mindedness.” The way of Balaam is in direct disobedience to the expressed will of God.

Unfulfilled Promises (verse 17). The pronoun these refers to ungodly, self-willed people, especially those who go in the way of Balaam. Peter likened such individuals to “wells without water” and “clouds that are carried with a tempest” (verse 17). The Greek word for wells actually denotes a spring. Ungodly, self-willed people who pass themselves off as teachers or preachers are like empty springs or fountains. They have nothing of value to offer. Peter’s other metaphor depicts the same message. Clouds driven by swirling winds are of no benefit to anyone. They do not produce any rain, nor do they provide any respite from the burning sun. They supposedly promise much, but they give nothing except in a negative, detrimental sense. The judgment of God upon such people is certain because “the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” (verse 17) for them. Mist is from zophos, which essentially means “darkness” (2 Peter 2:4) or “blackness” (Jude 13). The word darkness in this instance is from skotos, which refers to the darkness of night, or the absence of light. Ungodly people are doomed to an eternity of spiritual and moral cor-
ruption that is devoid of any goodness or decency unless they trust Christ as Savior.

**Great Swelling Words (verse 18).** In this verse, Peter continued to describe wicked, self-willed people, especially those who were false teachers. They might be eloquent, using “great swelling words” (verse 18), but what they teach is harmful (of vanity) for those who heed their teachings. The lure of false teachers is “through the lusts of the flesh” (verse 18). What they say sounds good to the natural man, while the truths of God’s Word have no appeal for the flesh. The Greek word for wantonness is generally translated lasciviousness. (See comments on 1 Peter 4:3, Lesson 7.) Not only do false teachers deceive people who are already entrenched in sin and lead them deeper into error, but they sometimes also mislead people who profess to be saved. On the surface it might seem as if the phrase, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error, refers to people who have recently been saved. However, when this verse is considered in the light of the entire context (2 Peter 2:18-22), it becomes obvious that the people mentioned in this verse are those who claim to have been saved but have not really experienced the new birth. Because they do not possess what they profess to have, they are easy marks for false teachers.

**The Servants of Corruption (verse 19).** False teachers hold the promise of liberty before their followers. However, the liberty they promise is not freedom from sin and its consequences, but freedom from the nagging sense of condemnation that plagues many people. False teachers make their followers feel good about themselves. They learn enough about Christianity to realize that those who profess to be followers of Christ are in good company. However, their profession is empty, and, all too often, they become “servants of corruption” (verse 19). Corruption, as has been noted previously, basically means “to come to ruin.” (See comments on verse 12.) In the last part of this verse, Peter mentioned that what overcomes anyone is likely to bring him or her into bondage. Sin is deceptive. One who tries to resist sin in his or her strength is often defeated by another sin. Satan can best be resisted with divine help, and only believers have the help of the Spirit when they are confronted with temptation.

**THE TERRIBLE FATE OF FALSE PROFESSORS**

A horrible fate awaits everyone who rejects Christ as Savior, and this certainly is for people who falsely profess to be believers in Christ. The destiny of all unbelievers will be in keeping with their nature. They are corrupt because of their Adamic nature, and the fate they shall suffer will be one of corruption, or total ruin.

**An Inadequate Knowledge of Christ (verse 20).** One who claims to be a Christian but is not really saved can temporarily, or superficially, escape the “pollutions of the world” (verse 20) in the sense that he or she becomes identified, at least for a while, with godly people. Outwardly, false professors might seem to be true believers. They probably receive baptism and become members
of a church. They might appear to be pious, and they might even seem to have a knowledge of “the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (verse 20). However, their knowledge of Christ is inadequate. The false teachings they have heard might have presented Christ only as a good Man, but not as the Son of Man. They might have been told that Jesus was a religious reformer, but they did not learn that He is the only Redeemer for mankind. They might have been taught that Christians need to help those in need, but they failed to realize that one’s greatest need is to have his or her sins cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

Entangled and Overcome by the World (verse 20). People who have not truly repented of their sins and trusted Christ as Savior do not have the spiritual nature even though they might profess to be saved. Without the spiritual nature, they do not have the divine help that believers receive when confronted with temptation. Thus, such people not only become “again entangled therein” in sin, but they often are even “overcome” by their sins. Their “latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (verse 20). The term the beginning refers to their state prior to their profession of having become a Christian. The condition is one of condemnation. To be in a worse situation is to have become hardened to the appeal of the gospel. False professors have often heard the gospel and have frequently been exposed to the working of the Spirit on their hearts. Their refusal to heed the message of salvation and the striving of the Spirit inevitably results in a hardening of the heart and makes them even more stubbornly resistant.

