

The five epistles we have studied together recently have all been authored by the apostle Paul. They concentrate on establishing the Gospel, life in Christ and the Assembly. They were all addressed to specific persons or assemblies. Eight other epistles were written besides the 13 definitely attributable to Paul. They are more general, addressed to believers in many locations. Peter's are addressed to believers scattered in many areas, some named, throughout a wide region once known as Asia Minor but now known as Turkey. His ministry treats the blessings, trials and responsibilities of believers particularly as belonging to the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord while here distinguished between His Assembly which He said He would build, and His Kingdom to which he gave Peter the keys.

Matthew 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

The Lord's statements show decisively His "Assembly" is not the same as His Kingdom. Simplistically, the Kingdom includes all who profess subjection to the King, whether truly believers or not. Therefore, the Assembly which consists entirely of believers is distinct from the Kingdom, but included in it, since all believers profess Jesus as Lord..

The Lord told Peter his confession would be the base upon which the Lord would build His Assembly. Peter made a huge leap of God-given insight, confessing Jesus as the Son of the Living God rather than simply as Jesus Christ the rightful Messiah/Son of David he and the other disciples expected. Simon is named Peter, "a stone," in contrast to his grand confession, the rock immovable as a Gibralter, upon which the Lord would build His Assembly. And more immediately, Peter was given authority to bind and to loose in the Kingdom of Heaven. Men persistently think of "Saint Peter" as the one minding the gates of heaven. He is popularly pictured as the one who reviews the record of earthly deeds and omissions and admits or refuses dead souls entrance to the "pearly gates" into heaven. But Peter was never given authority over the gates of heaven. The Lord Himself has the keys of death and hades, not Peter, Revelation 1:18. The Lord gave Peter the keys to the **kingdom of heaven**. Under this authority vested in him

by the Lord he administered the kingdom of heaven, binding or loosing people's sins while they are upon the earth. We saw Peter exercising this authority in announcing salvation to new converts from the Jewish multitudes attending the feast of Pentecost. He later confirmed salvation in those who received the Christ in Samaria under Phillip's evangelical work. Still later he was used of God to introduce Gentiles to the kingdom of God when he visited the Roman Centurion Cornelius, his household and guests. He also acted to bind sins upon persons. Ananias and Sapphira were denounced by Peter after they lied to the Holy Spirit, and the Lord removed them from the presence of the saints on earth, Acts 5. Later Peter rebuked the attempts of Simon the sorcerer to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit for himself, Acts 8. Peter, therefore, fulfilled his commission using the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven to admit or refuse people on earth. This authority and responsibility was also given to the local assemblies in every place where believers are gathered to the name of the Lord, even today, Matthew 18:15-20.

No, Peter never was given, nor did he take, authority on earth or in heaven over entrance of persons into heaven. The church wasn't given this authority either, although the Pope has, by claiming Peter as the first pope, arrogated this to the church, much to the dread of its members. The devil has successfully taken the Lord's rightful glory, authority and grace available to the repentant sinner and handed it to "St. Peter" (and also to the "Virgin Mary," the mother of Jesus). Both would be appalled if they knew such blasphemy was being done to their Lord and Savior by those using their names, deceived and deceivers. Deceived, but to die in their sins! Lost! What a shame!

If I counted correctly Peter and Paul are each mentioned about the same number of times in the New Testament. Peter had a privilege that Paul never had. He personally walked with the Lord Jesus for all three and one half years of His public ministry on this earth. And Peter, with James and John, saw the Lord transfigured while a Man on earth, a preview of His glorious return to reign. On the other hand Paul had a privilege Peter never had. He saw and heard the Lord after His ascension, a glorified Man at the right hand of God in heaven itself.

Peter also had another privilege few others have experienced. Few will allow someone else to change their name. Naming something or someone is an indication of one's authority. Adam was called by the Lord to name all the animals. Ultimately he named his wife as well. God made the woman out of his side to be his companion, his wife. He names her Eve, and she accepts that name, and her position as one named by him. Brides appropriately celebrate their marriage by accepting their husband's

surname. Jehovah exercised His authority changing Abrams's name to Abraham. Jesus surnamed the disciple, whose name had been Simon from birth, Peter (or Cephas in Aramaic). Peter accepted his new name readily without protest. He uses it on his epistles. (James and John were also given a surname by the Lord, "Boanerges," which is, "The sons of thunder," apparently befitting their natural temperament.)

