

Studies in

I Peter

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The Scattered Aliens

Oh, how the early church suffered. Those early Christians were whipped, scourged, and mocked by the Jews. Thrown out of synagogues, removed from their native society; their blood stained stones which hastened their exit from this world. Later the Roman Empire began its persecution, and our brothers fled to the refuge of the catacombs, or died on martyr's stakes. Yes, they suffered. And to a portion of this suffering first century church, the apostle Peter writes:

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia ...” (I Peter 1:1). What a mournful picture this creates, “scattered aliens.” Yet this is inspired terminology for the first century church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and each of these terms has a meaning which the twentieth century church would do well to consider.

- **Aliens** - An alien is a foreigner, separated by cultural and language barriers from those around him. Thus the Christian lives in a different culture - called this way in the scripture, contrasted to the “futile way of life inherited from your forefathers” (I Peter 1:18). Living this different, holy life and speaking the language of the oracles of God, the child of God is distinguished from the world and therefore subject to suspicion, envy and persecution. Alien here is a compliment to those who lived the separated lifestyle pleasing to God which those first century Christians lived.
- **Scattered** - The early Christians recognized their calling and purpose on earth was to spread the word of God. So instead of congregating all in one place and forming a comfortable little community they scattered throughout their regions, carrying the gospel with them in spite of the suffering Peter makes as the major subject of this a letter.

The twentieth century believer needs to recognize that he also is an alien. If he doesn't feel like an alien, he is too much at home in the world and is in need of a deeper desire to be a friend of God, which will make this world his enemy.

And each twentieth century Christian needs to be a spreader of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and willing to “scatter” to accomplish that great and primary goal.

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The Choice of God

Brave men. The best men. Choice men! “Out of all these people 700 choice men were left handed each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss” (Judges 20:16). Brave men. The best men. Choice men. Chosen from the ranks.

That’s what Christians are: Choice men, chosen from the best the world has to offer. To certain of these, those in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia. and Bithynia, the venerable apostle Peter writes: “who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (I Peter 1:1,2).

- **God’s choosing** - When God chooses, He does not choose the unprepared or the inactive. Those choice men of Benjamin had to practice a long time to be able to sling a stone at a hair and not miss. In the same way then, the chosen of God must “Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (II Peter 1:10). The chosen of God “must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).
- **The foreknowledge of God** - God foreknows everything, both general and specific. He sees what is, what has been, and what will be. He understands the whole scope of history, yet numbers the hairs of each living person. But does His foreknowledge preclude individual choice? Jesus, for example “was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Yet the guilt and responsibility for His death was justly laid upon the heads of the Jews for allowing this to happen. “You nailed [Him] to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death,” intoned Peter. The foreknowledge of God is not intended to turn children of God into sluggards; the foreknowledge of God’s choosing is to be an encouragement to keep going on through suffering, to persevere because he knows what the outcome of his faith is going to be.
- **Grace and peace in the fullest measure** - God’s grace likewise is intended to motivate the Christian. When he truly admires Christ, and desires to be like Him, the disciple needs to know that the Father approvingly watches his fumbling attempts to imitate his elder brother. The surpassing peace which then envelopes the honest heart provides the atmosphere for the most rapid progress and maximum performance.

The scattered aliens suffered in the first century. But they suffered in confidence, aware of the full grace and peace of God. They knew they were choice men in the Lord, called according to His infinite knowledge.

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Obedience and Sanctification

1500 years of Old Testament sacrifices prepared the nation of Israel - and through them, all mankind - for the one-time offering of Jesus Christ. The blood of countless sacrifices was sprinkled around the altar, which sat in front of the temple in Jerusalem, and the blood of hundreds of calves and goats was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the most holy place. Sprinkled blood, splattered all over those lustrous altars.

Furthermore, the old covenant itself was inaugurated with sprinkled blood, as the writer of Hebrews attests: “For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.’ And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood” (Hebrews 9:19-21).

This literal sprinkling of literal blood set the stage for the spiritual - the real and true “sprinkling” of Jesus’ blood. After Jesus died on Golgotha, His blood was physically shed. But while the blood of His flesh soaked into the ground, His “spiritual blood” - His true blood - was now available for spiritual cleansing. Thus, Jesus entered a spiritual, non-physical tabernacle - “not of this creation” (Hebrews 9:11) - with His spiritual, non-physical blood. And as those vessels of the first covenant were sanctified by sprinkled, physical blood, so the spiritual things - the church and heaven - are sanctified by Jesus’ sprinkled spiritual blood. “Therefore it was necessary for the copies [the physical tabernacle and its implements] of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves [the church and heaven] with better sacrifices [the sprinkled spiritual blood of Christ] than these” (Hebrews 9:23).

The One who makes the “spiritual blood” operative in the “spiritual covenant” is the Holy Spirit. Under the physical covenant, “the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled” sanctified for the cleansing of the flesh. But because the new covenant is spiritual, the Holy Spirit performs the unseen, non-physical actions. Thus Christ Himself was sanctified by the Holy Spirit - “who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God”. The sanctification afforded under the new covenant is when that same eternal Spirit sprinkles the spiritual blood of Christ on the heart of the believer. In immersion, then, “our hearts [are] sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

Peter, with all this in mind, greets the brethren in what is now northern and western Turkey, “who are chosen ... by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood” (I Peter 1:2).

In immersion a person:

1. Obeys Jesus
2. Is sprinkled with His blood
3. Is sanctified by the Holy Spirit

No obedience, no cleansing, and no sanctification. And may we continue to obey Jesus!

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Born Again to a Living Hope

If you were to turn your radio dial to one of the “religious broadcasting stations”, you would hear “born again, born again, born again.” And not one in a thousand of those on radio, or on TV for that matter, will teach what the inspired word of God says about being “born again.” The anathemas of God will ring down upon their heads.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” says Peter “who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3). So, scripturally, how is one *born again*? Do we find anyone in the inspired record kneeling down and “inviting Jesus” into his heart? Do we find the apostles preaching that their hearers need to pray for Jesus to come in and take control of their lives?

- **Beginning of the Church** – On the day of Pentecost, 30 AD, recorded in Acts 2, the gospel of Christ was preached for the first time. Inquiring souls were informed they were to “repent, and... be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of [their] sins,” and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. To be “born again,” a person must have his sins forgiven. 3000 souls gladly received Peter’s words, and were immersed that day for the express purpose of having their sins forgiven, and to be indwelt by the Spirit.
- **Saul of Tarsus** – Saul, later known as the apostle Paul, was not saved on the Damascus road, though Jesus spoke to Saul - he was not forgiven until he was immersed. In the words of Ananias, sent with the full backing of Jesus, Saul was to “arise, and be immersed, and wash away [his] sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). Saul could not be “born again” until his sins were washed away.
- **The Roman Road** - There are those who use “The Roman Road” to teach the message of salvation to lost and damned to hell sinners. Honest teachers of the word would not want to avoid Romans 6:4: “Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life.” In immersion a person is buried with Christ, followed by his resurrection with Christ, he is thus “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” and “walks in newness of life.”
- **Jesus to Nicodemus** - In describing “born again” to the teacher of Israel, Jesus said “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). All men are born of flesh; the spiritual birth is accomplished in the waters of immersion, wherein the individual receives the Holy Spirit. “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

A person can only be “born again” as he in repentance is immersed in water by the authority of Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins, and to receive the indwelling Spirit. Peter, who first spoke this truth, emphasized it in opening his first epistle. The Father, he said, “caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

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An Unfading Inheritance

In earthly terms, it makes a difference what family you are born into. Before modern tax codes went into effect, a man could pass his farm or his business on to his son or daughter, as it is written, “House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers” (Proverbs 19:14). Thus, what an honor it would be to be part of the family of God, to have Him as a Father, and what a glorious inheritance it would be. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again, to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (I Peter 1:3,4).

These are not small or insignificant words - we have been born again to obtain an inheritance. Consider some of the qualities of this inheritance, and marvel at its great value:

- **Imperishable** - What a disappointment, to open a box of fruit and find it spoiled or rotten. It was perishable. But our inheritance is imperishable; it will not spoil or rot or smell bad. It will be fresh and light on the day it is opened to us.
- **Undefiled** - What a disappointment, to open the door of a new car and find dead rats all over the front seat. The car is defiled; you now want nothing to do with it. But our inheritance is undefiled; nothing unclean or abominable happens to make it defiled, it will be clean and bright the day it is opened for us.
- **Unfading** - What a disappointment to have received a check for \$100,000, and with all those plans to serve the Lord with the windfall, to watch the ink on the check disappear. It was not fading. But our inheritance will not fade away; it will be solid and right the day it is opened for us.
- **Reserved in heaven** - What a disappointment, to have booked the finest hotel in Italy, only to arrive and find that there has been some mistake, there are no reservations, that the hotel is full, and you are turned out into the street. It was not reserved for you. But our inheritance is reserved, and there will be no mistake. It will be secure and tight the day it is opened for us.

This is a marvelous inheritance. God is to be blessed because He gives it to us. God has caused us to be born again that we may obtain it. God has implanted a living hope in our hearts that we may reach it without faltering.

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Protected by God's Power

In the past ages, when God spoke to the fathers in the prophets in many positions and many ways, He demonstrated His power in physical visible ways. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. He parted the Red Sea. He filled Solomon's temple with the cloud. The horses and chariots swung low for Elijah. Even Jesus Himself performed miracles to demonstrate that He was the Son of God, both in the flesh, and in His bodily resurrection from the dead.

But the greatest demonstrations of God's power were not physical, and were not in any sense visible. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul spoke of "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:19). This power, said he, is "in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ,"

1. When He raised Him from the dead.
2. When He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Note that no one actually saw Jesus rise from the dead. He was seen after His resurrection, but the actual demonstration of the power, which raised Jesus was invisible. Similarly, the apostles saw Jesus lifted off the earth and received by a cloud, but His actual ascension to the throne was not and could not be seen with the physical eye. The two greatest demonstrations of God's power can be perceived only by the eye of faith.

When we were immersed into Christ and turned to the Lord, that same great power was exerted. Again Paul, speaking this time to the Colossians, says that we have "been buried with Him [Christ] in immersion, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). In this way Christians are raised up with Christ and seated with Him on the throne (Ephesians 2:6); and the same non-visible power exerted in Christ's resurrection and ascension was exerted when we were born from above. But for that power to be operative, we must have faith - we must have the mental picture of Christ risen and ascended - in God's working, when we obey Him in immersion.

God's great power operated in raising Christ and seating Him on the throne. His great power functioned in raising us individually from the dead and seating us (by faith) with Christ. But that same awesome power continues to infuse the brother who truly walks by faith who truly continues to hold before him the image of Christ in glory. "I pray," said Paul, "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know... what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:18, 19). This power is not visible, that is why Paul prayed that our spiritual eyes might be opened.

This power, then, is:

- Exhibited in raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him on the throne
- Exerted in raising us from the dead and seating us with Christ when we turn to the Lord in immersion
- Exercised continually toward those who walk by faith

This is what Peter had in mind when he wrote to those first century Christians who were to receive the unfading inheritance, "who are protected by the power of God" (I Peter 1:5).

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A Salvation Revealed in the Last Time

When the word salvation is mentioned there is a tendency among brethren to think of salvation of the soul. But when the apostle Peter speaks of “a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time” (I Peter 1:5), there is more involved. Salvation, and its synonyms, redemption and deliverance, have actually had increasing meaning attached to them by God.

- **Salvation from enemies** - With the Red Sea in front of them, and the chariots of Pharaoh thundering down on them from the rear, the Israelites seemed trapped. In this condition, they cried out to the Lord and complained to Moses. As Moses prepared to stretch forth his rod over the Red Sea, he said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today” (Exodus 14:13). This is salvation (or deliverance, or redemption) from her enemies. Israel, then, eventually expected a Messiah, a Savior, a Redeemer, a Deliverer of Israel, who would come and physically deliver her from her physical enemies. Thousands shouted Hosanna at the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on the donkey, expecting Him to bring salvation from the Roman oppressors. But they wept in despair or turned their backs on Him when He died on a cross, bringing a different deliverance.
- **Salvation of the soul** - When an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph who was betrothed to Mary, he explained, “And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus [Yahweh our Savior], for it is He who will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Therefore, when a man turns to the Lord in immersion, his soul or inner man is washed, and he is spoken of as redeemed (Galatians 3:13) or saved (Titus 3:5).
- **Salvation of the body** - Even though the soul is saved - if we continue in faith, steadfast and unmoved - the body is decaying, “We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). This redemption, or salvation, of the body will occur at Jesus’ second coming when the body of this humble state is transformed into conformity with the body of His glory” (Philippians 3:20,21). Thus Christ, “having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (Hebrews 9:28). And the guarantee of this desired resurrection is the indwelling Spirit, “who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:14).

Blessed indeed, then, is the child of God who is “protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Keep your faith!

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Joy In Trials

This very title sounds as if it had been lifted from the well-known passage in James: “Consider it all joy, my brethren,” he said, “when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (James 1:3). But it actually comes from I Peter: “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:6,7).

God expects the Christian not only to endure trial, but to “greatly rejoice” during these distresses. To be able to have such joy generally requires an attitude adjustment on our part. And to make such an attitude adjustment on our part requires some very good reasons as to why we should make this alteration.

- **The coming salvation** - The Christian having been born again to a living hope in immersion, and protected by God’s power for the salvation or redemption of the body at Jesus’ second coming, can rejoice greatly in any earthly trial. He regards these distresses as “momentary, light affliction”, and recognizes that each trial produces “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (II Corinthians 4:17). The key to being able to do this is being able to continually focus on the great hope of being resurrected from the dead.
- **These trials last only a little while** -You know that you can endure anything if you know that the pain is only for a short time, especially if it is followed by joy. This is why the word travail is so often used: the pain, though intense, is comparatively short-lived. and followed by the great joy of having given birth. Our time on earth is the short-lived pain; the great joy of having been born from the dead follows.
- **Faith generally must be tested by fire** - Just as gold needs to be fire-refined to remove impurities, our faith must be proved by fire. “Abraham, the father of us all...did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Romans 4:16,20). In the same way, we must grow strong in faith, and our spiritual muscles are strengthened and conditioned by doing many “reps” [repetitions] in overcoming trials.

If the Christian can refocus his thoughts during times of distress, returning his mind to these great and powerful points brought forth by Peter, he will be able to greatly rejoice. It is imperative that we have joy in living, that our faith may indeed be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And that, brethren, is what it is all about.

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Praise and Glory and Honor

A Christian greatly rejoices in trials. The reason he does so is that he knows that his faith is like pure gold - it can stand the test of fire, whereas fool's gold or false faith withers in the furnace of testing. The child of God who walks in truth welcomes the challenge; knowing the great value of his true faith, he is anxious for this world to see those of false faith falter when they must leave the strutting of the parade ground and face the full fury of combat. The Christian greatly rejoices in trials.

Another reason the Christian rejoices in trial is that the genuineness of his faith - refined through testing - will be "found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:7). The brother of Christ who has the proper attitude about his life wants everything he does to glorify God, so it is the highest possible source of joy for him to know that his tested faith gives praise and honor and glory to the Almighty, and that these are mutually returned to him at the Lord second coming.

- **Praise** - The child of God has been called out of darkness into the Father's marvelous light, seen by faith in Christ. He learns to enjoy singing praises to God, as Jesus did. He learns to praise God in the opening of his daily and constant prayers, as Jesus did. "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God; that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). As he puts effort into praising God, the believer then trains his mind to look for that which is "worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8). Having learned the value of praise, the Christian is excited to find that his overcoming faith is going to result in praise at the end of time.
- **Glory** - The character and brightness of the Father is described by the word *glory*. "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift," says James, "is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Thus, when we give someone, in an earthly sense, well-deserved glory, we put "light" on them. Likewise, when we glorify God, we reflect His light back to Him. As the child of God successfully maintains his faith through trial, he will receive glory from God, and will thus glorify God at the revelation of Jesus.
- **Honor** - Honor is deserved respect, which sets a man above his fellows. An honorable name is much to be cherished and preserved. The honor of virginity is much to be protected. Honor is given to God, and the Christian is honored at the revelation of Jesus Christ for maintaining his faith firm to the end.

Praise and glory and honor rise to God when the Christian perseveres in joy. And praise and honor and glory are granted to the faithful brother at Christ's return. It is worth "going for." "Just do it."

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The positive results of our faith according to Peter will be praise and glory and honor “at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:7). Jesus is hidden now from the view of man’s eye; He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, “who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see” (I Timothy 6:16). But someday soon He is going to be revealed, and when He is, the following events will occur:

- **All the dead shall be raised** - “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed,” says the apostle Paul, “then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). And, as he says in another place, He “will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory” (Philippians 3:21). The transformation - this being revealed in Glory - is the resurrection of the saints from the dead. And of that day, Jesus Himself said, “For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear [My] voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28,29). All, good and evil alike, will be raised in the same hour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- **Jesus will execute Judgment** - “When the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,” says Paul again, He will deal out “retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (II Thessalonians 1:7,8). And Jude, faithful bond-servant of Jesus, adds what was prophesied even before the Flood, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all” (Jude 14,15).
- **The universe will disintegrate** - “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot,” said Jesus. “They were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and *destroyed* them all. It will be just the same on the *day that the Son of Man is revealed*” (Luke 17:28-30). Paul takes up the same theme: “For you yourselves know full well that *the day of the Lord will come just like a thief* in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then *destruction* will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (I Thessalonians 5:2,3). And Peter adds: “But *the day of the Lord will come like a thief*, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (II Peter 3:10)

But those of us who walk by faith through the fires of earthly trial find praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:8,9). It is worth whatever a man must go through to have that happy outcome at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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The Salvation of Your Souls

Jesus asked two great questions: “For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26) These questions simply point out the great value of each person’s soul, and correspondingly the great value of those spiritual truths connected with the salvation of each soul.

- **Jesus died on the cross to save our souls** - “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance,” Paul informed Timothy “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost” (I Timothy 1:15). “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,” he spoke in another place (I Corinthians 15:3)
- **Jesus’ resurrection saves us** - “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, *much more*, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). “Immersion now saves you...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:21).
- **Jesus’ continued intercession saves us** - Jesus, by the power of an indestructible life, exhibited by the ascension to the throne with His own blood in hand, is our High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. The writer of Hebrews speaks: “Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrew 7:25). And Paul concurs: “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Romans 8:34).
- **The Holy Spirit saves us** - Not only did Jesus die on our behalf, He rose from the dead, and ascended to the throne to intercede for us, He also sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts. As he told the apostles, “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7). And Paul writes to Titus: “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and *renewing by the Holy Spirit*, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:5,6)

When we see all that God has done to save us, it should produce a corresponding vibration within us to be saved. The words of Peter, addressed to those of us whose faith is being tested, are thus very encouraging. Focusing our attention on Jesus and what He has done to carry us through, he writes: “You greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:8,9).

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The Prophets Served You

It has been well-said that redemption's song is one the angels cannot sing. Of all God's creatures, man and man alone is in need of and the recipient of salvation. Of this great salvation Peter writes: "As to this salvation the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look" (I Peter 1:10-12).

These points stand out:

- The Old Testament prophets prophesied the grace that would come to us.
- These Old Testament prophets did not understand their own prophecies even though they made careful search and inquiry.
- The Spirit of Christ (another name for the Holy Spirit) worked within them to make these predictions. This is Old Testament filling with the Spirit, as contrasted to the indwelling Spirit which is the distinguishing mark of the New Covenant.
- The Holy Spirit predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. As Peter said, after John and He had healed a lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). Likewise the glories to follow were prophesied: Christ's resurrection, His ascension to the throne in glory, and His sending the Spirit of glory.
- But these things were hidden from the prophets. It was revealed to them, however, that they were serving peoples to come in the last days; that is, we who fall under the New Covenant of Christ.
- These things were first announced in the first century. The Holy Spirit revealed the meaning of these Old Testament prophecies through the apostles and New Testament prophets - the foundation of the church of the living God, Jesus Himself being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).
- These things were revealed through preaching. Never discount the importance of gospel preaching in God's way of doing things.
- These are things into which angels long to look. Those angels who have sinned and have been placed in eternal bonds under darkness probably wish there were some means of redemption for them. And those angels who have been faithful servants of God can only marvel at the response of grateful men, who have been snatched from the fire by a loving Savior.

To the only wise God and King eternal we offer praise and thanksgiving for having revealed to us His great salvation and for the Spirit-inspired gospel which has been preached to us from the pages of His holy word.

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Results of Salvation

Since you are the possessor of salvation what should you be doing? The apostle Peter, having emphasized, in a multitude of ways the greatness of this salvation, begins a list with the word *therefore*. The Holy Spirit then working through Peter, has drawn some conclusions for us. He says, “*Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober [in spirit], fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written ‘You shall be holy, for I am Holy;’*” (I Peter 1:13-16).