The Greater Judgment (verse 21). The expression, the way of righteousness, refers to the manner in which God expects Christians to live. The conduct of people who claim to be saved should be different from that of people who make no such claim. False professors have an intellectual knowledge of the way of righteousness; however, they do not truly know the One who can make them righteous. That is why people who are not really saved are likely
to turn from “the holy commandment” (verse 21). This term probably refers to the Scriptures in general. Unsaved people might profess to have high regard for the Bible, but they do not heed its teachings. Since they reject the written Word, they continue to reject the incarnate Word as well. Peter declared that it would be better for false professors not to know the way of righteousness. Jesus taught this same principle with His parable about the man who had cleaned up his life but did not do so through the salvation experience (Matt. 12:43-45). Because the Holy Spirit did not abide within the man in the parable, he had no way to resist Satan.

**The True Nature Revealed (verse 22).** Under the Law of Moses certain animals, like the dog and pig, were unclean, and, as such, were not acceptable for human consumption or religious sacrifices. Other animals, such as the horse and camel for example, were also unclean, but dogs and pigs were culturally reprehensible to the Jews, while horses and camels were not. In that day dogs were not bred for pets as they are today but were simply allowed to develop on their own, and, as a result, they generally were not truly domesticated but were often vicious. Pigs were repulsive simply because they ate practically anything and everything and wallowed in the mire. When dogs eat their own vomit and pigs wallow in the mud, they are simply following their nature. Likewise, when unsaved people—even those who profess to be saved—act like sinners, they are simply acting in accordance with their Adamic nature.

**LIVING FOR CHRIST IN PURITY**  
Religious error and immoral conduct often go hand in hand. False teachers are frequently guilty of ungodly activities which they try to conceal, and the same can often be said of their followers. No one can hide his or her true character indefinitely. Sooner or later, one who is not really saved will be subjected to a trial that will reveal what he or she really is. Those who have never been born again do not have the Holy Spirit abiding within them. Consequently, they do not have the help of God in meeting any tests.
In this chapter, Peter reminded the recipients of this epistle of the certainty in the second coming of Christ. He also warned about scoffers who deny this teaching. Believers might not understand all they want to know about the return of Christ, but they know how they should live while they await His coming. Peter exhorted his readers to exhibit lives of holiness, steadfastness and Christian growth. In closing this epistle, he did not mention any associates or extend any greetings, but he did give approval to the writings of Paul and the benefits one can receive from studying them.

**THIS SECOND EPISTLE**

In the opening verses of chapter 3, Peter referred his readers to three portions of the Scriptures. First, he mentioned the two epistles he had written. Next, Peter spoke of the words of the “holy prophets” (verse 2), a general designation for the Old Testament. Finally, he mentioned the “commandment” (verse 2), or writings of the apostles—men such as he and Paul—a reference to the New Testament which was in the process of being written.

**The Writing of This Epistle (verse 1).** “This second epistle” (verse 1) is in distinction to 1 Peter, both of which were sent to the same recipients. The place and circumstances regarding the writing of this epistle are not known. The fact that Peter did not make any reference to any other individuals and did not identify the place from which he wrote suggests that he might have written this epistle while traveling. (Compare 1 Peter 5:12, 13.) Moreover, it seems as if this epistle was written soon after the first epistle, so quite possibly Peter actually penned 2 Peter himself instead of using a scribe. The apostle’s designation of his readers as beloved is the first of four such instances in this chapter. Peter is not generally regarded as having been a man of such tender feelings; however, he certainly demonstrated an affectionate spirit in the final chapter of this epistle. Peter wanted in both of his epistles to stir up the pure

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**Pure Minds:** Peter wishes to stir up your sincere faculty of understanding. The word pure means “tested in the sun and no cracks found in the quality of the porcelain.” The mind is the entirety of understanding using all the faculties of mind, heart and feeling. He desires the believer to have a tested, fine, quality mind that comprehends, assimilates and uses the truth every day. Word Studies #1506 and #1271.
minds of his readers. As was noted previously (see comments on 2 Peter 1:13, Lesson 11), the term stir up denotes the act of reminding people of something about which they already know. The word pure conveys the idea of sincerity; minds is from dianoia, which essentially refers to one’s thinking process. Peter wanted his readers to have pure minds, or a sincere attitude or disposition.