Peter is a well known personage throughout the Gospels and early Acts. He was probably the most prominent, but adventurous and impetuous, of the twelve disciples. He usually spoke his mind, too often before thinking, but this changed once indwelt by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. He was a working man, a fisherman by trade, a good and godly man, not an intellectual. Although not of Judea he was religiously faithful to the Law of Moses, honestly protesting he had never eaten unclean creatures when directed to by a voice from heaven, Acts 10:14. Earlier, disheartened after denying the Lord, he returned to fishing in Galilee but the Lord restored him to the service to which He had called him, John 21. He was originally brought to the Lord by his brother Andrew and immediately became a believer and enthusiastic disciple and was given his surname. As we noticed above, Peter was the first to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. He was not simply the Son of David as the disciples first took Him to be while looking for the coming kingdom to free them from the Roman occupation. His many exploits and his sometimes

rash statements and actions make for an interesting biography if one follows his life through the gospels and the first twelve chapters of Acts. He drops out of sight at that point while the Holy Spirit takes up the conversion and activities of Paul. Peter's last appearance is in the conference in Jerusalem in Acts 15, where he testifies as to God's mind to include the gentiles as equals in the Assembly. Later he would fail to uphold that truth in Antioch and Paul had to withstand him to the face. That unpleasant incident is described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. However grace triumphs and Peter's second epistle ends with an endorsement of Paul's writings. All of their ministry is compatible and reinforces one another. Of course it would, being the inspired word of God. How wonderful God is to have preserved the individual personalities and styles of those He chose to write the scriptures.

Peter's epistles are just like the Peter we learned to know and like and love in the gospels and the Acts. They are practical with both warm hearted encouragement and faithful warnings. He especially encourages the suffering saints whatever the source and nature of the trials they experience. As with Paul, Peter shows us that suffering is the "name of the game" for faithful believers. His second letter, as with many "second epistles," reaches onward to conditions that can be expected in the last days, days we are certainly in today. Listen to what he has to say to us.

By Ronald Canner, October 13, 2004

Peter introduces himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, one who could make authoritative declarations in the Name of his Lord. He is seemingly unabashed at the unflattering stories of events recorded in the Gospels. Stories of more than three years as a disciple culminating in the denial of his Lord. The Shepherd restores souls who fail, then leads them on with Him in His service to shepherd others of His flock (John 21).

Peter addresses his letter to a multitude of believers. Believers who are Jewish by birth but are no longer residents of their homeland. To be sure many still returned to Jerusalem for the feasts of the Jews held on the days marked out in the Law of Moses. We read in the gospels that Jesus attended these events too although he was a resident of Galilee. Fifty days after the crucifixion on the Passover feast, ten days following the ascension of the Lord, He sent the Holy Spirit to earth to indwell the 120 believers assembled in Jerusalem. Many Jewish pilgrims were visiting the city for the feast of Pentecost. The nations they were from are named in Acts 2. Through the marvelous grace of God, just fifty days after they had crucified Jesus, they heard the gospel for the first time any heard it. These pilgrims heard it, along with their countrymen of Judea, from the lips of Peter. A man who days before had denied His Lord, who had hidden out with the other disciples for fear of the Jews, and who had given up his divine commission to be a fisher of men to return to fishing in Galilee. Peter, a mere fisherman from the hinterlands with no education or reputation, despised by the religious leaders of the day, swung open wide the doors to the Kingdom that morning. Over three thousand souls entered. And thousands more on subsequent days. When these returned to their homes scattered among the nations they carried the good news with them. So, years later, Peter writes to these believers, those who heard him in Jerusalem and those who heard the good news from them after they returned home.