Let us carefully consider these items which the Holy Spirit has noted:

- **Gird your minds for action** - Before an individual can accomplish any systematic action for the Lord (which involves most aspects of Christianity), he must first mentally prepare himself; he must set his mind. This is the first point, therefore, on the Holy Spirit’s list.
- **Keep Sober** - The idea here is to recognize the importance of salvation, the importance of following scripture, and the importance of the glorified Christ and His church. A sober-minded individual can look past buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, to the important eternal things. He doesn’t “laugh them off;” he seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- **Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ** - By being able to focus on eternity, the child of God can rise above the temptations and trials of this life. He is confident in his relationships with mankind, for His relationship with his heavenly Father is secure.
- **Obedient children** - Children are expected to do what they are told to do, and to do it now with a good attitude. That is our relationship as Christians with our heavenly Father, and instructions He has given us in His word are to be heeded and obeyed just as surely as if He had given each of us a verbal command.
- **Do not be conformed to your former lusts which were yours in your ignorance** - The Christian can no longer claim ignorance as an excuse for carrying our fleshly desires. These desires tend to press the individual into their mold; they conform him. The Christian is to flee those lusts, and become conformed to the image of Christ.
- **Be Holy in all your behavior** - God is holy. He expects those who are called by His name to be holy also. The question is: “Is what I am doing or thinking right now holy?” The Christian needs to engage in holy activities in all his behavior.

Having been regenerated in the waters of immersion, and having had his sins washed away therein through the blood of Christ, the child of God is ready to follow the instructions of the Holy Spirit in grateful obedience. Because he has fixed his hope on Jesus’ return, he willingly tackles any challenge this life has to offer. Is this what salvation has produced in you?

Studies in I Peter

Conduct Yourselves in Fear

Conduct has to do with how a person carries himself, his manners, his deportment. Most people tend to act differently in the enclosure of their back yards than they do at formal weddings. The individual's conduct varies according to the circumstance and to the others the human being perceives to be present. Peter draws on this characteristic to exhort the disciples of Christ to be holy in all their behavior: "And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay [on earth]; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:17-19). These points are worthy of consideration:

- **If you address as Father** - Only Christians, as sons of God, can really call God *Father*. Peter is simply making the point that if we claim to be Christians, then we had better "shape up."
- **The One who impartially judges according to each man's work** - Peter's fellow preacher, Paul, emphasizes that we shall all give an account. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). The Father judges impartially; He will not call a bad deed good just because a child of His performed it. Knowing that God will judge and that He will judge fairly, will encourage the one who does right to continue, and the one who does wrong to cease to rationalize his behavior, and do right.
- **Conduct yourselves with fear during the time of your stay upon earth** - The child of God needs to be conscious that his Father is checking on him. For the body of Christ as a whole, there needs to be a recognition that God can and will send wayward children to the eternal fire if necessary, so that each Christian can have the initial motivation to get him to understand and follow "the upward call of God" (Philippians 3:14). And since our time on earth is short, we can sacrifice whatever earthly pleasures may appeal to us for the sake of eternity.
- **You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold** - Our conduct is directly related to how valuable we think we are. The Almighty is communicating to us each individual's great worth. We were not ransomed with something as cheap as, say, \$1,000,000 in gold. We are worth much more than that.
- **You were redeemed with Jesus' precious blood** - The most valuable item to ever be used to procure a captive's release was the precious blood of Jesus.

Each Christian needs to remember just how valuable and important he is; knowing the great value of God's sacrifice for him, and knowing that the Father is now carefully watching him, the child of God needs to conduct himself in fear, so that the Father will applaud his performance, instead of frowning in disapproving judgment.

Studies in I Peter

A New Way of Life

At the Wilson household, there are some things we just don't do. We don't, for example, use "cuss words." And if one of the smaller children uses a word he picked up from somewhere, we explain, "We don't use words like that at our house. It's not our way of life." On the positive side, there are some things we always do. We always pray before every meal. We explain, "At our house, we always pray before we eat. It's our way of life."

In the good old U.S. of A., people can choose their lifestyles; they can easily choose their way of life. They can follow "the American dream," pursuing thick steaks, soft beds, and back yard swimming pools. The question is, is their choice of life-style in harmony with God's word?

Every society in the history of man has essentially chosen to go their own way. They refused to have God in their knowledge any longer; "they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). Thus plunged into darkness, they easily became materialists, and set the value of silver and gold above things in the spiritual realm. Peter works on placing the value of the spiritual above the material: "You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18,19).

The Christian needs to recognize that the value system of his forefathers was futile. In becoming a child of God, he becomes a part of the household of God; and in this way of life, there are certain things we do in this house, and there are certain things we don't do in this house.

- In this house, we don't lie, cheat, or steal. Since silver and gold are not that valuable, comparatively speaking, there is no need to lie, cheat, or steal to get them.
- In this house, we don't engage in coarse jesting, off-color jokes, people put-downs or silly talk.
- In this house, we don't yell at each other, or call names. We have put all this wrath, bitterness, anger and clamor behind us.
- In this house, we regard the apostles' doctrine, fellowship and breaking of bread, and prayer to be of utmost importance. We know that we were redeemed from a pointless way of life, and these are the things we now put value on in our new way of living.
- In this house, Jesus Christ is our hero, and the One we look up to. He is the One who rescued our family from a horrible captivity and we are very grateful to Him. No one says anything bad about Jesus at our house and no one complains about anything He wants us to do.
- In our house, there is a real emphasis on purity and holiness. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was unblemished and spotless and these qualities are very important at our house

The obedient children of God live holy lives. They have a new way of life they learned from Jesus, and have set aside the futile value system and way of life inherited from fleshly forefathers.

Studies in I Peter

Your Faith and Hope Are in God

Satan is at work. The subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle pulls of this world tug away at the heart of the believer. The child of God, then, wants to “fix [his] hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:13). No longer ignorant, he is to be holy as his heavenly Father is holy, knowing that he was set free from Satan’s snare and brought into a new way of life by the precious blood of the very Lamb of God Himself. When each Christian understands how important he is to the Father, and the commitment the Son made on his behalf, he will be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and be moved to continually upgrade his performance.

Peter throws in another reminder: “For He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (I Peter 1:20,21).

- **He was foreknown before the foundation of the world** - Who is the One who shed his blood? If He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, He must be the venerable One, the very Ancient of Days Himself.
- **He has appeared in these last times for the sake of you** - The One who was foreknown before the foundation of the world was willing to appear, as a man for the sake of each Christian. Blessed indeed are those who live after the cross, who live in these last times, who have the full revelation of the One who has received glory and eternal dominion.
- **You through Him are believers in God** -The apostle John comments on this same point “For the Law was given through Moses: grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (John 1:17,18). Only through Jesus can we come to know the Father; and through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, multitudes of those who would otherwise never even thought seriously about God come to believe in Him.
- **God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory** - God’s power in the Old Testament was described in His creation of the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. Following Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the throne of glory, God’s great power was then defined by those events. Thus the power of God is described here.
- **So that your faith and hope are in God** - What power does Satan have, what power does the world have, or what power does self have in comparison to the One who raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory? It becomes obvious in whom the Christian should have faith and hope.

God has done great things for the sake of those who will believe in Him through Jesus Christ, whom He raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of power. Let us respond to God’s offering by having faith and hope in Him, and in being holy as He is holy.

Studies in I Peter

Obedience to the Truth

The word of God is very concerned about truth. Luke opened his gospel account with these words: “It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus so that you might know the exact *truth* about the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3,4). Jesus Himself was “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). And the aged John would write, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking *in truth*” (III John 4). And this is important truth: where a man spends eternity rests on this truth.

But why this emphasis in the word of God on truth? “Because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (I John 4:1). “For many walk, of whom I often told you,” intoned Paul, “and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ” (Philippians 3:18). There are those who will lie to others - deceiving and being deceived themselves - about the truth of the word of God. In fact, there are so many false prophets pointing people down the broad way that leads to destruction that few find the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

So Peter would write: “Since you have in obedience to the *truth* purified your souls...” (I Peter 1:22). There are some important points connected with Peter’s statement.

- Truth must be obeyed as well as believed.
- For the soul to be purified, obedience is required.
- The soul cannot be purified, no matter how sincere the individual is, in obedience to falsehood.

There is only one way of salvation revealed in the pages of the word of God. Uniformly, the following occurred:

- **The message of Jesus Christ was preached** - No one can have scriptural faith without hearing the preaching of the word of God (Romans 10:14-17) (I Corinthians 1:21).
- **The message of truth was believed** - The death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were essential elements of the gospel, and no one could be said to have faith apart from a heartfelt belief in the truth of the testimony of the inspired men on these points.
- **Belief in the truth moved the individual to repentance** - The message is simple and clear: repent or perish (Luke 13:3, II Peter 3:9).
- **Public confession** of belief that “Jesus is Lord” is required (Romans 10:9,10).
- **Immersion in water** was required remission of sins and, therefore, for purification of the soul (Acts 2:38). In immersion, a person was to turn to the Lord, in order that his sins might be forgiven (Acts 3:19, Acts 26:18).

Any other means men might propose are lies. Those who would speak of sins forgiven in sprinkling, or in “accepting Jesus into your heart” are false prophets, and those who listen to them still have unpurified souls. Purify your souls in obedience to the truth!

Studies in I Peter

Fervently Love One Another

Love and truth go together. In our society, there is a counter tendency, however, to say that: if you love someone, you do not tell them the truth (specifically, “unpleasant truth”). But people make life decisions on what they perceive to be truth. And if a person does not know the truth, he is going to make the wrong decision. That’s why in the Bible, love and truth go together. “But speaking *the truth* in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). “*Love* ...does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the *truth*” (I Corinthians 13:6). And to our passage from I Peter, “Since you have in obedience to the *truth* purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again...” (I Peter 1:22,23).

The following points should be considered:

- **Purified Souls** - By obeying the gospel in repentance and immersion, the brother in Christ now has a purified soul. The soul has not only been cleansed from a defiled conscience and past impurities, but it is now pure, thinking pure thoughts, operating from pure motives. “To the pure,” Paul instructed Titus, “all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure” (Titus 1:15).
- **A sincere love of the brethren** - The pure soul has been purified for the express purpose of loving the brethren. God has always been insistent that there is no love for Him unless the brothers are loved. “If someone says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (I John 4:20). And this must be a sincere love, a love that in all honesty and truth really cares about the interests of others and what is best for others.
- **Fervently love one another from the heart** - Not only is this love to be sincere, it is to be fervent. Fervent love is not love from a distance. It is a love that is involved in the lives of others, a love that is strong enough to overcome the emotional problems inherent in close relationships, a love that extends itself in imitation of Him who first loved us. And, again, this love must flow from the heart; it must honestly flow from pure inner motives.
- **For you have been born again** - In simple terms, the child of God has been brought forth from the watery grave of immersion for the express purpose of loving others.

Have you personally followed up on this reason for your purification? Were you immersed into Christ expecting some sort of “fire insurance,” and continued living the same uninvolved, selfish life? Re-read this section of the word of God, and *with fervor*, throw yourself into the activities of the church of the living God.

Studies in I Peter

You Have Been Born Again of Imperishable Seed

“Born again” is one of those phrases which has been used so much and so badly that it has lost much of its meaning. But Biblical being “born again” is such a powerful concept that we must not let its hackneyed use in the world strip from our sensibilities its wondrous scope and application. “You have been born again,” Peter reminds us, “not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God” (I Peter 1:23).

- **The mechanics in being born again** - No one can be born again other than what is specified in the word of God. Without Biblical faith in Jesus, the individual simply will not be justified by God, and God will not act to cause him to be born from above. Biblical faith includes belief in the inspired testimony concerning Jesus, repentance, confession of Jesus’ lordship, and immersion into His name. When a person thus turns to the Lord, and is “born of water and spirit” (John 3:5), the mechanics which God has specified are fulfilled.
- **The heart required in being born again** -The heart, the whole inner being of the individual, must be right – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,” states the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37), and from this all others flow. Each among us must then “believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead” (Romans 10:9)
- **The power of God be exerted in our being born again** - Just as in the processes of physical birth, a whole new being comes into existence, so also is being born of God. “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away, behold, new things have come” (II Corinthians 5:17). The tremendous power of God that was exerted in raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him at His right hand was also exerted in our immersion (Colossians 2:12). Hence each Christian is spoken of as “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10).
- **The agency of the word of God in our being born again** - Without the word of God, no one could be “born again.” In the wisdom of God, the word of God must be preached to the individual; it must be “sown in his heart” (Matthew 13:19). When the seed of God’s word takes root and the hearer obeys the gospel, through the power of God exerted in conjunction with the word of God, the believer is born from above.

Praise God for His imperishable seed! “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the *word of truth*, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures” (James. 1:18). And what a powerful and permanent birth this is in contrast to the transitory nature of birth in the flesh. We have been born again “through the *living* and *abiding* word of God!”

Studies in I Peter

The Word of the Lord Abides Forever

It's party time! A son has been born in the big house, ensuring the continuation of the lineage, and that there is an heir to the property. Joy in fleshly birth. Joy in the birth of another who bears the image of Adam. But what kind of birth is this in comparison to spiritual birth? What kind of birth is this which imparts the image of Adam in comparison to a birth which "stamps" the image of Christ - "second Adam from above" in its place? (See I Corinthians 15:44-49.) What kind of birth is this from "perishable" seed as contrasted to that which is from "imperishable" seed?

"For

ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS;
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER.

And this is the word which was preached to you" (I Peter 1:24,25)

- **All flesh is like grass** - Flesh ages. The voluptuous young woman, bursting with life, becomes the toothless hag. The strapping young man, bounding with energy, becomes the crippled shuffler. But because this occurs over the lifetime of man, the process to man seems slow. The young person especially tends to think of himself as ever being old. Thus the Holy Spirit brings forth the words of Isaiah, calling out, "all flesh is like grass." It lasts but a season, fresh and green and lush this month, withered and yellow and dry the next.
- **Its Glory like the flower of Grass** - Ah, for the pomp and circumstance of royalty; trumpets blaring, courtiers fawning, the scramble for the high table. Or for the applause of the audience, the name in bold letters on the marquee, the front page of People magazine, recognition as a celebrity everywhere you go. Or for the arena filled with 100,000, the stands ringing with the shouts of your name, media publicity everywhere you go, your name known by every boy in the country. Glory! Earthly fame! But what is it? If the grass is short-lived; if the plants themselves last but a season; what about the fragile flower? Yes, earthy glory is like the flower of grass; that which was now lays in withered petals, scattered emptily on the ground beside the aging plant.
- **But the Word of the Lord abides forever** – "Heaven and earth shall pass away," said Jesus, "but My words shall never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). In contrast to the short-lived, withering attributes, of the flesh and its glory, the word which causes us to be born again to a living hope lives forever. The intelligent man, looking at this, will throw his efforts into that which offers eternal return of his investment.

"And this is the word which was preached to you." You who have heard and obeyed the real truth of the gospel need to fall on your knees and praise Him for the grace, which brought His eternal word and eternal life to you.

Studies in I Peter

Long for the Pure Milk of the Word

The fleshly man has a hard time grasping the importance of the eternal. While he may pay lip service to the pull of the upward call of God, his life testifies that things of the flesh and glories of the flesh are more important to him, where he and his family spend their time and their money - particularly when it comes to choosing between two immediate alternatives - is a good indication.

But the word of our Lord, which has been preached to us, abides forever, and eternity entreats us to lay aside the pettiness connected with an earth-life mentality. “Therefore putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect for salvation if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (I Peter 2:1-3).

- **Malice** - wicked intent, desire to get even or hurt
- **Guile** - Secret plotting, deliberate attempt to subtly hurt or destroy.
- **Hypocrisy** - To try to look like a good Christian on the outside, but to be unchanged and rotten in real conduct.
- **Envy** - Desiring, with furious intensity, that which another possesses in terms of respect, position or location.
- **Slander** - Spreading lies or partial truths in an attempt to discredit someone else’s character

These characteristics of the flesh need to be put aside. They are all the result of a short-term mind set, and emphasis on the flesh or the glory of flesh. Instead of these, the child of God is to:

- **Like a newborn babe, long for the pure milk of the word** - Newborns are regularly hungry, and if you’ve ever been around newborn babies, you’ll know this, they have a tremendous desire for their mothers’ milk. This picture is what the Holy Spirit is using to communicate to us the desire we need to have for His word. Note, too, that this desire is for the pure milk of the word, not adulterated with false doctrine or spiked with the admixture of men’s traditions.
- **But you may grow in respect to salvation** - God wants and expects growth. This baby if it does not grow rapidly after it has been born has something wrong with it. So the one newly born again, by feeding hungrily on God’s word is to grow. And specifically he is to grow in respect to salvation. There are many things that an individual in the throes of a convicted conscience, does not understand when the gospel of glory is proclaimed to him. Many things written in the epistles were simply reminders of what had been preached and taught before.

But the apostle is careful to put out a warning, a challenge. “If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord,” he says, each person needs to stop and carefully consider his salvation. He needs to test himself and examine himself to see if he is in the faith (II Corinthians 13:5). If then we have tasted of the kindness of the Lord, it should be evidenced in our putting aside the malice and related weaknesses of the flesh, and longing for the pure milk of God’s word. How do you stack up?

Studies in I Peter

Living Stones

Just the other evening while driving down the interstate, I was awestruck by the appearance of two complete, full-span rainbows. The light of the late August afternoon was just right; the burnt out grasses of the summer were a warming gold, the alfalfa fields and trees lush green, and the brilliant pillars of the inner rainbow seemed to vibrantly beckon the viewer into the very courts of heaven as they gently floated over the peaceful mountain valley.

But how much more splendor does our Lord Jesus possess! The brilliance of His majesty, the vibrancy of the life which is found in Him, and the peace which flows from the kindness of His mercy produce a sense of awe and reverence in the spiritual believer, which the most majestic of earthly rainbows could not touch. In this mood, awe and wonderment, our stranger and pilgrim upon the earth peers tremblingly through the pillars of heaven to Him who sits upon the throne, who suffered on this pilgrim's behalf, and who rose to glory to justify this same pilgrim. "And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:4,5).

- **Christ the living stone** - The angels had good news for the women who came to look at Jesus' grave. "Do not be afraid," he said, "for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said" (Matthew 28:5,6). He had been crucified but now He was living. Jesus is also described as a stone, in this case used in the construction of a spiritual building. As the cornerstone, Christ was the choicest and most precious in the sight of God. Men of course rejected Him and crucified Him because their fleshly nature blinded them spiritually. But in the eyes of the Father, Jesus is the choice, precious and living cornerstone
- **You also are living stones** – We were dead in the sins and transgressions of the flesh, but in being immersed into Christ we have been made alive with Him. As now living beings in God's eyes, we can be used as stones in this spiritual house, which God is now constructing. Just as the continuing construction of a physical building is proof of the existence of the physical builder (man), so also the progress in the erection of the spiritual building establishes the existence of the living God.

This spiritual building - this living temple for the habitation of the living God - is formed from the finest construction materials available. The cornerstone is the choice and precious Son of God Himself, but the rest of the building consists of us as Christians. Each of us must recognize our great worth, and praise God that He brought us forth from death to be living stones in this permanent and spiritual temple.

Studies in I Peter

A Spiritual Priesthood

Day after day those priests stood, clad in special priestly garb offering sacrifices at the altar in front of the temple. A lamb for the morning oblation, a lamb for the evening oblation, wave offerings, heave offerings, burnt offerings, peace offerings, grain offerings, sin offerings, new moons, festivals, Sabbaths - all these were observed in tiring round after round. But did those sacrifices take away sins? No! "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year" (Hebrews 10:3). The yoke of the law produced the consciousness of the weight of sin, which lays broadly across every man and woman's back.

But - praise God - He sent Jesus as the perfect one-time offering for all. "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired," it was prophesied as words of the Christ, "but a body You have prepared for Me" (Hebrews 10:5). "By this will [established at the death of Christ] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

This offering of Christ produced true forgiveness of sin, and provided the great transition from the physical realm to the spiritual realm. Note carefully the inspired words from the pen of Hebrews' author: "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, *not of this creation*; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but *through His own blood, He entered the holy place*, once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11,12). Jesus shed His blood physically upon the ground, but the blood, which He offered in the true holy place, heaven, was spiritual blood! And we, brethren, "have confidence to enter the holy place [spiritual] by the blood [spiritual] of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19,20).

In this new and living way, called Christianity, each child of God is a priest. "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood" (I Peter 2:5). But do we offer up the fat of rams, or trample the courts? Note that the "house" in which the believers function is a "spiritual house." Those who have turned to the Lord "offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5).

What a superior system to that of the old and imperfect covenant! Those sacrifices could never make the one who served perfect in conscience. But in the new and living way, through the living and abiding word of God, we come to a living Stone, being living stones ourselves, offering up spiritual sacrifices as spiritual priests.