**The Reminder in the Scriptures (verse 2).** Peter reminded his readers in this verse of the need for them to study the Scriptures. The verb form of the Greek word for mindful basically means “to remember.” Here the apostle mentioned by implication the two divisions of the Scriptures. The term holy prophets alludes to the Old Testament. There is certainly more to the Old Testament than the prophetic books, but the overall thrust of the Old Testament is to proclaim the coming of the Messiah, His first advent as well as His second coming. Peter previously referred to the prophets in a similar context in this epistle when he referred to the “holy men of God” who spoke in the “old time” as the Holy Spirit guided them. (See 2 Peter 1:21.) The expression, the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, denotes the New Testament. Like the Old Testament and its relationship with the prophets, the New Testament includes more than the epistles which were written by apostles. However, those epistles constitute the overwhelming part of the New Testament.

**LAST DAY SCOFFERS**

The nation of Israel as a whole was not looking for the Messiah as the first coming of Jesus revealed. In Peter’s time there were people who denied the second coming of Christ, and this is certainly the case today.

**The Warning About Them (verse 3).** Here, as in 2 Peter 1:20, the phrase, knowing this first, stresses the importance of what is to follow. Peter especially wanted to emphasize that the “last days” shall be characterized by “scoffers” who pattern their daily lives “after their own lusts.” The term last days refers to the period which began with the first advent of Christ. (See Hebrews 1:1, 2.) This period is so designated because the second coming of Christ is the next important item of the divine calendar. The Greek word for
scoffers is translated mockers in Jude 18. The term literally means “childish trifler.” (Compare Luke 14:28-30.) The scoffers about whom Peter warned were described as “walking after their own lusts” (2 Peter 3:3). The word walking is from a term which essentially means “to go on a specific mission or task.” The Greek word for lusts is epithumia, which basically means “over desire.” The root term is thuo, which denotes a violent or intense movement, such as water that has reached the boiling point or the eruption of a volcano. The last day scoffers who walk after their own lusts have such a deep hatred for God that mocking blasphemies spew out of their mouths.

**Their Erroneous Assertions (verse 4).** The chant of the scoffers mentioned in verse 3 was, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (verse 4). The implication of this question is that the promise that Christ will come again is no longer valid. Many years have come and gone, but Christ has not yet come, they will assert, and that is conclusive proof that He is not coming. What the scoffers fail to realize is that, as long as time continues to roll on, no one can logically claim that Christ will never come. Two thousand years have passed since Christ was on earth at His first coming, and even if another two thousand years passes, no one can say that the passing of many centuries without Christ having returned is in and of itself proof that He will never come. Another erroneous assertion by the scoffers is their statement, “for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (verse 4). Because of the phrase, the beginning of the creation, all of what is called time, as opposed to eternity, is embraced by this assertion of the scoffers. In the verses to follow Peter soundly refuted that argument by emphasizing that many changes have occurred since the beginning, and at least one more change will occur with the coming of Christ.

**THE HEAVENS AND EARTH—THEN AND NOW** 2 Peter 3:5-7

The heavens and earth are seemingly the most substantial and permanent things in all the universe. While it is certainly true that these are among the
most enduring things in all the creation, even they have not been without change. Peter mentioned in these verses some cataclysmic changes that have occurred to the heavens and earth.