Why were these scattered among the nations? They had been scattered by God's governmental judgment upon His chosen earthly people, Israel, who persisted in ignoring His Law, and His appeals to return to Him, all documented in the holy scriptures entrusted to them. (Witness the Old Testament prophets.) A succession of conquering nations had marched across their land and occupation forces remained a thorn in their side for over five hundred years. Many Jews had moved away and set up housekeeping in foreign lands. These were the scattered Peter writes to now. They hadn't yet been scattered by persecution as Christians but as Jews. They had continued to suffer as Jews (in the eyes of the nations) and are now beginning to experience suffering as a result of their Christian faith as well. This faith brings upon them a special brand of rejection and persecution from their Jewish neighbors, who view them as traitors and

apostates. They certainly need encouragement. And the Shepherd sees to it they get it. He moves Peter to deliver it. And His message carries the same grace to believers, Jew and Gentile, of every nationality enduring hardship, rejection and persecution down through the centuries and today.

Peter first acknowledges their plight, their scattered condition; but immediately focuses their attention to their election. They were chosen of God. They knew what election was for as Jews. They were the chosen people of God. A nation founded by an unsought promise to one man, Abraham, two thousand years before, and reaffirmed many times since.

Deuteronomy 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

Lest they think God had forsaken his promise to Abraham, Peter declares first off, **they too are chosen by God.** Elect. Chosen, not at random or by some innate or acquired merit, but according to the foreknowledge of God. In His foreknowledge of each one personally, he has selected each one for a particular place and role in carrying out His Purposes. Some like to think God's foreknowledge was merely His knowing how we would respond to the gospel therefore choosing us to be saved because of our foreknown response. That is mere human reasoning and removes God's sovereignty from the picture, replacing it with man's will. It minimizes man's utter sinfulness and lost condition putting us in control of our destiny to the exclusion of God's supremacy, as if we could and would choose to do or undo when we well pleased. It reduces our election to God humbly honoring our reluctant willingness to trouble ourselves to listen to and accept his kind offer of a well deserved salvation to avoid His wrath. **No! No! No!** His foreknowledge does not mean he just foreknows we would want salvation and would repent if but given the opportunity. **No! He says none would repent!** None was even interested.

Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

God in His infinite grace, however, does present opportunities to repent to every one, not just to those He chooses. Therefore those who reject the gospel or the witness of Creation are clearly without excuse and are solely responsible for their own fate. No room for complaining here. He is glorified by the fact the gospel goes out freely to all, even while knowing they would not repent. But He also is glorified that His kind offer of mercy to lost sinners is universally rejected. Why? Because He sent His only begotten Son! But He is

further glorified by His own gracious intervention to save by grace through faith through preaching, and to sanctify chosen persons (making them saints) by his Spirit. Through the work of the Spirit He brings chosen saints to a position of the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of a perfect One who was offered as a sacrifice for ours sins. No room for boasting here. Neither among the Jews scattered because of their unbelief, or the Gentile who never sought God to begin with. But what a resting place! What peace! What security! As His elect, our destiny, our peace and safety, presently and eternally, rests with God. Just as we initiated nothing to save ourselves we can do nothing to escape from His grip. Nothing! Praise God! Safe. What an encouragement for suffering, scattered saints.

Peter forthrightly blesses God. This isn't a mere formality used in the greeting of his letter. He blesses God the Father. The one who revealed to him years before that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God, Matthew 16:13-20. And he blesses his readers. Do we bless others with the words of our mouth spoken from the heart? Do we call down God's blessings on others? If something goes wrong or we are harmed or even just annoyed, curses may "*naturally*" rise to our minds from our fleshly hearts. If this happens repent immediately. We hear cursing all around us in this world, hopefully never from the mouth of a believer.

Romans 12:14 *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

The Spirit in us will give rise to thoughts and words of blessing if we do not grieve Him.

Ephesians 4:26 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil.*

...