So, my priestly friend, how spiritual are you, really? Do you really offer those sacrifices of praise? Do you really do good and share? Is all you do done in service to the Lord Jesus? There are no unspiritual priests in this house!

Studies in I Peter

The Service of the Spiritual Priesthood

Two words are important: worship and service. Old covenant worship was in Jerusalem, and occurred when the non-priest presented himself to the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem. Old covenant service was the activity of the priest in presenting offerings and sacrifices to the Lord. Hence the people of Israel collectively worshipped and served God. And if the hearts of the worshipers were not right, then the offering of sacrifices was in vain (see Isaiah 1). Acceptable service thus flows from worship.

But worship under the new covenant is not in Jerusalem, nor in any other physical location - it is internal; it is in Spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24). Just as old covenant service of the priests flowed from the worship of the people, new covenant service is derived from new covenant worship. Rather than flowing from people to priest, new covenant worship moves from external to internal. Worship is in spirit; in service the body is offered as a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Worship is the internal devotion of the individual; service is the outward expression of that which flows from within. If the heart is not right, then that which is offered externally is in vain. "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15).

Let us consider, then, five acts of service - spiritual sacrifices of a spiritual priesthood, which are misnamed worship in denominational, unscriptural terminology

- **Singing and Praying** - These two can be considered together in that they are both audible expressions which ascend to God. "Through Him [Christ] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). Sacrifice of praise is the offering of a priest; it is service.
- **Giving** - "Do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). Again, sharing or giving is a sacrifice; it is a service.
- **Preaching or Bible study** - Paul wrote that he was "a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the Gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:16). Preaching the gospel, as well as the fruit of that preaching, is an offering of a spiritual priest. It is a sacrifice; it is service.
- **The Lord's Supper** - "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16). The participation in the body and blood of Christ is compared to the Levitical priests sharing in their offering. "Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" (I Corinthians 10:18). Thus the participation in the Lord's Supper is participation in a spiritual sacrifice offered on a spiritual altar. "We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat" (Hebrews 13:10). Those who participate in the Lord's Supper, participate in a sacrifice, it is service.

Worshipping in spirit and truth - internally and continually - results in spiritual service - external actions - from a spiritual priesthood. This is what is acceptable to God. "You also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5).

Studies in I Peter

The Precious Stone or the Rock of Offense

Children of God are to come to Christ “as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God” (I Peter 2:4). In God’s blueprint, drafted in the writings of the Old Testament, plans for a spiritual building were detailed, including the laying of a valuable cornerstone. In God’s way of doing things, this is an important point.

“For this is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold I lay in Zion a choice cornerstone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed’ (Isaiah 28:16). This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very cornerstone’ (Psalm 118:22), and, ‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense’ (Isaiah 8:14), for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed” (I Peter 2:6-8).

- **For you who believe** - The human race as a whole has a hard time putting the proper value on their own souls, and on eternity. Those who believe are those who have allowed themselves to be educated in the worth of things eternal, and have therefore recognized their lost condition apart from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This sacrifice, and subsequent resurrection and ascension, are metaphorically referred to as the laying of the choice and precious cornerstone. This metaphor, as expected, since it is inspired, is a good one. The cornerstone is foundational and also “trues up” the rest of the building - that which is not aligned with the cornerstone is “out of line.” And the foundation is secure and solid: “He who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.”
- **For those who disbelieve** - Those who disbelieve cannot see the great value of the Christ; they toss a diamond aside because it looks like any other rock. Actually, they make an even worse mistake. They reject the cornerstone as not being of the shape their misguided imaginations picture Him to be, and substitute a stone of their own choosing. Jesus rightly is angry at this casual disregard of His offering of Himself, and has thus become to them “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” You either willingly recognize His Lordship, or at some point He crushes you. As Jesus Himself said, “And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces [you break your will voluntarily to serve Him]; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust” (Matthew 21:44).

Do you believe, or do you disbelieve? The precious value is for you if you believe. But if you disbelieve, demonstrated by your disobedience to the word, you are headed toward your appointed doom.

Studies in I Peter

Proclaiming God's Excellencies

What does God really want from man? This by the way, is a very important question. Man, interested in buying and selling, eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage tends to ask about what man really wants from God. But man needs to remember that he is the created, not the Creator, and that the clay is to serve the potter's purpose. "For by [Christ] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

God has sent forth His Son into the world to select out of this world those of a true and honest heart. As the living Stone, Christ became neither the choice and precious cornerstone for those who would believe, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense for those who are disobedient to the word, whose end is according to their deeds. "But you," says Peter to those first century brethren, "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9).

Note then what God has done for those who turn to Him. He has made us:

- **A chosen race** - There is the race of man, and out of that God has chosen Christians to be a higher order of being. Each child of God is a new creature in Christ; his fleshly nature has been removed in the circumcision of Christ and is no longer a mere man or to walk according to man. This group of new creations, born again by the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the preached word, constitutes an entirely new race, a chosen race.
- **A royal priesthood** - Each believer is a priest, a living stone, offering up spiritual sacrifices to the God who is Spirit. But each of the brethren is also a king; he has been anointed with the Spirit in his immersion into Christ (II Corinthians 1:20,21), and he has been raised with Christ, and seated with him (Ephesians 2:6). "He has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:6). This combination of priests and kingdom makes us a royal priesthood.
- **A holy nation** - Israel in the flesh was never very holy. They broke their covenant with God and functioned imperfectly under an imperfect law. But those of the church of the living God are indeed holy, and constitute the true and intended nation. Thus, when the Jewish high priest prophesied that it was expedient for Jesus to die for the nation, the nation was defined as "the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52).
- **A people for God's own possession** - Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). As those who have been bought, we are His possession.

But for what purpose has all this been done? Listen carefully to these words: "that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." So how is the proclaiming going?

Studies in I Peter

Darkness to Light

This is the great summary statement of the Bible “God is light” (I John 1:5). Jesus came in the flesh meeting us in the flesh, to raise our spirituality as we follow Him through the cross to His bodily resurrection and His ascension to glory. Jesus in glory is the communication of all there is about God, “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus in glory is a bright shining light: “His face was like the sun shining in its strength” (Revelation 1:16). The message of the scripture is “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Corinthians 4:6). This is the great summary statement of the Bible: “God is light.”

The children of God, then, are appropriately called “children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). These are those who have heard the message of God through Christ, of life “in His Son” (I John 5:11). “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:4,5). Children of light have comprehended “the whole message of this life” (Acts 5:20).

We, by faith in the Son of God, in being immersed into the family name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, “are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9). This is the great summary statement of the Bible: “God is light.” And this concept of *from darkness to light* is the great underlying theme of the Bible.

- **The great Old Testament high priestly blessing** – “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). This is fulfilled in Christ: “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:14).
- **The great New Testament transfer** - “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13,14).
- **The great New Testament message** - The great commission of Jesus was given to Paul in this way: “To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18).
- **The great message of Jesus Himself** – “The Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead, He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).

We have been set aside also to proclaim the excellencies of this One who called us out of darkness into this marvelous, marvelous light! Again we ask, how is the proclaiming going?

Studies in I Peter

The People of God

It is not always so easy to see things as they ought to be seen. One of Satan's techniques is to make the insignificant seem important, and to devalue that which is of great importance. In worldly terms, it is comparatively easy to understand what it means to be a nobody, and suddenly become somebody - the "rags to riches" story. But to be anybody spiritually, and to suddenly, by God's power, become a somebody spiritually - the world shrugs its shoulders and says, "Who cares?"

But those who have eyes to see and who have ears to hear know. They not only understand, but they go a step further *and proclaim* the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. In praise and thanksgiving they appreciate the power and care of the heavenly Father, "for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (I Peter 2:10).

- **You once were not a people** - These words, quoted from Hosea, really look to the eventual coming of the Gentiles into the church of the living God. From Abraham onward, the nations were essentially set aside while God pursued His revelation through physical Israel. They were, in the Spirit-inspired language of Paul, "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Spiritual nobodies, in ignorance and in darkness in the world.
- **You had not received mercy** - *Every* mouth is shut before God. All the world is accountable to Him, and apart from Jesus Christ no one is justified in His sight (Romans 3:19,20). Thus every stranger and alien to the covenants of promise is outside the pale of God's mercy, and languishing in the throes of an unclean conscience.
- **Now you have received mercy** - *Praise God* for His marvelous light! He who is obedient to the word has turned from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God in order that he might receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18).
- **Now you are the people of God** - From nobodies to somebodies. By God's great mercy we have come from darkness to His marvelous light, and we are *the* people of God. Those who are of the world do not recognize us; they regard sonship with God as of no importance in comparison to earthly glory. But "see how great a love the father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; and such we are" (I John 3:1).

Proclaim His excellencies! Proclaim His excellencies! Fill the earth with the news of His love and mercy!

Studies in I Peter

The Conduct of Strangers and Aliens

So Christians are the people of God. They are a separate and distinct race, separated from the world, separated in a sense from the sons of men. Not of this world, we are exhorted by Peter: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God on the day of visitation” (I Peter 2:11,12).

What follows from this in Peter’s first epistle essentially are specific instructions on what to do in keeping our behavior excellent among the Gentiles. But there are some key points in this launching pad for the missiles to follow:

- **“I urge you”** - The new covenant appeals to the sensibilities of the hearer. Each of us is a follower of Christ by choice and maintains his inheritance in light by continuing choice. Hence we are *urged* to make the right voluntary decisions.
- **“As aliens and strangers”** - This world is not our home; we’re just passin’ through. As aliens temporarily stranded in a foreign land, there is no reason for us to “go native.” We need to remember that our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly await our Savior (Philippians 3:20,21).
- **“Abstain from fleshly lusts”** - There are many fleshly lusts, whatever kind of “kinkiness” turns you on is available on the street. Just say “No!” Put in the positive pull power of the upward call of God instead of the downward allure of the dark, mysterious, deceptively sweet and sinful.
- **“Lusts, which wage war against the soul”** - “What will a man give,” said Jesus “in exchange for his soul” (Matthew 16:26). All the wealth of the world, all the glitter and tinsel heaped in one pile, does not compare to the worth of one single, solitary soul. So why would a child of God deliberately participate in lusts which wage war against all that he is?
- **“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles”** - Love for God is reflected in love for men. One of the powerful motivations for good performance is that love for men. Hence the Holy Spirit here appeals to us to keep up good behavior among non-Christians.
- **“In the thing in which they slander you as evildoers”** - When people are being convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, they tend to lash back at God’s people, and pick on real or imagined faults. Expect this and give them no excuse.
- **“As they observe your good behavior and glorify God in the day of visitation”** - There will be those who will note consistently good behavior, and turn to Christ and be saved in the day of judgment.

Remember the urging of the Holy Spirit to upgrade our behavior. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles. Conduct yourselves as sons of God, as strangers and aliens on earth

Studies in I Peter

For the Punishment of Evildoers

God did not intend for the Bible to be stuck in a glass showcase. The word of God is not to be boxed up in storage, brought out only for special occasions. The teachings about righteousness, sin, and the judgment to come are not to be heard only by a select few in weekly meetings. On the contrary, “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:3). In this gift of the revelation of God’s will, we hold the key to understanding everything about life. Life, among other things, includes teaching governments how they ought to govern.

“The manifold wisdom of God,” says Paul, “might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10). God’s wisdom is not limited to the basics of salvation; His wisdom is manifold, multi-faceted. Furthermore, His wisdom is to be made known to rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. The church is not to be silent; the church is not to content itself with a dialogue among its members. The church is to make the manifold wisdom of God known so well that it reaches even to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This wisdom, among other things, includes teaching governments how they ought to govern.

Children of God, then, are to submit “to a king, as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right” (I Peter 2:13,14). The following points are worthy of consideration:

- **All authority comes from God** - “There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God” (Romans 13:1). “You would have no authority over Me,” said Jesus to Pilate, “unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). Rulers and authorities need to be reminded that their authority comes from God, so that they do not abuse this authority which has been entrusted to them.
- **For the punishment of evildoers** - There is evil. Evil has been defined by God in His law, and God requires justice when evil has been done. Thus, in the will of God, those who have been given authority by Him are to punish evildoers with just punishment. “Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,” (Deuteronomy 19:21), is justice, and this is what governments are to administer. Justice, not rehabilitation!
- **The praise of those who do right** - Government is to praise those who do right. It is not to give them special economic monopolies, or special privileges. It is simply to praise those who do right.

Government is by God’s design a minister of justice. In the manifold wisdom of God, the church is to make this known throughout the world. This teaching, accompanied with prayers, entreaties, and petitions, will do what can be done “for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (I Timothy 2:2).

Studies in I Peter

For the Lord's Sake

In the Lord's way of doing things, there is no such things as submission to God apart from submission to other people. "The Son of man did not come to be served," said the Lord Himself, "but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). And "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

So, under the general heading of keeping our behavior excellent among the Gentiles, we are not surprised to find these words from Peter: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Peter 2:13-15).

- **For the Lord's Sake** - We have given up our lives for the cause of the gospel of Christ. Thus personal offenses against us are ignored as not being worthy of retaliation. "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now" (I Corinthians 4:11-13). For the Lord's sake we suffer ignominy and persecution, submitting to governmental authorities whenever we need to without compromising the gospel of the position of the Lord's church.
- **Submit to a king or a governor sent by him** - Government is a necessary institution. Its officials are often corrupt, and the experience of mankind has shown that a limited government - a republic - is the best that can be achieved on earth, but only when its people are essentially self-governing. Thus the Christian submits to its minions of officials in order to get on with the job of preaching the gospel.
- **By doing right you silence ignorance of foolish men** - There are rebellious men, empty talkers. The Christian is not to be one of these. In general he is to be cooperative, a team player, one who is interested in harmony. Paul's conduct during his various trials recorded in the portion of Acts serves as an excellent guide for the conduct of a child of God while dealing with governmental authorities. Foolish and ignorant men are looking for any excuse to be rebellious; the follower of Jesus is willing by his conduct to silence these men.

It is not easy to know when to tell people to beware of the leaven of the Herodians, and when to step out and calmly meet your executioner. It is not easy to know when to say that we must obey God rather than men, or to appeal to Caesar, or to joyfully accept the seizure of our property. Prayer for wisdom must be made in each case, and in all humility we must act properly for *the Lord's sake*.

Studies in I Peter

Act as Free Men

These great words from Patrick Henry ring yet in our ears: “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of freedom? Forbid it, Almighty God I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!” There beats within the breast of each man a desire for freedom, a desire to function without oppression, to build, to dream, to accomplish, to profit. And a deep desire to follow the will of God. Though humanism may rot the core of the human race, though false religion may misdirect men’s efforts and moralities, though creeping socialism may weaken a people and make them increasingly dependent upon a paternal central government, and though the jackboot may break the faces of those unwilling to yield to tyranny’s more subtle pressures, there are always those who have the inner desire to be responsibly free.

But what is this political freedom in comparison to the spiritual freedom of those found in Christ? In God’s way of doing things, those blessings which accrue to us in the physical realm are designed to serve as pointers for the blessings which we receive in Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every *spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

Knowing this, the words of Peter have more impact: “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God” (I Peter 2:16).

- **Act as free men** - The Christian has indeed been set free. The Lord’s servant is a free man. He has been delivered from slavery to sin and captivity to Satan. Regardless of any earthly privation - his citizenship is in heaven from which he eagerly awaits his Savior. Because this world has no pull or hold upon him, he is free to do what is right without fear to the praise and glory of God.
- **Do not use your freedom as a covering for evil** - Liberty often leads to license. “When the cat’s away, the mice will play.” But the very essence of political freedom is that men in a republic are essentially self-governing, and have no need of the herdmaster. Thus, even more in Christ, is the individual mature and constrained by love to do what is good, and does not use his freedom from law as a covering for wolfish, selfish, evil activity.
- **Use it as bondslaves of God** - Slaves by choice, that is what we are. And as bondslaves, of utmost importance to us is the desire to serve and to please our Master, the Lord Jesus. He has given us our freedom from tyrannical masters of a baser sort; should we not in gratitude offer Him earnest and complete devotion?

Free men are energized and enthusiastic. They act with intelligence and initiative. They have goals and hopes and dreams. They are responsible and righteous; they are charitable and compassionate. Act as free men!

Studies in I Peter

True Nobility

The child of God is really not of this world. He has been crucified to the world, and the world to him. He has set his sights on things in the heavenly places rather than on things of this earth; his citizenship is in heaven. Because of his noble-mindedness, he is not in competition with those who are still thoroughly suffused with Adam's stamp, and he can conduct himself with something that might be called a spiritual *noblesse oblige**. To this special group of people, this royal priesthood, the Holy Spirit has given instructions how to carry ourselves while on official business among the world's peoples: "Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king" (I Peter 2:17).

- **Honor all men** - The one who is a part of God's chosen race (Christians) is willing to give honor to men. He is not in competition with them; by God's grace he is of a superior order of creation. Therefore he can graciously honor even the most unkind and ungrateful in imitation of the character of his heavenly Father.
- **Love the brotherhood** - There is leaven hidden in this world, and this leaven is at work even though that which is dough is not conscious of its leavening impact. The salt of the earth and the lights of the world constitute a brotherhood of individuals who have common spiritual interests, who set their minds on things of the spirit rather than on the flesh, and who are following the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. These individuals recognize each other and love their common brotherhood.
- **Fear God** - This brotherhood of spiritual men recognizes the absolute Lordship of God our Savior. He is worthy of all honor. He is awesome, and His presence is indeed commanding. Those with spiritual eyes see Him, and grant Him in their lives His dominion, majesty, and authority. They fear God, and keep Him in remembrance always.
- **Honor the king** - This same group of spiritual citizens graciously grant honor to earthly kings. As ambassadors of another realm begging men to be reconciled to God, even though occasionally in chains, they conduct themselves with all the manners of courtly and gentlemanly behavior, giving honor to whom honor is due, tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom is due.

Praise God for choosing us to carry out His mission! Praise Him for giving us instructions as how to carry on. Praise Him for causing us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection from the dead, that we might act with the *noblesse oblige** befitting those who truly are children of the King!

* *noblesse oblige*- French (Noble Obligation)

Studies in I Peter

With all Respect

If you seriously intend to win anyone to the Lord, you must be a good example. The thrust of this section of I Peter is taken from the statement that each child of God is to keep his “behavior excellent among the Gentiles” (I Peter 2:12). It is for that reason the Christian honors the king and honors all men.

The thought continues: “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable” (I Peter 2:18). One of those men who is to be honored is a master.

One of the more difficult tasks for denizens of earth’s spiritual deserts is to be submissive. Man’s nature, taken from our first father, Adam, is rebellious. God commanded: Adam rebelled. And those who have borne Adam’s image have long since continued to kick and kick and kick against legitimately established authority. Compounding the problem’s that those who now stand in positions of earthly authority are less than perfect themselves, and often have reached for power because they are inwardly tyrants.

In one of the great paradoxes of God’s way of doing things, the way He appealed to the hearts of men was to become a servant Himself. Thus it was that our Lord Jesus Himself “took the form of a bond-servant” (Philippians 2:7). If the Christ, then, who did not come to be served but to serve, should become a bond-servant, how much more should we.

- **Servants** - Most men have lived, and do live, in societies where men are not as free as Americans have been. Many have been confined to a life of servitude, if not outright slavery, and have not had choices of work or living conditions. If one of these bore the name of Christ, he was to conduct himself according to these instructions. And there are today some comparisons between employee-employer relations and the servant-master interaction described in God’s word, although the parallel is by no means exact.
- **Be submissive to your masters** - There is a bigger picture than just the work to be done, or the personality problems involved between a servant and his master. The soul of the master and his family is at stake, and a good servant’s example could provide the opening for spiritual discussion. And even if the master continues in blindness, there are others who are watching - other servants, slaves, house guests - who can be influenced by that same outstanding example.
- **With all respect** - The man or mistress, by his conduct, may not deserve respect. But in the Almighty’s way of conducting business on earth, the Christian is to honor the position. Therefore, if the believer is before the king, or governors sent by him, or before his master, he is to show all respect to the one in that position as if Jesus Himself were sitting there. It is the Lord Christ whom we serve.

In a world of rebellion and complaining, one who performs his tasks with efficiency, effectiveness, and respect is a rare individual. He stands out as a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. As our Lord Himself said, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Studies in I Peter

Heavenly Credit

The life of a servant could be hard. Think of the indentured servants who came to America, working seven years for who knows what kind of master, until they could earn their freedom. Think of a kitchen servant in a lord's house, or a servant man constantly having to put up with one of the king's musketeers. Yet as Christians, those who thus served were to be submissive and respectful to the unreasonable as well as the good and gentle for the Lord's sake. "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (I Peter 2:19-21).