**The Old Heavens and Earth (verse 5).** The scoffers about whom Peter warned willfully chose to ignore that the original heavens and earth perished. This verse addresses the manner in which they were created. The original heavens and earth were created by the spoken word of God. Genesis 1:1 gives the account of that creative act, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The psalmist related how God created the heavens and earth, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6). The prophet Isaiah gave additional insight into the original creation, “I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass” (Isa. 48:3). The account of Genesis 1:1 states a fact that stands in and of itself. The original creation was declared by God and it suddenly came into existence. What is often regarded as the six days of creation could have been a period of re-creation or reconstruction, as will be noted subsequently. The heavens and earth that were “of old” (2 Peter 3:5) were perfect and complete when God created them.

**The World That Then Was (verses 5, 6).** In the last part of verse 5 and in verse 6 is a description of the heavens and earth as depicted in Genesis 1:2. It seems to be evident that some kind of cataclysmic event occurred between the first two verses of Genesis. What could have caused the perfect creation of Genesis 1:1 to become “without form and void” and totally engulfed with water as described in Genesis 1:2? Many Bible scholars believe these verses describe the antedeluvian flood of Noah’s day. Others believe that between those two verses was the fall of Lucifer, an exalted angelic leader whose sin caused him to become the devil. (See Isaiah 14:12-15; Luke 10:18; compare Ezekiel 28:11-15.) Most, if not all, of the angels under Lucifer followed him in his rebellion, thus becoming fallen angels, or the demons. The defilement of the original heavens and the wreckage of the original earth were consequences of that angelic uprising against God. The result of divine judgment on what had seemingly been Lucifer’s domain can be seen in that “the earth [was] standing out of the water and in the water” (2 Peter 3:5). An additional consequence was that “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (verse 6). Thus, Peter exposed the fallacy of the scoffers’ claim that everything had continued from the beginning without any changes. Tremendous changes occurred after Genesis 1:1, and additional changes are yet to occur.
The Present Heavens and Earth (verse 7). In this verse, Peter addressed “the heavens and the earth, which are now.” The present heavens and earth are those which God restored following the wreckage described in Genesis 1:2. That recreation or restoration is recorded in Genesis 1:3—2:1. The heavens and earth which now exist are “kept in store” (2 Peter 3:7) by the word of the Omnipotent, Omniscient God. The expression, kept in store, is from a term which usually denotes laying up treasures (Matt. 6:19, 20; James 5:3). Treasures that are laid up are carefully guarded so they will not be stolen. Likewise, God watches over the present heavens and earth and keeps them in store for the ultimate event on His calendar regarding the creation. Thus, they are “reserved unto fire” (2 Peter 3:7). The wreckage of the original creation was caused, in part at least, by water. The present heavens and earth are held in reserve for fire, a matter which will be addressed further in verses 10-12. That event will be “the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (verse 7), which will occur in conjunction with the Great White Throne Judgment at which time all the unsaved will be cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:11-15).

The Present Day Heavens and Earth (2 Peter 3:7): Prior to the flood men lived many hundreds of years while post-flood ages reached only into the seventies (Psalm 90:10) or eighties. The notable difference in the two eras gave rise to Peter’s mentioning yet another age when men shall live eternally. Actually, there has been a series of biblical ages with reference to the earth. The earth has undergone several radical changes. This phenomenon placed the present-day earth well down the list. The list was as follows: (1) the original earth (Gen. 1:1); (2) the ruined earth (Gen. 1:2); (3) the reconstructed earth (Gen. 1:3-31); (4) the cursed earth (Gen. 3:17-18); (5) the flooded earth (Gen. 7:11-24); (6) the present earth (Gen. 8—Rev. 20); and, finally, (7) the new earth (Rev. 21:1). Peter was making the point that there was yet another dispensation of heavens and earth still to come.

The Day of the Lord

In 2 Peter 3:8-10, Peter explained how the eternal God considers time and the relationship between the day of the Lord and the present creation. Divine Reckoning of Time (verse 8). Previously, Peter had exposed the scoffers’ refusal to acknowledge the changes that have occurred to the heavens and earth since the original creation. Another matter which the scoffers misunderstood—or denied—is that time does not mean the same to God as it does to man. As an eternal Being, God is not fettered by time, nor does He need the structure of time. Human beings have to be able to relate the past, present and future. Thus, time is meaningful and even necessary for man. This is not the case with God for time is eternity and eternity is time. Some
people have tried to make a formula out of the fact that with God one day "is . . . as a thousand years" and "a thousand years [is] as one day" (verse 8). The week of creation, or re-creation, is sometimes taken as a projection of the time which God has allotted for mankind to live on the present earth. According to that theory, the Millennium should begin soon and it could. As appealing as the one-day-equals-a-thousand-years notion might be, it is not what Peter intended in this setting. The apostle simply wanted to emphasize that time does not mean the same to God as it does to man.