30 *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

So Peter reminds them of the living hope and inheritance awaiting us in heaven. They were especially conscious of the lost hope of Israel. They fervently had desired rescue from Roman oppression, restoration to their land, and the founding of the Messiah's earthly kingdom promised in the prophets. It was not to be, **yet**. But meanwhile God hasn't let them down. He has given these scattered saints a sure and living hope and an inheritance that cannot be corrupted and defiled, or taken from them as was the land of Israel. So Peter doesn't remove the consequences of the Jew's national faithlessness to Jehovah. These Jewish saints rightly valued the faith of their fathers in Jehovah, though most did not imitate it. But the earthly blessings now lost to them are far outclassed by those in heaven awaiting them. Us too. And we can't miss out as did Israel, for we who have been chosen by God are now kept by the power of God unto a future salvation to be revealed. Salvation not only from hell, but from the very presence of sin on this earth. Salvation into His very presence. When? It's ready

now but is awaiting the last soul to be included. When? In the last time. Maybe today, maybe not. Maybe ten thousand years from now. (I think rather sooner than later, but His longsuffering is very loooong.)

2Peter 3:7 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

9 ¶ *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

How are we kept? Through faith, just as we were first saved. Only believe the promises Peter affirms, and trust the "Promiser." The Israelites failed through unbelief. God's preserving power toward the believer operates through faith, not by sight, self sufficiency, or personal assessment of surrounding conditions (Peter sank when he saw the waves and lost sight of Christ and His "Come.") Theirs was not a hope that faded away as had their hope in an earthly kingdom. Nor is ours.

The Jews then were about to lose any hope or rescue they might have had, as the temple in Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by the Romans. Peter had heard the Lord Himself forecast this, Luke 19:43 and:

Matthew 24:2 *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

As he wrote this letter those prophecies were about to be fulfilled. The temple remains in ruins to this day. The Jews were about to suffer and be scattered from their land in a way far exceeding anything they had yet experienced or could then have imagined. The Jewish believers were in danger of this same suffering, scattering, and subsequent loss of all hope. But as Christians they had a hope that was not fading away. It was secure in the heavens. What a boost to their godly spirits in the midst of seeing all that they had valued that spoke of God on earth being removed and destroyed. They would see their religious world wrested from them. All they had depended upon would be gone. They were cast solely upon the promises of God. So Peter reassures them as they are about to suffer this.

Do we view ourselves as like them? Aliens scattered abroad on this earth? How much are we hanging our hopes on earthly things, earthly institutions and provisions we may have made for our comfort, convenience and future security while we remain here on earth. The unthinkable can happen, as it did to Judea, even here in the United States, but God doesn't change and isn't affected. Listen to Peter.

The believer's faith is mentioned four times in this first chapter. Our joy is mentioned right along with our suffering. For what God has done for us is joyous, yet our experiences now on this earth are characterized by suffering. Our joy is not dampened by hardships and persecution. And our faith, undaunted, triumphs over suffering and attacks. These are but trials of faith. Tests that demonstrate our reality. And that glorifies God. For example, one who finds gold has it tested (assayed) to determine its purity and worth. He may know it is truly gold but he must have reliable independent proof to convince others. Having documented proof of its worth, the owner can then display it for the admiration of all. This is why God allowed the devil access to Jesus after those forty days in the wilderness immediately after His baptism. Jesus was beginning His public ministry and, though God could say "this is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight," He proved Jesus' sinlessness to men and angels through the three temptations in the wilderness. He passed the test. Similarly, God allows us to be tried. When our faith is tried we sometimes fail (as did Peter) for we are not intrinsically sinless. Yet we could pass the test every time through faith. Peter strongly exhorts and encourages along these lines.

It's a "jumping for joy" rejoicing with an "unspoken" unspeakable joy that Peter describes here. Our hearts leap up with unspoken joy. A strange, almost contradictory, thought but it expresses the deeply felt, Spirit given, real feeling believers experience even in the most unpleasant circumstances. Not mere fleshly excitement this! Jesus laid this blessing before the disciples, including Peter, early in His earthly ministry. Peter refers to this here and later in his letter (4:13).

Matthew 5:12 *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

It becomes a common New Testament theme.