- **Suffering unjustly** - God knows that much unjust suffering goes on in this world. And He lets it go on that we have a continual lesson on the evil effects of sin (lest we be tempted to think that sin is a good thing). We are also continually impressed with the fact that this unjust world is not our final home, that we look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness indeed dwells. Even Christ Himself suffered unjustly, that we might be aware that He is our faithful and merciful High Priest suffered understands and sympathizes.
- **This finds favor** – God offers no sympathy for the one who does wrong and suffers for the wrong. His spiritual law says that is how it should be. But God takes note when we suffer unjustly, and somehow, in His way of keeping track of things, credits it to our heavenly account.
- **Bearing up and patiently enduring** – The words from the Holy Spirit are carefully chosen. There is a sense of anger, which wells up in a man when he is innocent, and is being treated as guilty. There is an innate sense of fairness built within us which is notified when unjust treatment comes. God's word to the Christian is to bear up these kinds of sorrows, to find strength and encouragement in the God of all comfort and encouragement. As Jesus Himself often said, "Take courage!" (Matthew 14:27). The words *patiently endure* also apply. There are unpleasanties of life - death being one of them – which simply have to be endured. The solution is to endure without complaining, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- **For the sake of conscience toward God** - The child of God serves God. Because he serves God, he serves others. But in the sight of Jesus Christ and His chosen angels, the Christian in all honesty does what is right; he follows the dictates of his scripturally driven conscience. Sometimes this brings harsh and unjust treatment from a master, but the saint knows it is the Lord Christ whom he serves, and to whom he also looks for his reward.

God has placed each of us in the body just as He desired (I Corinthians 12:18). Some of us may be placed as servants or slaves, and may receive extremely unjust treatment at the hands of earthly masters. Let us *bear up* and *endure patiently*, for this finds heavenly favor.

Studies in I Peter

In His Steps

So you are a Christian. You have been born again to a living hope by your participation in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection when you were immersed by His authority for the remission of your sins. You have joyfully entered into what the word of God calls "the new and living way which He inaugurated for us" through His death. So what is your purpose as a Christian? So what do we all have in common as partakers of the Holy Spirit in truth? *Suffering!*

This is one of the truths of scriptural Christianity - suffering! It contrasts greatly with much of the lying propaganda being shoved at the masses by what can best be described as televangelists, clever wolves in sheep's clothing. Titles such as *Jesus Wants You Well*, and *How to make the Lord's Blessings Work For You* abound. But if you will only turn the pages of God's word, and leaf through until you locate I Peter, here you will find your true purpose in life: "But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (I Peter 2:20,21).

- **You have been called for this purpose** - The flesh has a tendency to avoid pain and suffering. Most of the compromising, lying and cheating which go on can generally be traced back to someone's misguided attempts to make their life in the flesh easier. But children of light have a higher commitment; their goal is to do what is right regardless of what it may cost them in the flesh. When the Christian recognized that he has been called for the very purpose of suffering it makes it easier for him to hold his values in the sight of God rather than loving this present world.
- **Christ suffered for you** - Our Lord Jesus Christ paid a penalty He did not have to pay to set us free. The just for the unjust, the son of God in exchange for a murderer and insurrectionist, is how the trade has been made. And how He suffered, referring to His "passion" as a cup to drink and an immersion to undergo. In like manner then, the saints of God have the opportunity to suffer injustice for the sake of others, for the sake of the truth of the gospel.
- **An example for you to follow in His steps** - If you follow in someone else's steps, you walk where they walked. Jesus' steps led straight to the cross, fishing for men on the way. We also, in His steps, take up our individual crosses and follow Him, suffering personal indignity and shame that the name of Christ in no way be dishonored, and that His righteousness and truth be upheld. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the father will honor him" (John 12:26).

Brother or sister in Christ, do what is right, and do not run from the suffering which comes with it. The beloved apostle Paul spoke of his purpose in life: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Colossians 1:24). He also spoke of his earnest desire to know Christ, "and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10). Let us arm ourselves for this purpose.

Studies in I Peter

Christ the Righteous Example

This is the age of the anti-hero. Satanic rock musicians, morally bankrupt movie stars, and HIV infected sports figures are passed before the American public in an endless parade, creating the impression that this is the best the world has to offer. But meet Jesus Christ, a true hero, a man who performed righteously under the most rigorous pressures, who delivered the goods when crunch-time came.

“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (I Peter 2:21-23). Just words on paper? Try any one of these on for size:

- **Who committed no sin** - For an individual to walk blamelessly before the Lord as Zacharias and Elizabeth did, is not an easy task. The inspired records reveal pitifully few names, which could meet that standard. But only One ever performed to the standard where it could be said, “He committed no sin. “If any actor ever deserved applause for a fine performance, if any team ever deserved a championship trophy, if any volunteer or employee ever deserved honor, our Lord Jesus Christ rightfully deserves praise and honor and blessing and power and glory for this one statement, “He committed no sin!”
- **Nor was any deceit found in His mouth** - Jesus did not, and does not, operate on the basis of deceit. He never told any lies. He never withheld information with intent to suck people in on some scheme. Sometimes His sayings were difficult to understand or to accept, but He was up front with His intentions. You cannot serve Jesus without knowing what you are doing, and what your motive is in doing it. He is the light of the world, and in Him is no darkness at all. How do the rest compare with him?
- **While being reviled, He did not revile in return** - When the soldiers and temple officers came to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, He explained to Peter: “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). If Jesus had wanted vengeance then, He could have gotten it. But He quietly endured the beatings, the epithets, the insults, and the mockings as an example for us. How’s your tongue?
- **While suffering, He uttered no threats** - When pain is imminent or just coming upon the body, the natural man utters threats and imprecations upon the source of suffering. But our Lord Jesus patiently endured the lashings, the beatings, the smashes in the face, the crowns of thorns, the cross on his back, the spikes through the flesh, and the agony of death on the cross. And not one threat did He utter.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate hero. His performance is so far above any other individual’s that it is hard to grasp really how great He is. But His righteous example stands before us challenging us in a positive way, encouraging us through our trials and difficulties letting us know that we too can entrust ourselves to Him who judges righteously.

Studies in I Peter

Trusting the Father

Be honest now! Do you really have no fear of death? Do you have no concerns about sickness, or plagues? Are you ever anxious about your family, or the economic condition of the country? Be honest now.

Jesus Christ came as an example for us. He suffered, so that we might know that it is necessary for us to suffer also. When He was reviled, He did not revile; when suffering, He uttered no threats; and He did so that we might through Him learn a very important lesson. And that lesson is that we can trust the Father.

Pay attention again to these words: “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (I Peter 2:21-23). The key to Jesus’ outstanding performance is that He *trusted the Father*.

We need to trust the Father also. But we need to learn the following from Jesus to increase our trust in true ways, and not in psychosomatic “hype”:

- **Reliance on Scripture** – Jesus not only knew Old Testament scriptures, he relied upon them as well. “Man shall not live on bread alone,” He quoted, indicating his reliance upon the scripture, “but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). He trusted the Father to sustain Him through every trial on earth. But more importantly, He trusted the Father to raise Him from the dead, to bring Him safely forth from death. This is the thrust of this passage from Hebrews “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the *One able to save Him from death*, and He was heard because of His piety” (Hebrews 5:7). Jesus trusted the Father because the scriptures had given Him the solemn assurance that He would be raised from the dead, and seated at the right hand of the Father. “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” (Psalm 110:1)
- **Reliance on prayer** - As Jesus approached the time of the cross, the intensity of His inner feelings seemed to increase. “Now My soul has become troubled,” John records Him as saying, “and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose, I came to this hour. ‘Father, glorify Your name’” (John 12:27,28). And the apostle records the response: “There came therefore a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’” (John 12:28). And it is well-known that when Jesus was to be betrayed, He found solace through intense prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We can learn to entrust ourselves to the faithful Creator if we also develop a lifestyle of reliance on scripture and prayer. But do not wait until the last moment; it is too late. Just as the Son Himself learned obedience, you and I learn obedience through the things we suffer. The time to learn is now not later!

Studies in I Peter

Jesus Himself Bore Our Sins

It is a great and important truth that no man can stand before God and justify himself. The vast multitudes of this earth are going to chance it," they say. What a horrible gamble to take, especially when the outcome is known. "Now we know that whatever the Law says," the apostle Paul informs us "it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God" (Romans 3:19).

Sin is a reality. It can't be measured, or boxed up and stored away. But it is real, none the less, and greatly affects every human being gracing earth's surface. Through sin, each man becomes accountable to God, "Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Again, as the apostle speaks in another place: "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22).

To Jesus we must turn. Without Him we have no hope of heaven. Without Him we have no opportunity to stand justified on Judgment Day. But, praise God, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (I Peter 2:24,25).

- **You were straying like sheep** – The scripture affirms that all of us have gone astray. And like lost sheep, we need the Shepherd to bring us safely back.
- **He bore our sins in His body on the cross** – The means by which the Shepherd brings us back is by sacrificing Himself. We were lost because of sin; it takes a substitutionary death for our sins. And, as the prophecy in Isaiah to which Peter refers says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:5,6). When Jesus died on the cross, a Roman soldier pierced His side with a spear, and blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.
- **We return to Him by obeying His gospel** – The gospel includes the facts that Jesus died for our sins, that He was buried, that He was raised from the dead, and that He ascended to glory. But the gospel also requires that we obey it (II Thessalonians 1:8). To have our sins forgiven by Jesus' death, we must:
 - a) Believe the testimony of scripture concerning Jesus (Acts 16:31)
 - b) Repent (Acts 2:38)
 - c) Confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9,10)
 - d) Be immersed for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16)

Jesus bore your sins in His body on the cross. Do not neglect to obey His gospel, and to continue to follow Him by functioning in His church,

Studies in I Peter

In The Same Way, You Wives

Suffering, unfortunately, is a part of life this side of glory. We have, said Peter, “been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you *an example to follow* in His steps” (I Peter 2:21). Servants then, were to patiently endure suffering from an unreasonable master, and this patient endurance finds favor with God.

In that setting, the Holy Spirit of God speaks to wives: “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior” (I Peter 3:1,2). Wives are to be submissive to their husbands, and in this submission there can be a number of sources of suffering

- **The husband can be unreasonable** - The scripture recognizes that there are unreasonable masters and husbands who are disobedient to the Word. This unreasonableness may be just a short term thing - he might be under a lot of pressure himself - or it may be his overall character. The woman needs to patiently endure. And if he gets too abusive, in places like the USA, she can file criminal charges against him and get him to legally change his behavior if she has to go this route. Patient endurance.
- **Circumstances may be tough** - Sickness sometimes comes to a household. Old age, strokes, heart attacks, cancer, or other debilitating diseases may beset the husband. Or financial difficulties may arise. In any of these cases the wife is in for much suffering as she does what is necessary to work through the difficulty until it passes, or she expires from earthly existence. Patient endurance.
- **The husband may have to make tough business decisions** - When you are married, you succeed together, and sometimes you fail together. Scripturally, the wife is under her husband’s headship, and if he makes a poor decision, she is going to suffer with him. Patient endurance.

In life there are more sources of suffering by far than the three listed above, but these three are common. Many a young woman has had difficulty adjusting to married life because it requires *patient endurance*; it requires physical, mental, and spiritual toughness which many women did not develop in their formative years because they grew up in too soft a lifestyle. And while they are developing the qualities of chaste and respectful behavior under the headship of their husbands, they suffer.

But... let them not become embittered in their suffering. Men suffer also, but in different ways. Suffering is a major part of earthly existence. Christ suffered also, and we have been called for this purpose.

Let us move forward in joy, in hope of our resurrection from the dead, and understanding what life with one another is in Christ.

Studies in I Peter

The Hidden Person of the Heart

The all-wise and all-knowing heavenly Father surely knew what He was doing when He made us male and female. In the home, in the work place, and in the church of the living God, there's a challenging vitality in the complementary roles of masculine and feminine which God has injected into our living and being. If man is the head, certainly woman is the heart.

So women received some special instructions, as those who are to exhibit chaste and respectful behavior toward their husbands: "And let not your adornment be external - braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (I Peter 3:3,4).

- **Inner vs. Outer** - The outer woman is more obvious, and often how she is judged by this world. She tends to be measured first by her own natural attractiveness, and secondly by the attractiveness of her clothing and jewelry, and how she fixes her hair (this is obviously not just a 20th century problem). But real adornment is in the inner woman. The emphasis of the word of God is always to work on that which is on the inside of the cup, knowing that will bring true cleanness to the outside.
- **Chaste and respected behavior** - Outer chastity and true respect for the king of the house naturally flows when the queen has been cleansed on the inside. One of the major attacks on this chastity in the home - the devotion of the wife sexually to her husband - comes through the daytime TV smut shows. This loss of chastity leads to direct loss of respect.
- **The hidden person of the heart** - Here is where women have a real opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ. Rather than being ice figurines, they can be warm, loving, caring, sharing females whose words and deeds are a reflection of the effort made to form the inner woman in the image of Christ. This hidden person of the heart, as the Holy Spirit calls it, is what is truly beautiful to the eye of a spiritual man.
- **The imperishable quality of a gentile and quiet spirit** - A gentle and quiet spirit is one, which is strong enough that it does not always have to talk, and does not have to be the head. This is imperishable *quality* - its value will never fade or wrinkle.
- **Precious in the sight of God** - The ultimate question for a godly woman is not "What do men think of me?" or "what do other women think of me?" or even "What does my husband think of me?" The ultimate question is "What does God think of me?" And He has told you what is precious to Him.

So, ladies, quit worrying so much about your makeup, and do a makeover where it counts, in the hidden person of the heart.

Studies in I Peter

Old Time Women

Having established the proper adornment befitting a lady of spiritual means, the apostle Peter speaks of classy ladies from the old times: “For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear” (I Peter 3:5,6).

Those were quite the ladies in those days when they went shopping, they were looking for good characteristics to add to their character wardrobe. They “hoped in God,” you see, and were anxious for their new pieces of clothing to please Him.

- **They were holy women** - It is an honor, in the sight of God, to be considered holy. These women, from former times, were holy without the indwelling Holy Spirit. How much more, then, in these last day, should each woman claiming to have faith in God view herself as a holy woman.
- **They were submissive to their own husbands** - It is not easy, many times to submit to someone else. Yet that is what a woman is called to do. They did; how much more the Christian woman
- **Sarah’s Example** - Sarah obeyed Abraham. The inspired record notes that Sarah was not required to only answer in demure yes-my-lord’s, but that she had freedom to speak, even occasionally persuading honest Abe to go the wrong way. But it is noted that she, having spoken her piece obeyed Abraham. She did call him lord, and governed herself accordingly.
- **You have become her children** - This is a great privilege and honor, to be considered a daughter of Sarah, even better by far than to be a Daughter of the American Revolution. In fact, considering what it means to be the true offspring of Abraham, the woman making a claim to godliness should ponder the consequences of not being a daughter of Sarah.
- **If you do what is right** - Submission to the husband is not the ultimate goal. Sapphira was submissive to Ananias, and suffered eternally because of it. Submission is ultimately submission to that which is right and that is what a woman is supposed to do.
- **Without being frightened by fear** - When a woman does what is right, sometimes even her husband can be a source of fear. But since her hope is in God, this daughter of Abraham is not frightened.

Those old time women patiently endured some rough times and some rough things but their names went down in the register of God’s hall of fame. Let the new creation women outshine them, and exceed them all!

Studies in I Peter

You Husbands

All right, you husbands. Sit up and listen. Wives have had six straight verses leveled at them. You ought to be men enough to take one: “You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (I Peter 3:7).

What a verse! This one verse of scripture has done more to truly liberate women than any of the so-called “liberation movements.” In this section of scripture, the Holy Spirit establishes the true spiritual equality of the sexes and places woman firmly on her queenly pedestal.

- **You husbands likewise** - Why the likewise? The likewise has reference to the submission that servants and wives yield to, and the patient endurance which submission requires. The husband yields in this case to the will of God in caring for his wife, and in so doing he experiences the suffering Christ called us all into. As the provider and protector, he lays himself on the line for his wife; he gives his all for her.
- **Live with your wives in an understanding way** - A husband needs to understand his wife. She is different than he, with emotional cycles and companionship needs which would never have crossed his mind. He needs to be sensitive to those needs, and within the time allotted for him to get all his work done, to provide an optimum balance in meeting the needs of his beloved.
- **As with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman** - A weaker vessel needs to be handled with care, like expensive glass. It is not to be slammed around, or pressed to the breaking point. Wives need to be cherished and protected.
- **Grant her honor as a fellow heir** - A fellow heir is a co-equal. Women are not second class citizens in the kingdom; they are equal heirs. This does not exclude women from the role of submission, which God has given them, but it shows how a husband is to treat his wife. She is to be honored; she is to be elevated in a showcase by a justifiably proud and caring husband.
- **Of the grace of life** - No one lives but by God’s pleasure. At any time our souls can be required of us. At best a man’s life is but a vapor. And a man who recognized this rejoices with the wife of his youth, and exhilarated always by her love (Proverbs 5:18,19)
- **So that your prayers may not be hindered** - God simply informs men that He is going to treat them like they treat their wives. If men will not grant their wives honor, and live with them in an understanding way, God shuts off answers to prayer. For any man who is spiritually inclined, this is powerful leverage.

This side of glory, life is a struggle. “And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). Let’s make the struggle a bit easier and more of a joy by sharing together as God intended husbands and wives to share.

Studies in I Peter

Lets All Be Harmonious

Wives are to exhibit chaste and respectful behavior. Husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way. Both are to work on what Peter calls the hidden person of the heart, the inner man (or inner woman, if you prefer). In all the struggle of living, it is the intention of the wise and loving heavenly Father for Christian men and women to enjoy life together, and live in a way which brings glory to the name of Jesus.

“To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (I Peter 3:8,9). This summary not only indicates how husbands and wives should conduct themselves, or how various members of individual families or of the body of Christ should behave toward one another, but it really shows how the child of God should carry on all interpersonal relations - employee-employer, slave-master, student-teacher. “Let all be harmonious,” says the Spirit of God.

- **Harmonious** - The harmony of music is one of the great teaching tools designed by God to communicate the joy of teamwork. Each part is different, each part is necessary and important, only one part is “the lead,” yet the whole is pleasing both to participants and to observers. So it is with a husband and wife team. Different, necessary, important parts, played in harmony - are joyful and satisfying. When this harmony can be extended to children, to brethren in the body of Christ, and to many other relationships, you have the makings of a wonderful and outstanding life.
- **Sympathetic** - There can be no long-term harmony without sympathy. To be able to harmonize, people need to have a feel - “feel with” - for where their partners are at any given time in God’s musical score, and play their parts with sensitivity.
- **Brotherly** - Brothers growing up together, in good and right circumstances, have such an understanding that it is easy for them to share their confidences, their strengths, their weaknesses, and their struggles. Open, uncritical acceptance of where each is - that’s brotherly.
- **Kindhearted** - Sometimes brothers in the flesh are so competitive that they engage in continual put-downs. But brothers who are kindhearted always seek to be encouraging, guiding younger brothers and sisters through difficulties or over tough obstacles, taking care of each other.

Sharing is where joy is. Life does not consist in abundance of possessions, but in honestly shared relationships. These qualities are worth developing in your home, church, and other personal contacts. *Let all be harmonious.*

Studies in I Peter

“Don’t Get Even; Get Ahead”

“Don’t get even; get ahead!” These words, accompanied by a chuckle, are intended as a spoof on the basic Biblical principle of non-retaliation. But they are true words, if you understand what it really means “to get ahead.”

God wants His children - in their families, in their employment, in their recreation, in their assemblies - to live in peace and harmony. “To sum up,” says the apostle Peter, “let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (I Peter 3:8,9). In God’s paradoxical way of doing things, the way to “get ahead” is to be the kind of person who does not “get even.” The way to the resurrection is always through the cross.

- **Humble in spirit** - Scriptural humility is submission to God, and thus a willingness to do and say what is right in every situation. A person who is humble in spirit will preach the word out of season as well as in season. Humility will work to bring harmony between a man and his God, between a man and his wife, and between a man and his brethren. A Christian who is humble in spirit will set aside his selfishness, and truly desire what is best for all in the sight of God.
- **Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult** - The natural tendency of man, when attacked or insulted, is to fight back. But all this does is to add gasoline to an already smoldering situation. The believer, interested in harmony and brotherhood, has sufficient control of himself to do something positive and unifying instead of destructive and fractionating.
- **Giving a blessing instead** - The very character of God is to take a bad situation, and make something good come from it. The fall of natural man, beginning with Adam, resulted in the rise of spiritual man through the second Adam (Christ). Israel’s wrongful clamor for a king set the stage for the coming of the Messiah. The death of the innocent Lamb of God resulted in life for the wayward sheep. So the disciple of Christ, when confronted with evil and insults, like his heavenly Father, finds some way to give a blessing.