The Longsuffering of God (verse 9). Yet, another matter which scoffers fail, or refuse, to consider is the long-suffering of God. The Greek word for slack denotes delaying or tarrying. The same term is rendered tarry long in 1 Timothy 3:15. The promise to which Peter referred is the promise Christ gave of His return. It might seem to some people as if God has forgotten about this promise. This is not a matter of divine forgetfulness, but of long-suffering. Long-suffering is from a term which conveys the ideas of patience, endurance and forbearance. Peter referred in his previous epistle to the long-suffering of God in the time of Noah while the ark was being constructed and people were given opportunities to repent before perishing in the flood. (See 1 Peter 3:20.) Thus, it is obvious that the long-suffering of God is inseparably associated with His grace and mercy. God is long-suffering in regard to the second coming of Christ because He does not want anyone to perish, that is, come to ruin. Instead, His objective will is that everyone would repent and become saved. (Compare 1 Timothy 4:10.) However, even though God desires the salvation of everyone, only those who believe are actually saved. (See 1 Timothy 4:10.)

The Day of the Lord (verse 10). The expression, the day of the Lord, appears several times in both the Old and New Testaments. It indicates primarily the end-time judgments that shall occur, especially during the Tribulation Period. One of the fullest accounts of the day of the Lord is in Zechariah 14:1-21, in which it is apparent that the period of time covered by the day of the Lord includes events leading up to and continuing through the Millennium. The apostle Peter indicates in this verse that the day of the Lord will close with the destruction by fire of the present heavens and
earth. Thus, the term, the day of the Lord, embraces the millennial reign of Christ plus the cataclysmic events immediately preceding and following that period of time. Peter declared that the day of the Lord “will come as a thief in the night” (2 Peter 3:10), emphasizing that the judgments associated with it will be unexpected by the masses of the people and devastating in their effects. The present heavens and earth will be consumed by a universal conflagration that will be accompanied with powerful cosmic explosions (a great noise). The fire will be so intense that all the heavenly bodies (the elements) will be melted, along with the earth and all that is on it.

THE DAY OF GOD 2 Peter 3:11-13

Peter shifted his emphasis in this passage from the day of the Lord to the day of God, from the destruction of the present heavens and earth to the coming of the new heavens and earth. In anticipation of all this believers should maintain a life-style that is appropriate as well as productive.

All Things to Be Dissolved (verse 11). In the first part of this verse, Peter explained how the present heavens and earth will be destroyed, “all these things shall be dissolved.” (verse 11). The Greek word for dissolved is luo, which basically means to loosen. This term describes the manner in which the destruction which was related in verse 10 shall occur. When it is time for the day of the Lord to reach its climax, all the components that constitute the heavens and earth will be loosened. Note that in verse 10 the Greek word for melt is luo, the same term as for dissolved. The means by which this dissolution shall occur is the “fervent heat” (verse 10). The apostle John referred to the fiery destruction of the present heavens and earth when he mentioned in his account of the Great White Throne Judgment that “the earth and the heaven fled away” from the face of the One who shall preside over that judgment, and “there was found no place for them” because they had all been dissolved (Rev. 20:11).

A Holy Life-style (verse 11). In view of all that shall occur in regard to the day of the Lord and its consummation, Peter reminded his readers of the manner in which they should live as they await the coming of Christ. Believers should live “in all holy conversation and godliness” (verse 11). The Greek word for holy basically means “set apart” or “separated.” Conversation is from a term which literally means “a turning again.” It indicates the day-to-day
activities of one’s life, and thus refers to his or her daily conduct, way of life or life-style. A “holy conversation” (verse 11) is a life-style characterized by conduct that is consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures. The word godliness is from eusebeia, which literally means “good reverence,” with eu denoting good and sebeia referring to reverence or worship. Based on this, godliness is used to indicate piety. Many people assume godliness is from God-likeness. While that is not true etymologically, it is a good practical application of the word godliness.