2Corinthians 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*

6:10 *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {temptation: or, trials}*

1John 1:4 *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Is there anything more precious than gold? Our faith is more precious than gold. Gold is well known, and highly valued as an inert, almost indestructible, beautiful precious metal. But Peter refers to it as something that perishes, that loses its ability to perform its intended purpose. (Incidentally, here he loosens our grip on earthly wealth and transfers our attention and coveting to heavenly things.) Our faith is tried by fire

and is found to be unto praise and glory at a future time. The time spoken of as our salvation. A salvation which is the end of our faith. The "end" spoken of here is the goal or terminal point sought for, reached for, and finally attained. It is the **appearing** of Jesus Christ. He has been sent to earth already as a lowly man, and rejected. Now we, His own, are rejected with Him but we still anticipate and expect Him to appear publically in His glory before all on earth. (We know also He will return secretly for us, and take His Bride to Himself before He appears publically with her.) But here Peter is encouraging Jewish believers who have lost all their fondest hopes for the appearing of their Christ (Messiah) to take up His reign on earth. We surely need this encouragement today when we see the world hurtling toward certain destruction, spiritually, morally and physically. As Paul puts it,

2Timothy 2:12 *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Yes, **we love His appearing.** Not only His coming **for** us, (the rapture) but His coming (appearing) **with** us. For that is the hope that we rest upon when we see all around us in rebellion and degeneration. This would vex us, as it did Lot, if we had our hope and efforts fixed upon establishing a kingdom for Christ down here. Sadly many believers have been tricked by the enemy into attempting just that. He has successfully diverted them from their heavenly hope and true earthly mission of bringing lost sinners to Christ. Peter has nothing to do with such notions, attractive as they may sound to the human heart longing for righteousness and piety here on this earth. He tells us, yes, the King and His Kingdom will come but not through our efforts. Clearly He will come. The overwhelming preponderance of Old Testament prophesies bear unquestionable witness to that. Peter refers to these, well known to the Jewish believers although, sadly, less well known to believers today. And the New Testament amply witnesses to the coming Kingdom and **appearing** of the Lord. We love His appearing! The Rapture is the **next** event we wait for. Receiving His Bride is essential before the Lord receives His Kingdom. She will reign with Him for ever.

The Old Testament prophets, along with the very angels themselves (including Satan and his angels), did not know these things and were not able to decipher the prophetic word when it was given. They knew it was for future dispensations which would be ushered in by the birth of the Messiah. Yet many believers living today in the first of the new dispensations cannot seem to distinguish the truth that distinguishes this age from the

former. They attempt to mix both together, much to their confusion and God's dishonor. The Old Testament prophets didn't read our "mail", so to speak, and try to live in the future they forecast, although they certainly were rightly curious about what was to come. Likewise we shouldn't ignore our "mail" and attempt to live by the program God had set up for them. We do receive from those Old Testament scriptures many valuable insights and instruction regarding Christ and God's nature, heart and ways and revelations about events still to come which we can anticipate with joy. In fact the Old Testament scriptures were all that the disciples had available in the beginning. Peter tells us in his second letter:

2Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

So Peter quotes liberally from the Old Testament as do Paul and James and John.

The remarkable fact is that the Old Testament clearly witnesses to both the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The Jews were blinded to this by their misplaced, haughty national pride and unwittingly fulfilled the very scriptures they took pride in

possessing.

Romans 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

These scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit as was the New Testament preaching they had heard and received and which we have before us now.

The angels desire to look into this. Apparently they weren't in on the Grand Plan, kept secret from before the foundation of the world. Paul notes they (both the holy and the fallen) now see it as witnessed to by the Church (Assembly). In fact we are witnesses to them.

Ephesians 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

With this, we will now see what actions Peter exhorts us to take to live up to our wonderful calling.

By Ron Canner, October 27, 2004

Peter has told the scattered Jewish believers of the wonderful fact of having been chosen, sanctified, begotten again, and made heirs of unfading heavenly prospects. Earthly prospects, previously valued, were rapidly fading and they were in the midst of hardship, suffering and persecution on the earth simply as Jews and also now as Christians. These would more than amply be repaid by the wonderful heavenly inheritance and future public revelation, display and crowning of the Lord Jesus. The mystifying Old Testament prophecies concerning the future earthly glory of the Christ and His people Israel will yet be fulfilled to the letter in a later age. Meanwhile the rejection and suffering of Christ described by those same prophets has been fulfilled. Now they (and we) are partakers of His sufferings while looking forward to fulfilment of the remaining prophecies.