It truly is more blessed to give than to receive. When, in the course of human relationships, it becomes necessary to take action, let that action be one of giving a blessing. And when you give a blessing, it comes back multiplied, and you experience a positive, joy-filled life. “Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Luke 6:38). Give a blessing!

Studies in I Peter

Inherit A Blessing

The message of the New Testament is centered about what it calls the promise. The message of the Old Testament, according to the New Testament, is centered about the mystery. Both the promise and the mystery refer to Christ in the Spirit - Christ in you, the hope of glory; the indwelling Holy Spirit for the Gentiles. Follow us while we attempt, in the short space following, to use this to bring out the grand truth of Peter's words; "You were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (I Peter 3:9).

- **The blessing of Abraham** – In Genesis 22:18, the angel of the Lord promised Abraham "And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." What was this blessing? This blessing is not Christ in the flesh; for Christ in the flesh came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The blessing of Abraham is Christ in the Spirit – the indwelling spirit of God – for which forgiveness of sins cleanses the body so it is a fit temple for God in the spirit. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'" (Galatians 3:13,14).
- **God sent Him to bless you** - The apostle Peter, preaching as recorded in Acts chapter three, refers to the same passage in Genesis. Speaking to the Jews present in the temple, He noted: "It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant, which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways?" (Acts 3:25,26) The language here is significant. It does not read that God sent Christ to bless you, and then raised Him up; it says that God raised him up, and then sent Him to bless you. The indwelling Spirit here again is blessing sent by God after He raised Jesus from the dead. The Spirit of Christ is the purpose and blessing of God.
- **Rivers of living water** – Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to those who would be immersed into Him in these words. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:38). We have tasted the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 6:4), but we have only tasted. But the full-blown blessing of the Spirit is ours when we inherit the reward of heaven: "And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Revelation 22:17). The ultimate blessing in heaven is to be a partaker of the Holy Spirit.

Don't read past the significance of Peter's words: "You were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing." We, as Abraham's sons and Sarah's daughters, have received the blessing of Abraham, the promised Holy Spirit.

Studies in I Peter

A Thousand Sacred Sweets

God's great blessing is His Spirit in the inner man. We, through Christ, have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And from this spiritual foundation flow multitudes of inner blessings for God's children during the years of our earthly sojourns. As the songwriter put it, and put it well, "The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets before we reach the heavenly fields, or walk the golden streets."

Listen, then, to the apostle Peter: "Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. And let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (I Peter 3:10-12).

The Father in heaven does not want His children to live a life of misery and heartache, a life of back-biting and constant friction. Even though we may be afflicted and ill-treated, dressed in sheepskins and goatskins, living in mountains and caves and holes in the ground, the Almighty has still made provision whereby we might love life and see good days.

- **Who wants to love life and see good days** - One of the key ingredients in this recipe for loving life is an inner resolve to do so. If you want to continue in the squalor of your present pitiful condition, you can do so. But if you want to get out you must mean to do so.
- **Refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile** - If you want to see good days, you simply must control your tongue. If your tongue has a tendency to drift into evil, just make it a rule not to talk about people. And if you are one who sows the seed of discord and waters the plant of discontent. Hush your mouth! Your guile will upset the faith of many, wreck harmony, and destroy your own life. Do you want to love life and see good days?
- **Turn away from evil and do good** - Good intentions are not the same as actually doing good. Cease to be a faction, get some traction, and spring into action!
- **Seek peace and pursue it** - When you decide to finally have some peace in your home, and you are no longer going to be a troublemaker in the local assembly, this peace is not just going to settle itself automatically over all your enterprises. You are going to have to seek it, and with some people you are going to have to make a major effort to chase it down.

There you are: four simple steps to have the best possible life on earth. Go for it!

Studies in I Peter

The Face of the Lord

There is a smart way to live, and there is a foolish way to live. Peter calls the latter “your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers” (I Peter 1:18). In general, this former way of life consisted of strife, cursings, insults, and general malice tinged with selfishness. But the smart way to live is to be “harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit.” In this way the child of God ends up with the best this life has to offer, and inherits the blessing of the eternal measure of God’s Spirit in glory.

But in order to love life and see good days, each Christian must implement some systematic procedures to control his tongue and direct his body. The Lord offers both a blessing and a curse: “For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (I Peter 3:12).

- **The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous** - When a father has a son involved in a sporting event – basketball for example - he doesn’t go to watch the game so much as he goes to watch his son play the game. Through all the play-by-play, his eyes are on his son encouraging, advising, letting the son know of special interest in him. This is the picture the Holy Spirit provides for us of our heavenly Father: His eyes are upon you and me, if we are righteous.
- **His ears attend to their prayer** - If you were to have an attendant, you would be in possession of someone who would meet your needs. He would run and get you this, bring you that, meet someone at the door, deposit money in your bank. The Father uses this imagery to communicate just how interested He is in us and how important every one of our prayers is. His ears are attentive - if we are righteous.
- **But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil** - Stern, forbidding, blocking the way - are impressions conjured up by the expression “the face of the Lord” in this context. And if the face of the Lord is against you, you are not going anywhere, and you are not going to accomplish anything.

God really stands with those who are anxious to live harmonious, righteous, brotherly, sympathetic lives. But the Christian who still insists on the selfish, futile way of life has an enemy in God. The message is clear: clean up your life, and God will bless you.

Studies in I Peter

Even If You Should Suffer

One thing each Christian should remember is that he is a bond-servant of God. As a servant by choice, he is willing to be used of God whenever, wherever, and however the Almighty needs him. And sometimes God needs to use one of his bond-servants as a flaming example to the world.

Jesus, for example, told the rebellious city of Jerusalem, "I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth" (Matthew 23:34,35). Yes, Lord, you say, send prophets and wise men to Jerusalem. Have them be persecuted and put to death, that it may be clearly shown that she is guilty of all righteous blood. May Your will be executed, Almighty God.

Then the Lord sends you to Jerusalem as one of those to be put to death. What is your response?

"And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts" (I Peter 3:13-15).

- **Who is there to harm you?** - The thrust of this rhetorical question is that nothing can harm the Christian without God's permission. This is a real confidence builder, until the Father has adequately prepared us for combat duty, we will not be harmed.
- **If you prove zealous for what is good** – The son of God must show that he is serious about doing God's business to experience God's protection. He must be - "hot" – excited, fired up – for doing God's deeds.
- **Even if you suffer for the sake of righteousness** - This is a further confidence builder. If God uses you as an instrument of righteousness by sticking you into fire, it is because He knows you can handle it.
- **You are blessed** – What a joy it is to be put into the game at a crucial moment, instead of being a "bench-warmer"! How blessed is the man whom the Lord selects to undergo suffering for the sake of the gospel! What an honor!
- **Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled** - When the Almighty of the universe has chosen you, and given His nod of approval, why would a Christian be intimidated or troubled by mere men?
- **Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts** - Outward strength flows from inward confidence. When Christ, and Christ alone, has been set aside as Lord in our inner man, nothing outward can us tremble.

The Father is carefully watching over His sons and daughters and His ears listen attentively to their prayers. So who can harm the child of God who does good? But even if you should suffer, how blessed you are.

Studies in I Peter

A Checklist for the Suffering

The book of I Peter is all about suffering. And it's all about maintaining faith and a good attitude when persecution comes. So if you haven't suffered, and don't plan to suffer persecution, don't bother to read and study I Peter. But if "perhaps" you may suffer in the future, then consider these words from the apostle:

"And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame (I Peter 3:14-16).

- **Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts** - In the inner man - the treasure, the heart – are many things both old and new. The concept of sanctifying Christ in our hearts means to set Him apart and make everything else in there bow down to His Lordship, or simply be cleaned out.
- **Be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you** – None of us today can claim inspiration – The Holy Spirit has already given us the words of our defense in the sacred writings. So it is our responsibility to have developed the habit of talking to others about the greatness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- **Give an account of the hope that is within you** - The Gentile world is described as lost, "having no hope and without God" (Ephesians 2:12). There is empty hope, and false hope, and hope in earthly things. But the Christian looks eagerly for "the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13)," who will transform the body of our humble states into conformity with the body of His glory. This "one hope" of our resurrection from the dead, the redemption of our body, is guaranteed by the earnest of the Spirit, given when the individual is properly immersed into Christ.
- **With greatness and reverence** – No bitterness for suffering and persecution allowed.
- **Keep a good conscience** – The cause of Christ can really only be maintained by one who is innocent of wrongdoing and whose conscience is clear. That way, charges brought are only slander, those who brought them will be put to shame and the individual is free to speak of his hope in Christ instead of trying to defend or justify his wrong action.

This is a Spirit inspired checklist of how to handle yourself under the suffering of persecution. Use it over and over, so that when strong persecution comes, you automatically follow down God's list.

Studies in I Peter

Suffer for Doing what is Right

In spite of what our humanistic “situation-ethicized” generation is subject to, there is still *right* and *wrong*. A man who does wrong knows he did wrong; his conscience condemns, regardless of the loudness of his proclaimed innocence.

The Christian is repeatedly warned not to violate his conscience. “Keeping faith and a good conscience,” Paul told Timothy, “which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith” (I Timothy 1:19). Keep a good conscience Peter has warned us, “so that in the thing in which you are slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (I Peter 3:16). There is still *right* and *wrong*.

“For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong” (I Peter 3:17).

- **If God should will it so** – Peter is still talking about suffering, particularly suffering persecution for the sake of the gospel. The underlying theme is that the believer in Christ will suffer only if God allows him to do so. These words, “if God should will it so,” further emphasizes this foundation, and remind us of Jesus’ own words in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39).
- **Suffering for doing wrong** – God has a basic spiritual law, and He will not withdraw its effects even for believers in the Lord. This law says that “whatever a man sows, this will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). The Holy Spirit again confirms this with these words to all Christians: “For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality” (Colossians 3:25). If you do what is wrong, you should suffer for it. Don’t whine about it; take your punishment like a man or a woman ought to.
- **Suffering for doing right** - This is a better kind of suffering. Sometimes it is hard to take this kind of suffering because inwardly your sense of justice is offended. But if you have been thrown in jail for preaching the word, verbally threatened for standing for righteousness or undergone the anguish of having worked hard for someone else’s benefit and having it thrown back in your face, that is God’s will. Remind yourself that this is a better kind of suffering.

Pain, persecution and passing of time are hallmarks of earthly existence. Recognize them for the short-term parameters they are and focus your attention toward the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who brings His reward with Him.

Studies in I Peter

Christ Also Died

“If then I am a wrongdoer,” said Paul and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die” (Acts 25:11). Paul’s sense of justice allowed him to say that if he were guilty of capital crime, he was worthy of capital punishment. “But,” he added, “if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Due to vestiges of justice still somewhat present in the Roman system, Paul’s appeal to Caesar was granted. But the inspired record shows that Paul received much more injustice from the system than justice.

So how did men like Paul, Peter, and other first century Christians respond to suffering unjustly? They reminded themselves of this great truth: “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (I Peter 3:18).

- **For Christ also died** - Christ did not simply suffer, although He suffered greatly; He died. Even the Scripture, which says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones” (Psalm 116:15.), speaks of the pain involved in the death of Christ. “And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:24). In effect, the early Christians reminded themselves of the ultimate suffering Christ went through, and more easily accepted their own.
- **The just for the unjust** – The only person who was ever perfectly innocent was Christ. In the grossest case of injustice ever perpetrated, Christ the Lamb of God was crucified. The early Christians reminded themselves of the ultimate injustice inflicted upon the ultimate innocent of the ultimately unjust, and more easily accepted their own suffering.
- **Christ died for sins once** - Christ not only paid the price for sins in general, but the one who believes and has been immersed needs to remember that Christ died particularly for his own sins. He needs to remember that mercy triumphs over justice, and if the Christian experiences a little injustice himself, he will appreciate the death of Christ on his behalf even more deeply. The early Christians reminded themselves of this ultimate sacrifice on their behalf, and were willing to accept their own sacrifices for the gospel more easily.

Christ suffered ignominy in order to bring us to God. We must take up our crosses daily, and, with joy, follow Him. He died for sins, once for all.

Studies in I Peter

Made Alive in the Spirit

God injected Jesus into the world to move man from the physical to the spiritual. The gripping story of the life of Christ is designed by the Almighty and Omniscient to rivet man's attention at the cross, to gently draw his vision and interest upward. The result, then, in the language of Paul, is that "we look - not at the things which are seen - but at the things which are unseen" (II Corinthians 4:18).

More details: A spiritual Christ, in one manner of speaking, is of a higher order than a physical Christ. "Though we have known Christ according to the flesh, we know Him thus no longer" (II Corinthians 5:16). "Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Romans 6:9,10). The point of Paul in both epistles is that the resurrected, glorified Christ is in all respects superior to His condition during the years He subjected Himself to an earthly sojourn.

Further weight is added to the significance of Christ in the Spirit by the conclusions Paul applies to us. "Therefore," he says in II Corinthians, "Even so, consider," he says in Romans. Great and powerful applications are derived from the principle that Christ has ceased in the flesh, and has been brought to life in the Spirit. "Therefore," says Paul, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Corinthians 5:17). God's creative power, exerted in bringing a totally new creature into existence, is predicated on a Christ who has become spiritual. "Even so, consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). The child of God is to consider himself as already resurrected in Christ, obviously built on the concept of a Christ whose earthly existence has ceased, and who is now the radiance of the Father's glory.

With this background, Peter's words take on greater significance, and serve as a source of encouragement to the sufferer: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust in order to bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18).

- **The flesh is weak** - Even our Lord Jesus, because He became flesh, had to die. It was in the flesh, remember, that He was put to death.
- **The Spirit gives life** - It is exciting to realize that, by God's power, life triumphs over death. But life comes through the Spirit of God, and it was in the Spirit Christ was made alive.

Rejoice then, you who follow - suffering - in the footsteps of Christ. You have indeed been born of the Spirit, born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Christ also suffered and died for the sake of others, but was made alive by the same Spirit He has now placed in you as a guarantee of your own resurrection on the last day.

Studies in I Peter

Spirits in Prison

What happens when you die? Do you rest in peace in the great unknown? As a pre-figure to immersion, Noah and his family were saved from the waters of the Flood, and those who were taken were said to be “spirits in prison.” What is this prison, and what happened to Noah?

- **Sheol - the resting place of the souls of the dead** - *Sheol* is the Old Testament word for the place where the soul of the individual went when he died. Jacob, for example, upon believing that his favored son Joseph was dead, said, “Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son” (Genesis 37:35). Not only did the righteous, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, descend to Sheol, but the unrighteous as well. Those who perished in the rebellion of Korah “went down alive to Sheol, and the earth closed over them” (Numbers 16:33). Even Jesus Himself had to descend to Sheol, as David prophesied the Christ as saying to the Father, “You will not abandon My soul to Sheol” (Psalm 16:10).
- **Hades - the Greek equivalent** - When the writers of the New Testament quoted the Old Testament concerning Sheol, they used the term *Hades*. “You will not abandon My soul to Hades,” read Peter’s words recorded in Acts 2:27. Hades (or Sheol) had two compartments - one for the righteous and one for the not so righteous - separated by an unbridgeable chasm. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Lazarus (among others) occupied the comfortable portion; the rich man and others of his ilk were in agony in the flame of the other (Luke 16:9-31).
- **Paradise - the comfortable section of Hades** - We know that Jesus descended to Hades. Yet He would say, in justifying the “good thief” on the cross, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Jesus and the justified robber both went to the comfortable portion of Hades, clearly termed Paradise by Jesus.
- **Paradise was lifted up** - Jacob and the other Old Testament greats went down to the Paradise portion of Sheol. But by the time Paul writes, Paradise is up (II Corinthians 12:4), and those who physically die in Christ are spoken of as “absent from the body and at home with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:8).
- **The prison – Hades now contains only the spirits of the unrighteous** - With Paradise now up in the presence of Jesus, all that is left down is the abode of the unrighteous dead. They are “on the docket,” “in prison,” awaiting the resurrection of judgment (John 5:29). Those in this prison will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:1-15).

Noah and his family were delivered by the ark from this prison. You can be delivered from this prison yourself by being immersed into the body of Christ, and by remaining faithful to the Lord. You will be immersed - either in water voluntarily, or in fire involuntarily. Your choice!

Studies in I Peter

In the Spirit He Made Proclamation

This is one of the most difficult statements in the Bible to honestly understand. Christ was “made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah” (I Peter 3:18-20). Did Jesus actually preach to those who perished in the Noachian Flood after He died and went to Hades? Did He give them a second chance?

The key words here are “made alive in the Spirit,” as contrasted to Christ’s being “put to death in the flesh.” The general thrust of the word of God is that Jesus, the revelation of the glory of God, existed in different stages so that the essence of God can be communicated to spiritually interested men.

- **Christ in glory** - “Glorify Me, together with Yourself” Jesus said to the Father, in His longest recorded prayer, “with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5). Jesus, the Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts (Isaiah 44:6), was in His state of eternal glory from before the foundation of the world until He took flesh. Before He became flesh, He appeared numerous times, primarily as the angel of Yahweh, in what are called “Christophanies.”
- **Christ in the flesh** - “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The Christ took on a body, that - among other things - He might be an understanding, faithful, and merciful High Priest.
- **Christ in His bodily resurrection** - After Jesus rose from the dead, but before He ascended to heaven, He was seeable and touchable. “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit [ghost] does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). This was a further step in the development of God’s revelation, but in Jesus’ bodily resurrection, He was still recognizable “in the flesh.”
- **Christ in glory again** - It is the Christ in glory who is the exact impress of the Father. It is the Christ in glory, which is revealed to the eyes of our heart through the revelation the Holy Spirit gave the apostles and New Testament writers. It is the Christ in glory of whom Paul speaks when He says, “Even though we have known Christ in the flesh, yet we now know Him thus no longer” (II Corinthians 5:16). It is the Christ in glory of whom Peter speaks when he says, “put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit.”

It was not the Christ who was dead who made proclamation to the spirits in prison; it was the Christ who was alive in the Spirit. In Noah’s day, He spoke as the Spirit of Christ in Noah, warning them of the Flood to come. Today He speaks from heaven through His spirit-inspired word, warning of judgment to come.

Studies in I Peter

The Patience of God

God should have torched off this place down here long ago. But, in His own words, He is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exodus 34:6). Thus it was that He patiently preached repentance through Noah for 120 years, while the ark was being built, to those disobedient and unrepentant spirits whose bodies perished in the Flood. In the Spirit, “He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark” (I Peter 3:19,20).

Those days of Noah stand as a warning to every generation of man to inhabit the earth. God had implanted a conscience in man, and man rejected the strivings of God’s Spirit. “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be 120 years” (Genesis 6:3). This 120 years is apparently the time when the patience of God kept waiting during the construction of the ark. And what did God have to be patient with for those years?

- “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great of the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).
- “Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Genesis 6:11,12).

God should have torched the earth off then, but He is patient, and He had a plan. Through Noah, the Spirit of Christ preached to them, and when they did not repent, He “did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (II Peter 2:5). Thus, “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8).

“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark” (Matthew 24:37, 38). They had no spiritual interests, their thoughts were fixed upon earth and thus on evil; and when the proclamation of a preacher of righteousness did not change the disobedient, the patience of God ran out!

But, because of the construction of the ark, “a few, that is, eight persons were brought safely through the water” (I Peter 3:20). Though the rest of the world be corrupt, God is willing to save the few who will listen to His preachers of righteousness. Enter into the church of Christ by immersion, and you will be brought safely through the judgment.

Studies in I Peter

Immersion Now Saves You

Salvation is always a great and important issue. The vast bulk of earth's population in Noah's day did not think it was important - there were "important" things like buying and selling, planting and building - until the floodgates of the sky were opened and the fountains of the great deep burst open. When the rain dumped, salvation became the only issue. And by then, it was too late. So, "a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water" (I Peter 3:20).

"And corresponding to that, immersion now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21). Immersion is obviously a salvation issue. There are vast multitudes in today's world who don't think so, even among most so-called Christian leaders; but when the heavens turn to fire and the judgment of God begins to rain down upon them, it will be too late. But, first, a word or two of important background information:

- The scripture contains in itself numerous *types* and *antitypes* to communicate some of the Almighty's great truths. *Types*, or *foreshadows*, are systems, examples, and constructions in the Old Testament which prefigure the real message of the New Testament
- Antitypes are the real things. The offering of Isaac by Abraham on Mt. Moriah was the type; the offering of Christ by God on Calvary was the antitype. The Old Testament tabernacle (and the temple, which had the same basic design) was the type; the church of the living God and heaven's throne of grace is the antitype. Moses, the great prophet and deliverer of Israel, was the type; Christ, the Prophet and deliverer from sin, is the antitype.