The Coming of the Day of God (verse 12). As believers we are to maintain a holy, godly life-style while “looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God” (verse 12). The expression looking for speaks of expectation or anticipation. Hastening unto is from the verb speudo, which essentially means “to urge.” Jesus used this term when He directed Zacchaeus to “make haste, and come down” from the sycamore tree (Luke 19:5). In 2 Peter 3:12 the phrase, hastening unto the coming of the day of God, means that believers are to live with a sense of urgency, realizing that at any moment they could go to meet the Lord, either in death or in the rapture, which would be the beginning of the end. The term day of God refers to the eternal age. This is the only instance in which this term appears in the Scriptures; however, an allusion to this day is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. When all the purposes for the millennial kingdom are accomplished, the Son will deliver all rule and authority to the Father, and, when that is done, God may be all in all throughout the day of God.

The Heavens and Elements on Fire (verse 12). The preposition wherein links the coming of the day of God with the dissolution of the heavens and the melting of the elements. As noted previously, the destruction of the present heavens and earth with fire will mark the consummation of the day of the Lord. The term wherein, as used here, actually means “on account of which.” The heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire to make way for the day of God in which there will be the new heavens and earth. There are three significant events, each of which is associated with fire, that shall occur immediately after the Millennium. The first of these is the fire that falls from Heaven and destroys the great force which Satan will have assembled against Jerusalem following his release from the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:7-10). Another fiery event will be the destruction of the present heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:10-12). The third matter will be the casting of all unbelievers into the lake of fire after their judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).
The New Heavens and Earth (verse 13). Following the total dissolution of the present heavens and earth will come the new heavens and earth. The question has often been asked, “Will the new heavens and earth be an entirely new universe, or will they be a purification and renovation of the present heavens and earth?” Based on the fact that the present heavens and earth are a restoration of the original creation, it seems logical that the new heavens and earth will (could) be a restoration of the present universe. The promise to which Peter referred is a reference to some prophecies recorded by Isaiah (Isa. 65:17; 66:22). The original creation was marred by angelic sin, and the present heavens and earth are marred because of Adamic sin. However, the new heavens and earth will not have any trace of sin at all. Righteousness will be so pervasive throughout the universe that it will be considered part and parcel with the entire creation. Peter personified this by saying that righteousness shall dwell in the new heavens and earth. (Note: The preposition wherein in this verse is from a different Greek word than the term in verse 12; here the word essentially means “in which.”)

GROWING IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE 2 Peter 3:14-18

Previously, Peter exhorted his readers to maintain a holy life-style in view of all that is in store regarding the future. Here, the apostle gave additional instructions as to how believers should live and the need to be aware of biblical teachings. Spiritual growth, like physical growth, must be nurtured.

Christian Diligence (verse 14). The term wherefore connects Peter’s admonition in this verse with the promise of the sinless character of the new heavens and earth. Righteousness will prevail throughout the entire universe during the eternal day of God. Accordingly, practical righteousness should characterize the daily lives of believers. The term such things refers specifically to the new heavens and earth which God has promised. Associated with that promise is the fact that believers will meet the Lord first either through death or the rapture. Be diligent is from the same basic term as in 2 Peter 1:5. (See Lesson 10 for comments.) To be found in peace is to have the peace of God mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:7. The expressions, without spot, and blameless, remind one of 2 Peter 2:13 in which the ungodly people against whom Peter warned were said to be “spots . . . and blemishes.” However, believers are to be without spot, or without defilement and blameless. (Note: The Greek word for blemish essentially means “blameful.”) Those who look for
the return of Christ and all that shall occur in connection with the second coming will live holy and godly lives.