Now, in the passage here in I Peter 3, *immersion is the antitype*, the real thing. There are those who try to maintain that immersion is a figure or type based on this passage, but the reverse is emphatically true. God used the devastation of the planet and the salvation of Noah's household as a type to point to immersion as the antitype

Just as the old world was destroyed, and a new world - fresh and clean from corruption - was brought forth, so also the old man of sin is destroyed in immersion, and a new creature is brought forth. Just as Noah and his family were brought safely through the water, so also immersion now saves us.

The blood of Jesus saves, and no one can be saved apart from Jesus' blood. Faith saves, and no one can be saved apart from faith in the risen Christ. Grace saves, and no one can be saved apart from the grace of God. Immersion saves, and no one can be saved apart from the immersion described in the New Testament. And, since God has chosen to make all of these operative at immersion in Jesus' name for the remission of sins, let those who would challenge that remember the Flood of Noah's day.

Studies in I Peter

Appeal to God For A Good Conscience

The great themes and grand spiritual truths of the Bible do not interest the fleshly human being. The promise and *glory* are vaguely boring to the man whose eyes are focused on the ground. *Type* and *antitype* elicit a vacant stare from the woman whose attention is fixed on the mating game. So the Father of all spirits, loving communicator that He is, implanted a conscience in all the race of men.

When a man steals - anywhere on earth, in any civilization - his conscience unceasingly nags at him. When a man commits murder - anywhere on earth, in any civilization - his conscience tears him to shreds. When a man bears false witness anywhere on earth, in any civilization - his conscience rips gaping holes in his concentration. When a man commits adultery or covets - anywhere on earth, in any civilization - his conscience shakes the finger of accusation continually before his face.

Some men respond by searing their consciences, shearing them off and cauterizing them so they will bother no more. Some men lose their sanity in trying to bear their loads of guilt. Some resort to the quick fix and quicksilver of psychiatry. Some try drinking or drugging their way to some sort of stupefied oblivion. Some angrily blame everyone or someone else. Some devise false religions. Some try to justify themselves. But some, praise the Lord, turn to God on His terms.

To these lovers of truth, God has arranged an orderly sequence of events so that they may have confident assurance in God's ability to perform what the word says that He will do.

- **Animal sacrifices were offered from the beginning** - in the days of Cain and Abel, God required animal sacrifice. The patriarchs offered animal sacrifices on altars of uncut stones.
- **Animal sacrifices were offered under the Law** - God explained that animal sacrifices could be offered to atone for sins. Thus, while the offering of sacrifice by the priests increased consciousness of sins, the fact that the soul of the animal (Leviticus 17:11) was in the blood began to make the connection that there could be an exchange of soul for soul - blood for forgiveness.
- **The sacrifice of Christ was the great one-time offering** - Having prepared all mankind through the ritual offerings of the Jews, the way was now clear for Jesus to offer His blood on the cross in true forgiveness. The writer of Hebrews explains, "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13,14)

The truth-seeker, the one whose guilty conscience has caused him to seek the favor of the Lord, has found the fountain of purity in the blood of Christ. Now he must make his personal appeal for a clear conscience by the means which God has specified: "Immersion now saves you not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience" (I Peter 3:21).

Studies in I Peter

The Appeals Process

A conscience is a terrible thing to sear. Those who cauterize their consciences end up liars and hypocrites, working for Satan as they introduce demented doctrines into the world. But the honest man who is willing to let his conscience condemn his wrongful actions is driven to seek relief in the arms of Jesus at the court of heaven. Here he praises God as he finds there is a process by which he might make an appeal to the Governor of the universe for clemency.

Using the physical deliverance of Noah's family from the ravages of the Flood as a springboard, the apostle Peter writes, "And corresponding to that, immersion now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him" (I Peter 3:21,22). Immersion is the conscience-stricken individual's appeal to the great God for mercy and a good conscience!

- **Immersion's power is not in the removal of dirt from the flesh** - The Holy Spirit wants to make it clear that external, physical cleansing is not the purpose of the water. Water, of course, is normally associated with cleansing dirt from the flesh. But the Great Teacher is in the process of raising the sights of a fleshly, conscience-driven man who bears the image of Adam from earth's shores to the glory of the heavenly calling. So right from the time of the new birth the emphasis on spiritual cleansing rather than on something merely physical.
- **Immersion is the formal presentation of a legal appeal** - In the judicial process ordained by the Most High, there is a means by which petition for clemency is tendered. The Almighty, not desiring the death sentence for any of His offspring, has made proclamation to the whole earth through His Son that pardon is available through the Son's sacrifice on the cross. Those who believe the proclamation are required to repent, to confess the name of the Son publicly, and to be immersed for remission of debts to the King. This immersion, by the will of the King, is the eperotema - the legal petition - by which the King has offered to grant mercy to every individual who so appeals.
- **God, through the appeals process, grants a clean conscience** - Only God, the Creator of the conscience, can grant a clean conscience. In this area, as in no other, is man's dependency on God so clearly demonstrated. The vain and empty philosophies - the claptrap psychologies and twisted religions - all fail to do what only God can do: provide a good conscience.

Immersion now saves you. It is the means by which God reaches beyond the mere physical cleansing of the flesh and purifies the soul. In immersion, the one who believes the gospel is saved as he contacts the blood of Jesus Christ in immersion, blood as of a Lamb unblemished which cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Studies in I Peter

Immersion Saves Through The Resurrection

In some sectors of the Restoration Movement, there is a subtle tendency to overemphasize the crucifixion of Christ over the resurrection of our Lord. Far be it from me to de-emphasize the cross, and the blood which Jesus the Lamb shed in His death upon the tree. Far be it from me also to fail to put the emphasis that the word of God puts on the glorious resurrection of Jesus. "Christ Jesus is He who died," writes the apostle Paul, "yes, *rather who was raised*, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34).

How can the crucifixion be subtly overemphasized? It works like this:

- Immersion as the vehicle by which forgiveness is granted is very controversial. Much of denominational world believes in sprinkling instead of immersion. And those who believe in immersion generally vehemently teach that a person is "saved" first, then later immersed. So predominant is the latter view that an increasing percentage of congregations are adopting this perspective, loving the approval of men rather than the approval of God.
- Because of this tremendous pressure, those who try to "hold the line" on the scripture's teaching on immersion are forced to place a great emphasis on passages such as Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16, which clearly establish that immersion is the point wherein God forgives the repentant believer.
- This forced emphasis on remission requires an attendant focus on the cross. When a person is immersed into Christ, he is immersed into the death of Christ, where Jesus' blood was shed for remission of sins.
- The thrust of Romans 6:1-7, one of the clearest sections of scripture on immersion, is on the death of Christ. While there is some attention given to the believer's participation in Jesus' resurrection, the salient point in those verses is the crucifixion of the old man of sin.

But... what must be destroyed is always less important than what must be built! "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, *new things have come*" (II Corinthians 5:17). Christ crucified took away the certificate of debt and decrees which were hostile to us, but Christ resurrected and glorified ushered in the power of the new man as a new creation, strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inner man.

Hence it is written: "Immersion now saves you ...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21). What vistas this opens up! The great thrust of immersion is not so much that the old man of sin is buried with Christ, but that a new creature comes forth in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection. "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). "If then you *have been raised up with Christ*, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

Studies in I Peter

Who Is This Jesus?

There was a time when Jesus was a crying baby lying in a manger. There was a time when Jesus was a twelve year-old boy asking questions of the learned doctors of the Law in the temple. There was a time when Jesus was a strapping young man who stepped forth from the crowd to be immersed by John in the Jordan. There was a time when Jesus stretched forth His arms on the cross, and in the agony of death triumphantly cried out, "It is finished". There was a time when the resurrected Jesus would say to Mary Magdalene, "I have not yet ascended to the Father." All of these *were* Jesus. But who is Jesus?

Jesus "is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him" (I Peter 3:22).

- **Jesus is the One who is at the right hand of power** - The expression "right hand of God" is not a description of a physical location. In the realm where Jesus is, there is nothing physical: It is all spiritual. Jesus is also described as "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). The "right hand of God" is a figurative expression meaning that He is the agent by which all the power of God works. He is indeed the "power of God" (I Corinthians 1:24). As Jesus told Caiaphas, the Roman-installed high priest of Israel, "Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Jesus must be very great indeed, to be the agent for all this power.
- **Jesus is the One who is over angels** - Angels are powerful beings. They are of a higher order of creation than man and as totally spirit beings. They do not have the limitations imposed by bodily encasement. They do not die, and they do not have to plod wearily from here to there as strangers and pilgrims on the wastelands of earth. While we are not offered many glimpses of angelic activity through the scripture into realms we cannot see, those which we can peer into tell us a tale of mighty, flashing beings who are also involved in the great spiritual war. Jesus, our Redeemer, Yahweh of the spiritual armies of heaven, must be very great indeed to be over angels.
- **Jesus is over authorities and powers** - By Him, and for Him, and through Him are all things. By virtue of His seating as the King of glory all dominions and authorities and thrones, both visible and invisible, are in subjection to Him. Jesus must be very great indeed, to be King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Praise God for the greatness of Jesus! Praise God that our immersion now saves us by the resurrection of this Jesus. If this Christ is for us, who can be against us? This is truly a great salvation found only in sharing in the resurrection of this Jesus, the Most Exalted One.

Studies in I Peter

Arm Yourselves For This Purpose

Nobody likes to suffer. In fact, many fleshly activities are honestly or dishonestly designed to alleviate suffering or increase comfort. But...even the great Lord Jesus, the One to whom angels and authorities and powers were subjected, had to suffer. Of the non-inspired writers, perhaps William Penn said it best:

*No pain, no palm
No thorns, no throne
No gall, no glory
No cross, no crown*

“Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (I Peter 4:1,2). In God’s way of doing things, because sin has entered the world through Adam and spread as a vicious cancer to affect and eventually infect all men, the pain indeed precedes the reward of the palm branch. No suffering, no reward. No sacrifice, no resurrection. Since Christ had to suffer while He walked in the flesh, we who follow in His footsteps are privileged to suffer also. “**Arm** yourselves for this purpose,” the Holy Spirit says.

- **Arming is mental preparation** - If you arm yourself for a battle, you prepare ahead of time. You make sure your musket is ready, your powder dry, and your shot handy. In the same way, a Christian needs to mentally prepare himself *beforehand* for the suffering to come.
- **If you expect suffering, it does not surprise you** - If a Christian expects to have everything go easy because the Lord is “blessing” him, and then unjust persecution or difficulty arises, he is often devastated because he was not “armed;” he had been disarmed by his own false expectation.
- **The only way to be armed is by the development of entrenched spiritual habits** - The individual who has consistently set aside an hour a day in prayer - with a significant portion of that in praise and thanksgiving - has developed a trust in God and a positive mental framework that cannot be instantly activated by some sort of spiritual push-button.
- **Reserves of memorized scripture are needed** - The weapon - the arms - of a Christian is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. The child of God who has neglected the study of the word, and who is not skillful in spiritual swordplay, has not really armed himself.

The key to success in any endeavor is the proper mental pre-disposition and laying in necessary preparations. The scripture forthrightly warns each of us of our coming suffering, and tells us to arm ourselves for this purpose.

Studies in I Peter

Suffering And Sin

It is interesting that God should make a connection between suffering and ceasing from sin. The apostle Paul, for example, in speaking of his own desire to attain to the resurrection of the righteous, desired to know “the fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10). Those who truly hope to be resurrected to life on the last day will want to fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law - to continue in sin no longer. But the only way the body can be brought into such subjection is through suffering. As Peter says, “He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (I Peter 4:1,2).

In suffering the body’s weakness is graphically displayed - Mankind in general trusts that he perceives, rightly or wrongly, to be strong. A young man’s glory is his strength; he sometimes foolishly believes that his strength will allow him to bull his way through any problem. But suffering emaciates and destroys portions of the body, and the person who has truly suffered recognizes that this tent in which our spirits are currently housed is a fragile, filmy, vapor-like thing indeed.

Suffering produces the one hope - The one hope of the Christian’s calling is his resurrection from the dead. The kind of suffering first century Christians experienced stripped away any hope that might have been fixed on earth, and produced a clear desire to experience the transformation of a suffering body into conformity with the body of Christ’s glory.

Suffering produces an appreciation and respect for others who have suffered - A person who has been laid open with a lashing of “40 stripes save one” can certainly respect a man like Paul, who had experienced these whippings five times. To those of us who have never suffered thusly for the gospel, these words seem ethereal and distant.

Suffering produces a deeper appreciation and respect for Jesus - To have suffered, and to appreciate others who have suffered deeply for the cause of Christ, leads directly to the exaltation of the One who suffered most.

Suffering clarifies the issues. My appeal that earth’s treasures and pleasures might make is exposed by suffering as a shimmering sham. The personage of Jesus is exalted as the experiences of suffering bring into clear focus His greatness, and produce the honest desire to please Him who paid the ultimate price for the sufferer’s soul. Peter’s words are true: He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. The rest of the time he lives in the flesh he lives no longer for the lusts of men, but to do the will of God.

Studies in I Peter

The Desire of the Gentiles

The Gentile lifestyle does not impress God. Of course, the Jews didn't particularly impress God either because of their hypocrisy, so that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them. But the general superiority of the Jewish life style in the New Testament era is noted in the words of Paul to Peter in Antioch of Syria: "We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15). Christians suffering in the flesh cease from sin, no longer living for the lusts of men but for the will of God, are obviously living a life that is superior to the Jews, and vastly superior to that of those loathsome Gentiles.

"For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you; but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (I Peter 4:3-5).

The key word here is desire. There can be a big difference between what a person should do and what he really wants to do. And what a person really wants to do, when given the opportunity, that's what he will do. Some men, for example, when out of town on a business trip, "step out" on their wives. Some preachers drink alcoholic beverages with their dinners on airplane trips, where they think no one will see them. As Jesus excoriated the Jews in the temple one time: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father" (John 8:44). That is why James' warning is so strong: "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The solution is to change desire. Sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties (isn't it amazing how up to date, relevant, and 20th century this list is?), and abominable idolatries (our idolatries are more subtle in modern times - we worship ourselves as humanists) were our desires in the past. The implication is that these are our wishes no longer. Suffering has exposed these desires as being worthless, and the lusts of men have been left behind.

When your desires have changed - when you have no desire to carry out those lusts - then you do not run with the Gentiles no matter how much pressure is put upon you. Of course, they are surprised that you don't participate; then, because their consciences start to bother them, they begin the name-calling routine.

But the suffering Christian has seen that this earth and pleasing men has nothing to offer. He lives - His desire is - for the will of God, and as one of those who is truly living, to give a good account to Him who judges the living and the dead.

Studies in I Peter

The Quick and the Dead

The *quick* is an old King James English expression meaning *those who are living*. The word of God is greatly concerned about life and death about the quick and the dead. Indeed, from the opening passages in Genesis to the closing paragraphs of Revelation, this is the great theme of the Bible. “From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,” God told Adam as recorded in Genesis, “for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely **die**” (Genesis 2:17). 66 books later, Revelation is still on the theme: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

Therefore it is not surprising to find life and death interwoven into Peter’s first letter. Speaking of the Gentiles who malign Christians when they don’t run with them into sinful practices, he writes: “But they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God” (I Peter 4:5,6). Who are the *quick*, and who are the *dead*?

- **The spiritual is more important than the physical** - When God warned Adam not to eat the fruit of the wrong tree, the *death* He promised was not Adam’s physical death, but his spiritual separation from God. The scripture, then, is generally concerned with spiritual life and death more than physical life and death. As the apostle Paul put it: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).
- **The gospel is preached to those who are spiritually dead** - The gospel is not preached to those who have passed from earth’s existence. The gospel is preached to those who, in the flesh, have opportunity to make a decision. Thus, the gospel is preached to those who are dead spiritually so that they may live in the Spirit. Again, as Paul says, “Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). And, as Jesus said, referring to His “voice” as that which is heard through the gospel, “An hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live” (John 5:25).
- **God is ready to judge the living and the dead** - The judgment upon all men in the flesh is the same - condemnation. God allows the one who hears the gospel to bury the flesh in immersion (Colossians 2:11,12), and to come to life through the judgment seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10) - both the living (spiritually), and the dead (spiritually). As Jesus also said, “An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28,29).

God is ready to judge both the quick and the dead. The question is: are you ready to be judged? Are you *quick*, or are you *dead*?

Studies in I Peter

That They May Live

“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” spoke the Lord through His prophet Ezekiel, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?” (Ezekiel 18:23). The Father of the spirits of all flesh, who lovingly and intricately works to form each man’s spirit and to fashion each man’s body, has not performed such work with the desire of seeing it burn in the fires of hell. But, if a man does not turn from his wicked ways to the Lord, then burn he shall.

God has a way of warning men of their fate - the gospel. God has harbingers who move through out the land with the message of God’s impending judgment upon their lips - preachers of the gospel. Gospel preaching always includes the information that the retribution of God awaits those who do not know Him, and who do not obey the gospel. As Simon the Sorcerer told the apostle Peter, after Peter rebuked him, “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me” (Acts 8:24).

Thus, “For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God” (I Peter 4:6). God is ready to judge the living and the dead, so the loving Father has sent His message and His messengers into the world to proclaim His righteous judgment.

- **Those who are dead** - The dead are those who are lost in sin, separated from God by the guilt of their own transgressions. God does not desire the ultimate death of these wicked (all who have sinned), so for this purpose the gospel has been preached to them.
- **They are judged in the flesh as men** - “There is no man who does not sin,” said wise Solomon in the prayer of dedication of the temple (I Kings 8:46). So when God judges men in the flesh, the judgment is always the same - condemnation. The apostle Paul, speaking of his life prior to becoming a Christian, delineates the difficulty of an honest man: “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I also see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:22,23). The honest man recognizes the accuracy of God’s judgment, and cries out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).
- **They may live in the spirit** - The gospel sets a man free from the body. When a person is immersed into Christ, the sinful man is crucified, and the new creature arises to walk in newness of life. “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,” said Paul, “if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Romans 8:9)

Praise God! The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and of death. The gospel has been preached for this purpose, that we may excitedly live in the Spirit!

Studies in I Peter

The End of All Things

This earth is not going to go on forever. Man is not going to physically pollute himself off the planet, nor is some atomic holocaust going to bring on the dread of a sterile nuclear winter. This earth will end when Jesus speaks the word, which will shake not only the earth but the heavens also, and this whole physical creation will vanish just as suddenly as it first sprang into existence at the bidding of the Almighty. It will end when Jesus descends from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel - and with a blast from the trumpet of God.

“The end of all things is at hand,” Peter warned them in the first century AD. The nearness of the end always puts what a person needs to be doing in the proper perspective. Here is the inspired list of things to be done in the present, preceded by the powerful and tell-tale word, “therefore”:

- **Be of sound judgment** - Set the right priorities, use your head, don't be running off on wild goose chases, remember that people are more important than things.
- **Be of sober spirit** - For a drunk, everything is hazy and out of whack. The sober person is able to recognize when something is not important and can be ignored, and he is also able to recognize the gravity of dangerous conditions or situations, which a tipsy individual just does not see. The sober-minded Christian is aware of the grave importance of eternity and the perilous condition of men's souls apart from Christ.
- **For the purpose of prayer** - The special reason a Christian is to be of sober spirit is so that he knows how and what to pray for.
- **Keep fervent in love** - Fervent has to do with feverish, or hot. “Above all,” says Peter, “keep fervent in your love for one another” (I Peter 4:8). Brethren in Christ need to keep the embers of love for one another glowing, and this love covers the multitude of sins, which tend to occur when brothers and sisters in Christ interact.
- **Be hospitable to one another without complaint** - Hospitality has to do with sharing each other's lives, “taking meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” And even though you have to extend yourself to be hospitable, don't complain about serving or the brethren whom you are so serving.
- **Employ your gifts in serving one another** - God has been very kind and gracious, and has given each Christian a gift. These gifts, however, are not to be kept selfishly to oneself and one's family, but to serve the brethren. This is another stewardship from God, a stewardship of His manifold, multi-faceted grace.
- **Whoever speaks, let him speak the utterances of God** - Let him say what God says - the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
- **Whoever serves, let him serve in the strength which God supplies** - It takes tremendous stamina to continue to serve in the kingdom of God. God will supply, especially if we are willing to recognize that He is the supplier.
- **That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ** - No personal glory, or vain or empty glory, but that which causes men to respect and praise the name of Jesus.

The end of all things is at hand. Use this list as your checklist during the final countdown.

Studies in I Peter

Glory and Dominion

Jesus is worthy of praise. The great spiritual picture book of Revelation gives us powerful and repeated scenes declaring the praise - worthiness of the Christ. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," responded tens of thousands upon tens of thousands of the heavenly host before the throne, "to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:12). The created things in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea say, "To Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 5:13). And the redeemed from every nation cry out, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:10). Yes, Jesus is worthy of praise, and He is worthy of praise forever and ever.

But when shall this praise begin? And how shall this praise be offered? For Christians this praise begins now! "Behold," says Paul, "now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the 'day of salvation'" (II Corinthians 6:2). And how shall this praise be offered? Peter has emphasized that the end of all things is at hand, and has given a checklist of instructions for the saints to carry out. The saints of God are to be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer, to keep fervent in their love for one another, to be hospitable, to employ their gifts in serving one another, to speak the utterances of God, and to serve one another in the strength which God supplies. These are to be done, he says, "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 4:11).

In one manner of speaking, it is comparatively easy to assemble with the saints on the first day of the week and offer up to Him a number of hymns of praise. But, while this is to be done, some of the "weightier" matters of glorifying God are not to be neglected. It is interesting how loving and serving God is never separated from loving and serving men. "The one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (I John 4:20). And our Lord Jesus, after expressing the great commandment that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, and minds, said this: The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

It is greatly significant that God should be glorified through Jesus Christ when a Christian exercises sound judgment, and keeps a sober spirit for prayer. A person may say he glorifies God, but if he is not fervent in his love of the brethren, or if he is not hospitable to the saints without complaining, he is lying. An individual who won't serve is no glorifier of God, nor is he who will not speak the utterances of God. These are to be done, says the Holy Spirit, "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Jesus is indeed worthy of praise and glorification. But we cannot yet join the four and twenty elders to cast our crowns before Him who sits on the throne of the Lamb (Revelation 4:10). We cannot yet lift our voices in glory with the myriads and myriads who sing of the worthiness of the Lamb who was slain. But we can think, love, serve, pray, and preach for the glory of God through Jesus Christ, "to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!" (not Revelation, but I Peter 4:11).

Studies in I Peter

Do Not Be Surprised At The Fiery Ordeal

A surprise is something truly unexpected. A surprise party, a surprise gift, a surprise hug - these are delightful and unforeseen. But there are also what are called unpleasant surprises - broken pipes and a flooded basement money stolen or embezzled the loss of a child in an accident. These can be more difficult to bear because of the unexpected nature of the blow.

“Forewarned is forearmed,” is an old saying Peter has told us as a forewarning to arm ourselves for the purpose of suffering. After encouraging us with these words, “The end of all things is at hand,” he then comes back to his theme of preparing us for the suffering to come, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation” (I Peter 4:12,13).

“Do not be surprised,” says the Holy Spirit through Peter. Suffering on earth is not to be some unexpected tragedy, which overwhelms the child of God; rather, it is the expected norm for which each Christian must spiritually and mentally prepare himself.

- **The fiery ordeal among you** - The accumulation of trials, which Christians experience is not just an ordinary ordeal, it is a “fiery ordeal.” Expect the suffering to be intense and the persecution to be very severe: torture, burnings, all the things, which those who have been given over to a depraved mind are capable of.
- **Which comes upon you for testing** - Just as fire tests the trueness of gold, so our faith is tested in fiery trial. And as gold has nothing to fear from fire, those who are truly of the faith have nothing to fear from the testing.
- **As though some strange thing were happening to you** - All gold is refined; it is not strange at all for gold to pass through furnace and crucible to remove impurities as dross. All faith likewise is refined; it is not at all unexpected for the Christian’s faith to be tried by fire.
- **To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ** - The all-wise Father knows how much suffering each of us can take, and gauges the fire accordingly. The closer we approach in imitation of the character of Christ, the greater degree of suffering we can handle.
- **Keep on rejoicing** - The implication is that the Christian has been rejoicing prior to suffering. The exhortation is that he is to continue in the joy of the Lord through the pain of the ordeal.
- **At the revelation of His glory** - The glory of Christ, which is now seen by faith, will be manifest at His second coming. This is the moment for which each Christian waits with eager expectation.
- **You may rejoice with exultation** - The time for spiritual “high fives” is at Jesus’ return. At this point, the final gun will have sounded, and Christ and His team will have been declared undisputed champions of the universe.

The Christian is not surprised at the fierceness of the battle in the trenches. Rather, he is to prepare for the test, and rejoice in the testing process. He is to listen to the voices of victory calling him upward, and join in the great celebration of triumph in glory.

Studies in I Peter

The Spirit Rests On You

God can bless in a material way, but the blessings of God are not always material. In fact, God's blessings may come to the individual in the midst of material depravity, when his poverty and wretched condition force him to look at the spiritual realm. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul, "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

The whole purpose of God in His dealings with the human race has been to move him off his material dead center, and to implant in him the ability to see that which is not seen with the physical eye. The first acceptable "anointed one," King David, for example, was a swash-buckling, sword-carrying commander of men who sawed his enemies into pieces and burned them in brick kilns. But the true Messiah was not a soldier or a king in an earthly sense at all, as He personally reassured Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). And it was on this very point that those whose minds were focused on earth stumbled; when Jesus was not a fleshly Messiah, they rejected and crucified Him. "Therefore," said Jesus to the rulers and elders in Israel, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it" (Matthew 21:43).

Other than a small remnant of Jews who turned to the Lord, the kingdom was given to those from the ranks of the Gentiles who were of a mind to seek for spiritual blessings rather than for something earth-centered. Christ in the flesh never came to the Gentiles, as He Himself explained, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). But Christ in the Spirit would come to the spiritually-minded Gentiles, and this would be the greatest of all spiritual blessings. The apostle Paul explains: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' - in order that in Christ Jesus the *blessing* of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the *Spirit* through faith" (Galatians 3:13,14).

The apostle Peter draws upon this great truth to encourage the brethren to whom he is writing. Speaking of the fiery ordeal of suffering which comes upon those of the faith, he writes, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (I Peter 4:14). The indwelling Spirit is the great blessing; He is such a great blessing that the fact that He rests upon the suffering Christian greatly overshadows any disgrace or pain that being reviled for the name of Christ might bring.

Are you spiritual enough to be reviled for the name of Christ? Are you spiritually minded enough to recognize the great blessing of the indwelling Spirit? Have you focused enough on those things, which cannot be seen to look upon the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon you while you suffer for the cause of Christ?

Studies in I Peter

Suffering As A Christian

One time I picked up a hitch-hiker who claimed to be a priest of the Druids. This young man had rejected Christianity, he said, because it pictures life on earth as “a vale of tears.” Unfortunately, the earth is not merely pictured as a vale of tears; it is a place of suffering and heartache, a place of pain and disease, a place of crime and punishment, a place of war and greed. And none of us is untouched by these tentacles.

So it is not so much a question of suffering, it is a question of what a person is going to suffer for. “By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God” (I Peter 4:15,16).

One of the best laid principles in scripture is that whatever you dish out, you get dished back to you in return. Speaking more eloquently, Jesus said, “By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you” (Matthew 7:2). Let us consider some of the suffering, which might then come upon a Christian who falls into the wrong kind of “dishing out”:

- **As a murderer** - Generally speaking, a murderer is to be put to death. From the time that Noah stepped from the ark to a fresh new world, the dictum has been, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed” (Genesis 9:6). If a Christian commits murder, he deserves to suffer and die.
- **As a thief** - A thief in Israel was to add one-fifth to what he had originally stolen from the victim, and to make restitution to the victim. While the penalty for stealing was different in various Gentile societies, a thief was to suffer justly, and experience the ignominy of having the name of thief.
- **As an evildoer** - The standard of justice is an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, wound for wound. If a Christian participates in evil in any form, he should suffer for the wrong he has committed.
- **As a troublesome meddler** - There is no civil punishment for being a person who wrongfully meddles in other people’s business. But there is a social ostracism which results from this type of activity, and this can be very painful.

The child of God should not be a participant in these forms of behavior. But if he in all honesty suffers - not for doing wrong, but for simply being a Christian - he is not to be ashamed. If he is imprisoned unjustly, if his good name is besmirched in the community, instead of feeling the shame, which someone justly experiences in being an evildoer, the believer is to glorify God

This is an example of the wisdom and encouragement of the Lord in handling adversity. Don’t let it get you down; face it with rejoicing!

Studies in I Peter

The Name Christian

If anyone suffers as a Christian,” says Peter, “let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God” (I Peter 4:16). The name of Christian is obviously quite significant to God, and it is the name in which an individual glorifies God.

When the church of God began on the Jewish feast of Pentecost in 30 A.D. as recorded in Acts 2, all the followers of the Lord Jesus were Jewish. Even when the Samaritans (who were of ancient, Israelite stock) were added, the church was regarded as merely a sect of the Jews who believed their founder to be raised from the dead and therefore the promised Messiah; thus those of this sect of the Jews were known as *disciples of Christ*. But when large numbers of the Gentiles began turning to the Lord in Antioch of Syria as recorded in Acts 11, they could no longer be regarded as merely a branch of Judaism. As the Greek text indicates, at the instigation of Barnabas and Saul, “the disciples were first called *Christians* at Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

Isaiah had prophesied the message of salvation reaching the Gentiles (the nations). “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning. And the nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will designate” (Isaiah 62:1,2). It is clear that he also prophesied the giving of a new name to God’s people, a name designated by the very mouth of God. This new name is the name Christian, which means “pertaining to, belonging to, of Christ.”

The name for God’s people is not Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, Evangelical, Lutheran, Pentecostal, or any of a host of man-made denominational names. The Holy Spirit is very clear: “if anyone suffers as a Christian, in that name let him glorify God.”

But just because an individual calls himself a Christian, that does not mean that he is one. Since the name Christian is a name, which God has designated by His own mouth, it may only be used as God uses it. According to the Almighty One, what are the means by which a struggling human being may proudly wear this great name? The steps in the scripture are crystal clear:

1. He must hear the word (Romans 10:17).
2. He must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and that He is therefore the Christ (Romans 10:9,10).
3. He must be moved to repentance (Acts 3:19).
4. He must confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9,10).
5. He must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of his sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Upon his immersion in Jesus’ name, the new creature is joined as a bride to her husband, and now wears the name, which only He can bestow. If anyone suffers as a Christian, in that name let him glorify God.

Studies in I Peter

The Judgment of God

How do you help someone who is experiencing suffering and pain to go through it with the proper attitude? The primary means by which trial is overcome is by a constant focus on the reward. Note what our Lord Jesus used to pull Himself through the suffering and shame of His crucifixion and associated events: “who for *the joy set before Him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Only the prospect of certain and commensurate reward can give the mind the strength it needs to overcome adversity with rejoicing.

Continuing on his theme of exhorting brethren in the midst of their suffering, the apostle Peter again writes: “If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?” (I Peter 4:16-18). Implicit in this passage is the reward for the one who glorifies God as a Christian, and the subsequent righting of wrong in the ultimate judgment of God. Consider:

- **The household of God** - The household of God is the church, upon whom He has bestowed the blessing of the Holy Spirit and His special favor. These are those who are saved from the wrath to come.
- **The judgment of the household of God** - In God’s way of doing things, everyone suffers. Jesus suffered, and took the judgment of God for the sins of others upon Himself. Christians likewise experience the immersion of suffering, drinking the cup Jesus drank, for the sake of those who will be saved. This suffering, then, is the judgment of God upon the household of God.
- **The judgment upon the non-Christian** - The magnitude of suffering which comes upon the children of God is great. Recall this experience from a page of Paul’s life: “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death [the judgment of God] within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” (II Corinthians 1:8,9). The greatness of this suffering points to the extreme agony of those who are not immersed into Christ or who do not remain faithful. “If it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God!”

These thoughts are intended to encourage the sufferer. The recognition of the terrible anguish the Christian escapes in the next life by experiencing difficulty in this one makes it possible to face any persecution on earth with joy. It is with difficulty that the righteous is saved. “And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner!”

Studies in I Peter

Obeying the Gospel of God

Most moderns speak of the gospel as something simply to be believed. Not so the word of God, however. Both Peter and Paul speak of *obeying* the gospel, and they both speak of that obedience in connection with the onrushing judgment of God.

Peter says, “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do *not* obey the Gospel of God?” (I Peter 4:17). And Paul speaks thusly, referring to the appearance of Jesus at His second coming, being “revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not *obey the* gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction” (II Thessalonians 1:7.8). The penalty for not obeying the gospel is the retribution of God, eternal damnation.

So how do you obey the gospel? Obedience always involves action; obeying the gospel is going to require motion on the part of the believer. And note two major points:

- **Obedience is required before the cleansing with Jesus’ blood is accomplished** - As Peter had declared earlier in this first epistle, these things are written “that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood” (I Peter 1:2).
- **Obedience is required before the Indwelling Spirit is Granted** - Again we may call upon Peter, speaking as recorded in Acts: “And we are witnesses of these things [the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus]; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32).

So what is it about the gospel a person could obey, and be granted forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ blood in that obedience, and be granted the Holy Spirit? The scripture answers that question from the time the gospel of Jesus Christ was first preached. The question was asked. “What shall we do [which implies obedience]?” The answer was two-fold: 1) Repent, and 2) Be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit would be received (Acts 2:37-38).

Both the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ and the granting of the Holy Spirit are accomplished when the individual obeys in being immersed in water. As the writer of Hebrews put it, “having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). “There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three are in agreement” (I John 5:8). These three bear witness and agree at the point of immersion!

To obey the gospel of God, you must be immersed for the express purpose of having your sins forgiven, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Don’t stand before the judgment bar of God, and have to answer this question by your eternal future experience: “What will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

Studies in I Peter

Entrust Your Soul

You say you trust God. You have confessed Christ as Lord, have been immersed into His name for remission of your sins, and you are trusting Him to carry you through the valley of the shadow of death. The Almighty, however, is not content that we simply affirm our faith and our confidence in His power; He puts us through a “fiery ordeal” that we might learn not to trust in ourselves but in Him who raises the dead. “Therefore,” says Peter, “let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (I Peter 4:19).

- **Let those who suffer** - The theme of the whole first epistle of Peter is that Christians shall suffer, and that they shall suffer joyfully. Since our Lord Jesus Himself learned obedience through the things He suffered, we also are to suffer in the flesh so as to cease from sin, “that I may know Him,” as Paul says, “and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10).
- **According to the will of God** - The Father is intensely interested in what is going on in the lives of each of His children of faith. That the Christian does suffer does not indicate lack of interest from God. As recorded in Acts 5, God intervened to save the apostles from physical death through the words of the respected teacher Gamaliel. If He could save them from death, He could also have saved them from being flogged. But He did not. It was His will that they suffer.
- **Entrust their souls** - The body is going to perish. It can decay slowly and die in old age, or can die rapidly in accident, murder, or persecution. Either way, the body is going to die; what is important is that which is eternal. “Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul,” said Jesus, “but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Do not think God has let you down because the body is suffering; rather, entrust your *soul* to God.
- **A faithful Creator** - God is dependable. The creation itself shows the regularity and constancy of His divine nature. Peter, in referring to the “faithful Creator”, draws our attention to the consistency of His character that we might know that we can indeed entrust our souls to Him.
- **In doing what is right** - The pressure is on to do what is wrong. Sometimes the world says, “Compromise, or we will kill you.” But the believer is to trust God to solve the problem, and simply concentrate on doing what is right.

Suffering has an important purpose. It is the mechanism through which the child of God really learns how dependable and faithful His heavenly Father is. It is the mechanism in which “lip service” becomes “life service.” Do what is right; entrust your soul to God. He won’t let you down.

Studies in I Peter

The Need For Leadership

The more intense the crisis, the greater the need for leadership. In times of peace and domestic tranquillity, it is comparatively easy to command an outpost. But in the face of sudden attack, then leadership must be decisive, organized, able to pull the troops together to work as a unit, have qualities which will cause men to follow, and must lead in the right direction.

So it is in the church of Christ. When the general crisis of suffering sets in, then each congregation must be led by spiritual men who can help their brethren maintain their forward movement in faith. "Therefore," says the apostle Peter, "I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you" (I Peter 5:1,2). Peter lets these men identify with him as he draws them to him with these words, "as your fellow elder." But his exhortation is strong, "shepherd the flock of God."

But what is an elder? While various denominations have all sorts of ideas and traditions about elders, it is critical that we let the scriptures speak.

- **An elder is an older man** - The Greek word *presbuteros* means "older man." It does not mean some man in his 20's, or 30's, or even 40's. It does not mean some sidewinding "mature in the faith." It means older man!
- **An elder is a bishop** - The Greek word *episcopos* means "overseer" or manager." By the changes involved in moving from one language to another, *episcopos* became *biscop*, and finally *bishop* in the English language. Bishop and elder are different descriptive terms for the same man, as evident in their usage in Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5-9.
- **An elder is a pastor** - The Greek word *poimen* means "pastor" or "shepherd". While the noun form is used only once (Ephesians 4:11), the usage of the verb form of *shepherd* (or feeding the flock [KJV]) shows that shepherd and elder are also different descriptive terms for the same men, as in Acts 20:17,28, and our passage here in I Peter 1:1,2.
- **There is never just one elder** - The modern denominational concept is that a local preacher is "The Pastor," whereas a traveling preacher is an "Evangelist." Biblically speaking, preacher and evangelist are used synonymously, and refers to a different role than that played by shepherds of the flock (although elders may teach and preach). The word of God without exception always speaks of a plurality of these men.
- **Elders serve Christ directly through the Holy Spirit** - "Shepherd the flock of God among you" is the exhortation from Peter. Paul told the elders in Ephesus, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). There is no higher earthly authority than elders; they report directly to Christ.

God gives us men in our local congregation who are truly elders, spiritual men who can lead in the crisis of suffering.

Studies in I Peter

Shepherd the Flock of God

Peter was a personal “witness of the sufferings of Christ” (I Peter 5:1). He was in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested. He was in the courtyard of the High Priest when Jesus was condemned. What Peter particularly saw of the beatings of Jesus during the night, or of His carrying the cross through town to Calvary’s summit, or of His agony in death, we do not know. We do know, however, that he was a “witness of the sufferings of Christ.”

As a fellow elder in the Lord’s church, and as one for whom the sufferings of Christ were indelibly impressed, Peter exhorts the elders in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia to “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight...” (I Peter 5:2). If the elders of those flocks were not effective pastors or good bishops, then the suffering of Christ for the lives of those in the aforementioned Roman provinces would have been eventually in vain; without good leadership, the flock of God cannot survive. How does an elder shepherd and exercise oversight?

Shepherd the Flock

- **A shepherd guides** - A shepherd knows where the flock must go. He knows the danger spots, the rough terrain, and the best route to follow. He is a shepherd because he is a wise, far-seeing man who is willing to lead personally to show the way.
- **A shepherd provides good nutrition** - A shepherd knows what good feed is, and he knows where it is. He knows when the current pasture is getting thin, and when he needs to move the flock on to other fodder. He knows where the poison is, and where empty, non-nutritious stalks are; and he knows how to skillfully guide the flock around these. He knows where water and salt are, and how to get the flock to them.
- **A shepherd protects from enemies** - There are savage wolves who would tear the flock to shreds. A shepherd knows wolves, and is willing to lose his life (or anything else) to protect the sheep from them. He exposes wolves for what they are, and does his best to educate others what wolves in sheep’s clothing are.

Exercising Oversight

- **An overseer coordinates** - There are many projects and priorities which need decisions and coordination in Christ’s church. An overseer must have the people skills, the initiative and drive, and the spirituality to accomplish things in accordance with the will of Christ as revealed in scripture.
- **An overseer trains and develops future leadership** - Any effective organization trains its people for specific tasks, and works hard at developing leadership for the years to come. So it is in the body of Christ; elders oversee the process of “equipping the saints for the work of service” (Ephesians 4:11,12).

We pray that God will give us faithful men who will take on the challenge of learning to shepherd and to exercise oversight.

Studies in I Peter

The Motive of Elders

People naturally tend to operate on the basis of “what’s in this for me?” The mother of James and John, for example, approached Jesus at one time, requesting that her sons might sit at Jesus’ right and left hands in the kingdom. When the other apostles heard that this request had been made, they were upset, presumably because those were the positions they wanted for themselves. But Jesus called them together and exhorted them in these words: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

These words are the crux (pardon the expression) of Christianity - to serve rather than to be served, and to give our lives for others. Our Lord led by example; those who would lead the local flock of God must certainly follow in His steps. Elders must listen to these instructions from a fellow elder and inspired apostle Peter: “Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock” (I Peter 5:2,3). The apostle makes these interesting contrasts:

- **Not under compulsion, but voluntarily** - If you have to push or otherwise coerce a man to be an elder, he should not be one. “If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do” (I Timothy 3:1). The man’s desire to serve other people should be so strong that he serves whether he has the title or not.
- **Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness** - If it takes money to get a man motivated, he is of this world rather than of Christ. And he cannot be half-hearted in his desire and effort to serve; he must be eager to do so.
- **Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock** - When men are motivated by position, then they tend to “lord it over” their “lesser brothers”; they are of this world rather than of Christ. Elders need to be praying, serving, hospitable, helping, spiritual men. They must be men whose families are in order; a man who cannot handle his own family cannot manage the household of God. These are men who are true heroes, men who are proven examples to the local congregation.