**The Long-suffering of Our Lord (verse 15).** In verse 9, Peter referred to the long-suffering of God and emphasized His grace and mercy along with His desire for the salvation of every individual. Here, the apostle gave a similar emphasis by stating that “the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (verse 15). Generally speaking, through His great patience and forbearance, God gives sinners many opportunities to be saved. Few people repent of their sins and trust Christ as Savior upon their first time to be convicted to do so by the Holy Spirit. Most of us heard the gospel taught and preached many times before we responded in repentance and faith. Thus, the long-suffering of God was certainly a critical factor in our salvation. This is one reason why it is so important for people to hear the gospel as often as possible. Teachers, pastors, evangelists and missionaries should always be ready to tell about the good news of the salvation that is available through faith in Christ.

**The Wisdom Given to Paul (verse 15).** The recipients of this epistle were in an area, generally speaking, where Paul had ministered during some of his missionary tours. Some of those churches and individuals, such as those in Galatia and Asia, had received epistles from Paul which became part of the New Testament—Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. Paul was an intelligent man, and he was highly educated. However, in regard to the writings mentioned by Peter in this verse, Paul had the additional assistance of “wisdom given unto him” (verse 15). The source of that wisdom was God Himself. None of the writers of the Scriptures wrote only from his own wisdom, but they wrote instead “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Paul also addressed this matter in one of his epistles, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The wisdom which God gave to Paul enabled him to address properly the particular needs of the recipients of his epistles.

**Things Hard To Be Understood (verse 16).** In this verse, Peter broadened the scope of his remarks concerning the writings of Paul to include “all his epistles” (verse 16). The phrase these things refers to the matters addressed by Peter in chapter 3, such as the scoffers in the last days, the day of the Lord, the destruction of the present heavens and earth, the day of God and the new heavens and earth. Paul dealt with many more topics in his epistles, but Peter was concerned only with those which he himself had mentioned in this letter. The expression, hard to be understood, describe Paul's epistles, especially from the standpoint of human reasoning. Natural intelligence cannot fathom spiritual truths. However, “the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). Because spiritual truths must be spiritually perceived, those who are spiritually “unlearned and unstable wrest, . . . [the] scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). The Greek word for wrest, basically means “to distort” or “to pervert.” The term for destruction is translated perdition in verse 7 and denotes total ruin.
Beware, Lest You Fall (verse 17). The connecting word therefore links the exhortation of this verse with Peter’s observation in verse 16 regarding the destruction of the ungodly individuals who were distorting Paul’s teachings, and the phrase these things in this verse refers to the terrible fate of such men. Peter warned his readers not to be deceived by false teachers. The expression, error of the wicked, denotes the teachings of the ungodly, self-willed men whom the apostle denounced in chapter 2 of this epistle. Peter was especially concerned that his readers would not fall from their steadfastness. Note that Peter was not concerned that his readers might lose their salvation. The Greek word for steadfastness essentially refers to something that is strengthened, fixed or firmly established. Salvation is firmly established by God. What the believer needs to be concerned about is maintaining a consistent testimony of his or her salvation. Peter wanted the recipients of this epistle to have a firm testimony regarding their salvation and their assurance regarding such phenomena as the day of the Lord, the destruction of the present heavens and earth, the day of God and the new heavens and earth.

Grow in Grace (verse 18). To maintain the steadfastness which Peter mentioned in verse 17, believers need to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (verse 18). The tense of the verb grow denotes constant, continuous action. Growth in grace and spiritual knowledge should be ongoing experiences for believers. The grace and knowledge are from Christ. We readily understand that God is the source of all grace, whether saving grace or sustaining grace. However, we sometimes fail to remember that He is the source of spiritual knowledge as well. Those who depend upon human sources for spiritual knowledge will not be steadfast in their Christian testimony. Peter closed this epistle with a brief doxology in which he ascribed glory to Jesus Christ “now and for ever” (verse 18). The word now refers to this present age. For ever is from a term that appears only this one time in the New Testament, and literally means “the day of the age,” a reference undoubtedly to the eternal day of God in which righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and earth.

LIVING FOR CHRIST UNTIL HE RETURNS 2 Peter 3:1-18

Every believer should examine his or her life in the light of the divine promises regarding the end of this age and the dawn of the new age. The righteousness that will characterize the new heavens and earth should be reflected in the daily lives of believers. We have the inspired Scriptures to guide us, and we have grace and knowledge supplied by God to establish us. In looking for the day of the Lord and the day of God, we must also be looking for Christ to return for us.
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