These are men who are internally motivated, who lead because they love. They themselves will suffer greatly in following in the footsteps of Christ; they will stand with the Paul’s of today, and with them light the wild beasts in today’s equivalents of Ephesus of old. They are not motivated by special privileges or “perks” or increases of salary.

Rather, these words pull them upward: “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (I Peter 5:4).

Studies in I Peter

Clothed With Humility

“Team! Team! Team!” is the emphasis of every successful coach. The coaching staff works with each individual on the team to help each to maximize his own potential. But the members must cooperate with the staff; there is no room for “hot-dogging” or putting other members of the team down. It takes teamwork to achieve great and difficult goals, and there are no greater or more difficult goals than those accomplished by local congregations in their offensive advances and defensive stands against the forces of evil.

After giving some specific instructions to the coaching staff, the elders, the apostle Peter then exhorts the team: “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (I Peter 5:5). The team members need to ponder these points of advice:

- **You younger men** - There is a structure in the local congregation. Older people have always been given honor according to the requirements of the word of God, but elders - obviously older men, especially have earned the respect of the younger men. But younger men need this exhortation to be in subjection; they sometimes have a tendency to “do their own thing,” and often make mistakes in their impatience. The aged Peter brings them up short: “You younger men!”
- **Likewise** - Because the eldership is an earned position, men who serve in that capacity have already demonstrated their sense of teamwork and desire to please the Christ. Younger men need to imitate that same spirit.
- **Be subject to your elders** - Okay, guys, follow the game plan. Play your position. Execute your moves. Follow through. Do your best to make the play calls work. Encourage other members of the team. Think, “Team! Team! Team!”
- **All of you** - The whole church - the younger men, younger women, older women, and older men, including the elders - needs to be ready to do what ever tasks are necessary in the team effort.
- **Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another** - Humility and sacrifice are essentially synonyms in this context. Gone is selfishness and vain-glory. Each cross-bearer is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of the forward movement of the gospel of Christ. But this humility toward the Christ is also expressed toward one another - so much so that each is exhorted to be totally clothed with this humility.
- **God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble** - The opposite of humility is pride, and the refusal of a Christian to subject himself to elders who are functioning according to the scriptures is a demonstration of the sin of pride. Pride is hard to detect, but the Lord knows the proud and is opposed to them. But the humble operate under the favorable eye of the Almighty.

The team needs to remember that they are the local outpost of the Lord and engaged in a war to extend the boundaries of the kingdom of God. The seriousness and nature of the battle is such that there is no room for pride, demonstrated by an unsubmitive spirit. Younger men are to be subject to their elders, and all brethren are to be clothed with humility.

Studies in I Peter

Under the Mighty Hand of God

To the unbelieving, God is nowhere around. The Almighty, in His wisdom, operates behind the haze of human activity and the events of “nature.” The Midianites turned their swords upon one another in the days of Gideon, and a wall fell upon 27,000 Arameans in the time of Elijah. To the unbelieving, God was nowhere around. But to those who had eyes to see, it was the hand of God who guided the events for the victory of His people. And it was a mighty hand. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you” (I Peter 5:6,7).

- **Humble yourselves** - All humility ultimately must be to God. Submission to a husband, to a boss, or to the elders is in the proper context submission to Jesus the King. Younger men, then, are to serve in less “glamorous” roles, serving their apprenticeships, learning their lessons. And all are to be clothed with humility.
- **Under the mighty hand of God** - God’s hand is indeed mighty. One of the major purposes of the word of God is to demonstrate the power of this mighty hand in creation, in history, and in raising Jesus from the dead. So the question is not, “How mighty is the hand?” but, “Are you under it?” Only those who are faithful in Christ Jesus are under this hand.
- **That He may exalt you at the proper time** - Men may either exalt themselves, or be exalted by God. Those who exalt themselves have their reward in full in this life. Those who have been exalted by the Lord to stand in front of governors and kings for the sake of the testimony of Jesus Christ, though in chains, are the ones who are truly honored.
- **At the proper time** - Moses had to spend forty years as a lowly shepherd before his exaltation above Egypt in the presence of all Israel. But at the proper time, as determined by God, Moses and Israel left the land of the Nile in triumph. And our Lord Jesus’ exaltation did not occur during His life on earth; that was not the proper time. “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:8,9). We must be willing both to accept humiliating circumstances and to submit to God’s timetable for the accomplishment of His will.
- **Casting all your anxiety upon Him** - The child of light who walks by faith will see the powerful outstretched arm of God firmly raised behind this haze of human activity, and will take courage. He can indeed actually throw all his anxiety upon God and be done with it.
- **Because He cares for you** - The love of God has already been greatly demonstrated in the cross of the Christ. The child of God needs to remember that the God who saves his soul is certainly willing and able to deliver him from any earthly trial.

God is opposed to the proud. But He extends grace and lovingkindness to those honest hearts who truly submit to His revealed will, and who are willing to be found faithful, doing the work the Lord places before them. They can cast all their anxiety upon the Almighty in the calm assurance that He cares and is active on their behalf.

Studies in I Peter

Your Adversary, The Lion

Thoughts of the suffering Christians experience in this world were never far from Peter's mind. After encouraging the brethren to cast all their anxiety upon the Lord, the needle on his thought meter swung back to the suffering and persecution which is the lot of the committed in this present evil age. He speaks these words: "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world" (I Peter 5:8,9).

- **Be of sober spirit** - The Christian is always to consider the seriousness of the battle in which he is engaged, the awesome loss of just one soul, and the greatness of the angels rejoicing over even one sinner who repents. This sobriety will cause him to rise above the pagan partying and the heathen snickers which constitute the false gaiety of a perishing world.
- **Be on the alert** - The enemy would have his opposition asleep when he makes his attack. The Christian and the whole church are constantly at war with the devil and his forces, and must not sleep but be ever alert.
- **Your adversary, the devil** - The faithful believer at least knows who his opposition is - Satan the deceiver. The devil hates Christ, and is out to destroy all that he can of the works of Christ. But he disguises himself as an angel of light, and is thus able to put many to sleep when they should be watchful. He is real, and his activities are known and monitored by those who are guided by the word of God, and who are thus not ignorant of his schemes.
- **Prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour** - The picture of a child torn apart by the claws of a lion, or the body parts of an adult already being ripped by the jaws of a mangy beast is not a pretty one. But it is a prettier picture than what actually happens when Satan again encapsulates a soul - the spiritual ramifications are worse than any physical disaster can ever communicate.
- **Resist him, firm in your faith** - Sometimes this adversary is subtle, but sometimes he appears in brute force and violence. In the face of terrorizing, demoralizing activity from Satan's henchmen, Christians are to resist and maintain their firm faith, seeing Him who is unseen but who has never lost a battle.
- **The same experiences of suffering are being accomplished** - Sometimes it is a comfort to know that others are going through the same difficulties you are experiencing. And when you know that they are coming through their fires successfully, it helps you to know that you can also!
- **Your brethren who are in the world** - God has kept for Himself a remnant, those who will not bow the knee to any modern Baal. They suffer for this refusal, but they are the true holy ones of God. This, my friend, is the brotherhood of which the scripture speaks.

Brethren, let us not pretend there is a lion in the streets when there is not one. But let us not pretend there is no lion roaring around the edge of the camp of the saints, seeking to devour the weekend stragglers. Let us be sober, committed, faithful, alert, and firm, carrying out our war safely under the banner of the cross.

Studies in I Peter

What God Can Do

“It’s all mental.” So say those who coach in the arenas who exhort on the playing fields, and who discipline and encourage on the practice grounds “It’s all mental.” You can have great physical ability, but if you do not have mental toughness you will cave in under the stress of intense competition. “It’s all mental.” No one can compete successfully in the games without a vision of victory, and a sense of joy and reward.

So also those who run the endurance course of Christ “It’s all mental.” If the devouring lion deceives the runner, or his roars scare him off course, the competitor has not run successfully. “It’s all mental.” If the pain and the length of the race, or the constant pounding required in the conditioning discourage the racer, he quits the team. “It’s all mental.” If for some reason the participant feels like he lacks the skills or ability necessary to make a good showing, he slinks away before he can be what he considers to be “embarrassed”. “It’s all mental.” If there is no reward, why try?

“It’s all mental.” Note then these Spirit-inspired words to the team: “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen” (I Peter 5:10.11). These true words are designed to help the fellow partaker of the sufferings of Christ see the actual conditions of this race so that he can make the mental adjustments necessary to be an effective part of the all-star team of the ages. “It’s all mental.”

- **After you have suffered for a little while** - If you look at an earth’s lifetime of suffering as a long time, you are whipped mentally. Many a person has lost his faith with these words: “I’m not going to spend the rest of my life going through this.” Scripturally, this life is a vapor, a very short time. The mentality of the great apostle Paul who was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and left for dead was exhibited in these words, “momentary, light affliction” (II Corinthians 4:17).
- **The God of all grace** - God is a forgiving God. Shrug off that last mistake. Forget about the loss last week. Concentrate on the upcoming game, and take them one at a time. “Forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead...” (Philippians 3:13).
- **God Himself will perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you** - Talk about a conditioning and equipping program! If each team member will work with the Coach, then the Coach personally will give each team member the abilities and strength to play his part and to run his race in victory.
- **Who called you to His eternal glory in Christ** - No reward, no run. But look at this reward - eternal Glory in Christ! No earthly gold medal, no thousands of earthly cheers, no millions of earthly name recognition could ever compete with this.

God is able to help each Christian overcome every mental battle he might have in this tremendous and exciting eternal race. God has provided all the elements necessary for a positive, sense-of-victory mentality, even to the point of perfecting each player, confirming his membership on the team, strengthening him, and establishing him in his position. It’s all mental, and to Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen!

Studies in I Peter

It Is Written

The servants of God have spoken. And they have written. In fact, what is permanent is what has come down to us in written form. These are the words, which shall never pass away.

So how does a poor ignorant fisherman do in the writing department? I marvel when I read these pages in the word of God. It takes me approximately one hour to write each one of these little commentaries, and the words of Peter and Paul and others are by contrast generally dictated. I fuss over each phrase; yet the words off the top of the apostles' heads are infinitely more sublime. The Holy Spirit was guiding their work and words, to be sure; yet it is clear that each in a sense earned the right to speak as he spoke, and to write as he wrote.

Listen, then, to the closing of Peter's first letter: "Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ" (I Peter 5:12-14).

- **Through Silvanus** - The closeness of the first century Christians is illustrated in the men who worked together. This Silvanus is generally regarded as the Silas of Acts - prophet from Jerusalem, Roman citizen, and Paul's sidekick on a couple of missionary journeys. He was involved in the authorship of I Corinthians with Paul, and here is the one who apparently wrote down the words as Peter dictated them. What a joy it is to see these brethren dwelling and working together in unity for the cause of Christ.
- **Our faithful brother** - There are brethren who are unfaithful, and there are brethren who remain faithful. This fidelity comes in various facets: faithfulness to the truth of the gospel, faithfulness in commitment to Christ and the church, faithfulness in a devoted, holy lifestyle, and faithfulness in loyalty and dependability to the brethren. Silas was so regarded by Peter in all of these.
- **I have written to you briefly** - That which is written can *be* made permanent, can *be* studied and pondered over, and can disseminated over a wide area. The Holy Spirit chose the printed page as the means by which His word would be distributed throughout the world, and He chose Peter's writings on suffering to be included in this permanent instruction. And as is typical of the New Testament writings, though the epistle is brief, it conveys a lot of information and exhortation in its short space.
- **Exhorting and testifying** - The children of God need much exhortation. The problems they face, the suffering and persecution they endure, the privation they experience, and the seeming distance of heaven all combine to try to overwhelm those who walk by faith. But the sure testimony of those like Peter who have the authority to speak, and the words of encouragement flowing from his lips and life, motivate the saints to keep on keeping on.

The servants of God have spoken. And they have written. In fact, what is permanent is what has come to us in written form. These are the exhortations and the testimonies, which shall never pass away.

Studies in I Peter

The True Grace of God

We are saved by faith through grace, and by the grace of God we stand. “I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!” (I Peter 5:12). This whole epistle on victory in suffering is, by the words of the one who wrote it, on the true grace (not a false grace) of God. Note some of this epistle’s thousand points of grace:

- **Grace in unfinished salvation** - “As to this salvation,” Peter says early on, “the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you...” Salvation, at its very root, is for those whose condition is such that they cannot save themselves. Grace here is God’s willingness to cover our shortcomings, that in obeying Jesus we may “be sprinkled with His blood,” and thus have grace and peace in its fullest measure. Blessed indeed is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
- **Grace in unmerited suffering** - “God is opposed to the proud,” the apostle quotes, “but gives grace to the humble.” This humility is expressed in a willingness to maintain faith and a good attitude in all sorts of suffering situations, as listed throughout this letter.
 - Be obedient children, holy like the Holy One who called us.
 - Fervently love one another from the heart.
 - Abstain from malice and fleshly lusts.
 - Submit to every human institution.
 - Be submissive to your masters.
 - Wives, be submissive to your husbands.
 - Suffer for the sake of righteousness.
 - Elders, shepherd the flock of God in submission to the Chief Shepherd.
 - Younger men, be subject to your elders.
 - All are to be clothed with humility.

All of these acts of submission and humility are carried out through the grace of God – we “are protected by the power of God.” It is the “God of all grace” who “will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish” us. He is the giver of all abilities: all flows from His willingness to overlook our weakness and supply our need.

- **Grace in Unselfish Service** – Those things which each member supplies to the body of Christ also flow from the grace of God. Thus, Christians are spoken of as “stewards of the manifold grace of God;” they disseminate what is really God’s bounty in all forms.
- **Grace in Ultimate Salvation** – “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” the apostle exhorts us. Grace at the beginning, grace at the middle, and grace at the end is for us “who are protected by the power of God for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (I Peter 2:13). Jude also says it well: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (Jude 24).

Who can fail to fall on his knees before this God of all grace - this Author and Exponent of true grace. From Him flow all unmerited favors: blessings, gifts, strength, and sustenance. To Him be glory and dominion forever. Amen!

Studies in I Peter

Stand Firm

Everything in life is shaky or sound. It is firm or it is faulty. “The firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows who are His,’ and ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness’” (II Timothy 2:19). There is nothing wrong with the Lord’s foundation; it is firm. Christians are exhorted not to be flaky shaky; rather they are to be found sound, nesting on this foundation, as Peter says, “I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying to you that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!” (I Peter 5:12). This is the conclusion of Peter’s letter; he wrote of the fiery ordeal and the grace of God for one purpose, that Christians might stand firm!

The events of this life can shake Christians. War, persecution, famine, and disease can singly or in combination devastate an individual who is not as firm as Job in his faith, who cannot say with that great example of suffering and patience, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). The writers of the New Testament concur with Peter that each child of God must do his part in strengthening himself so that he can stand firm in the grace of Christ

- **God’s grace encourages us to stand** - “Therefore having been justified by faith,” says Paul to the saints in Rome, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith in this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1,2). God’s willingness to overlook our faltering until we can stand encourages us to keep trying. Praise God for our introduction to this grace through faith in our Lord.
- **God’s reward encourages us to endure the trial of hard work** - “Thanks be to God,” says the apostle Paul again, “who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:57,58). Much of what is required in the cause of Christ is hard, wearisome work without much notice or acclaim by your fellow man. But the child of light is not to be moved to quit or be discouraged by all the work; he is to stand firm and focus his attention on the victory Jesus gives.
- **God’s teaching encourages us to stay sound in the midst of confusing teaching and false reasoning** - “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...” (Ephesians 4:14). The pressure to bend on sound doctrine is definitely out there, but the Christian is to stand firm.
- **God’s word encourages us to resist in the time of total conflict** - “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10,11). This is war on the saints of God from every imaginable front - it is not a flesh and blood war, but a spiritual conflict against demonic forces. The Christian on his part must take up the full armor of God in order to stand firm.

The earnest desire of the Holy Spirit is for believers to stand firm in the one faith delivered once for all. Those who fail to do so will perish.

Studies in I Peter

Greetings!

“Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land” (Proverbs 25:25). There is something refreshing to the human soul in greetings. Especially when you love someone, when your soul is closely knit to his, then the longing of the soul is greatly cheered by greetings. “She who is in Babylon,” writes Peter through Sylvanus, “chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love” (I Peter 5:13,14).

- **She who is in Babylon** - Babylon in the Old Testament was the highest example of worldliness. She said “I shall be a queen forever,” and, “I am, and there is no one besides me. I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children”(Isaiah 47:7,8). This is what the Holy Spirit called her: - “You sensual one.” Symbolically, then, in the New Testament, there are two cities, Jerusalem and Babylon. Jerusalem is from above; she is the church; she is our mother. Babylon is from below; she is the world; she is the mother of spiritual harlots. There is a good possibility that Peter was writing this letter from the city of Rome, which certainly could have been called “Babylon” as the salient example of worldliness in New Testament times.
- **Chosen together with you** - This letter was written to the saints in what is now Turkey. Peter called them “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (I Peter 1:1,2). Each Christian is carefully chosen by God, and by the means, which the Father instituted through the gospel. And each corresponding congregation is chosen by that same process. But that “being chosen” can sometimes lead to a false exclusivity. So the apostle reminds the brethren “throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” that even in Rome, there was a congregation of faithful brethren who were just as chosen as they.
- **Sends you greetings** - Greetings from this congregation would be good news and refreshing indeed if this congregation were indeed remaining strong in Rome, there were undoubtedly brethren known to these congregations in Asia Minor, and it would be encouraging to hear this brief greeting from them through Peter.
- **So does my son Mark** - This Mark is generally regarded as the John Mark who deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. He apparently redeemed himself, being later regarded as “useful” to Paul He is affectionately and closely referred to as “my son” by Peter and the gospel according to this same Mark is generally thought to be Peter’s account researched and recorded by this close companion of the apostle. Greetings from Mark would also be encouraging to those suffering Christians, recipients of this letter.
- **Greet one another with a kiss of love** - This greeting one another - with a true loving (not a sensual) kiss - is something those who have intimately suffered together can do without forced or artificial affection. This greeting would be encouraging, and in this context would also be a greeting from Peter through this exchange by the brethren.

Greetings from loved ones, from brethren in Christ, and from a far country are very encouraging and needed within the body of Christ. Let’s learn to greet one another deeply, honestly, and with the love of Christ.

Studies in I Peter

Peace In Christ

“My peace I give to you,” said Jesus (John 14:27). The peace of Jesus is a peace, which can only be possessed as a gift. Man on his own efforts or in his own way can never possess this peace. When man tries to produce peace, he produces a perverted form of Jesus’ peace, and Jesus’ peace is “not as the world gives.” The peace the world offers is a shimmering mirage, a false security which always lays just beyond the horizon. Peter’s closing in this letter, as well as his beginning, is a prayer for true inner peace for the persecuted brethren of Asia Minor: “Peace be to you all who are in Christ” (I Peter 5:14).

- **Peace In Christ** - No one, in spite of any loud protestations to the contrary, can have true peace unless he is in Christ. And it is important to note that there is only one way to enter into Christ and that is by immersion. “All of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death,” the apostle Paul informs us (Romans 6:3). “All of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,” he says in another place (Galatians 3:27). By entering into Christ, an individual may have the peace of Christ and the peace of reconciliation with God. Anyone who claims to have the peace of Christ without participating in immersion for remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit is living under a delusion and is spreading that delusion.
- **Peace In Suffering** - When a Christian indeed bears peace as fruit of the Spirit, he can suffer in confidence. He can know that His Lord Jesus offered peace to him even as the storm of the cross was breaking in His own life, and he has the calm assurance that God Almighty will strengthen him. While he can not see them, he knows that angels have been sent to him also even as they were sent to the Lord in the days of His flesh, angels sent as “ministering spirits - for the sake of those who inherit Salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).
- **Peace In Submission** - In submitting to a king, to a master, or to a husband, the child of God knows that he or she is really being humbled under the mighty hand of God. When a Christian has been a student of the scriptures, as all are exhorted to be, he knows how mighty, how caring, and how precise this Hand is, and he is at peace in submitting to its guidance.
- **Peace among brethren** - “How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1). When the brethren are at peace with God, then they can be at peace with one another - loving one another, forgiving one another, hospitable to one another, serving one another, speaking the utterances of God - knowing that all things are progressing well under the mighty Hand.
- **Peace in Prayer** - A man who has the habit of praying to the Almighty God through the authority of his Lord Jesus Christ is confident that he is heard, and consequently is at peace. “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to [the Lord] at a time when [He] may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they [the waters] shall not reach him [who prays]” (Psalm 32:8).

Peter opened his letter with a prayer of peace for the brethren, and he closed it with a prayer for peace for the brethren in Christ Jesus. This peace is obviously to be earnestly sought by the individual, and a constant topic of prayer among all the saints.