Having established their (and our) present situation in accordance with God's big plan and purposes, He begins with needed exhortations. "Wheresoever" and "ifs" precede various action verbs exhorting as to our walk with God in present circumstances. It is not a time of leisure and entertainment but of work, and not just work but labor. Girding up the loins describes a man freeing the legs from loose garments that would hamper movement when working or running. Paul uses a similar illustration to speak of the girdle of truth, Ephesians 6. We freshly, as needed, gird up our minds to restrict our thoughts from wandering into areas that will defile our thinking (morally or doctrinally) and move us toward sinful behavior. Rather we are to recall and focus upon the **grace** that lies ahead when Jesus Christ is revealed to all the earth.

We are to behave as obedient children, subject to parental authority, and not return to conform ourselves to the way we ignorantly walked when still unsaved. There is a far more blessed state to enjoy. To be holy in all of our thinking and behavior. Holy? That's a large order! Unattainable many say. But Peter doesn't exaggerate. He points us to be "holy (sanctified, set apart) as He is who has called you is holy." He quotes Old Testament scripture (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7) familiar to the Jewish believers. Peter refers to many parts of the Old Testament in his letters, scriptures which by their very familiarity would both calm and inspire the saints of Jewish descent. As we become more familiar with the Old testament (which we should strive to do) we will understand and value the New Testament more.

Another "if." If they now call upon God as "Father" instead of His Old Testament name Jehovah, remember He still judges impartially. Just because we are now his children brought into tremendous favor and blessing doesn't mean we are free to "goof off" at will. No, we are to carry out our daily lives in fear because He judges impartially. He hasn't changed. Not fear of losing

our eternal salvation or status as saints. No, he has just assured us that He sovereignly chose us. But we fear hurting Him who gave so much to make us His own. Because we love Him. (And God is also a faithful Father who will lovingly chasten us, Hebrews 12:5-11. So we fear His displeasure as well).

Therefore Peter reminds us again of the tremendous sacrifice given and made for our redemption. It cost far more than anything of earthly value such as silver or gold. (Note again the weaning of their thoughts and values from mere gold and silver, both said to be corruptible.) And notice what they are redeemed from. The tradition of their fathers, the Law, instituted by God through Moses and added to by the Pharisees and others. It was now proven to be vain, empty, useless to them because of their proven inability to live up to it. Redeeming them (and us) cost the Father the death of His only begotten Son. It cost the Son a life of poverty, hardship, rejection, and a death of unparalleled suffering. The precious blood speaks of a violent or sacrificial death, not a "natural" death in which normally there is no blood shed. His death was as of a Lamb without blemish or spot, as was prescribed for the lambs used for the Passover and other sacrifices Israel was to carry out. A "blemish" speaks of a flaw one was born with. A "spot" is a stain or eruption from some disease or injury experienced during one's life time. Jesus had neither when He was crucified.

They had to be redeemed from the vain tradition of their fathers but this was not a surprise to God. He gave the Law as a schoolmaster up to Christ, Galatians 3:24. The need for a Redeemer was clearly proven to men and angels though God knew it all along. This Lamb was foreordained. Foreordained before the foundation of the world. Not an afterthought. Not an emergency stop-gap. Not Plan "B." No it was "Plan A" from before the foundation of the world. God's Plan was carried forward through creation, the fall of man, the degeneration of the race, the growth of corruption and violence, the flood, the establishment of government and nations, and further departure and independence from God. He then chose Abraham to father a nation to be His chosen people. It was the ancestry of the Christ who was to be the required sacrifice to redeem man kind. What Grace! What forethought! What wisdom! What blessing!

And the rest of the Plan is laid out here. God raised His Son from the dead and has given Him glory so our faith and hope might be placed in God and not in those traditions from which Christ died to redeem us. He already is glorified at the Father's right hand but still looks forward to believers receiving public glory with Him in the appointed day.

Peter isn't the only one to affirm God's foreordination of Christ to die, and election and

predestination of saints through sanctification of the Spirit. Paul does as well, Ephesians 1:4; 2Thessalonians 4:13; etc. So God in His grace has given us more than one witness to His marvelous sovereign grace. Accept it, trust Him, act in the light of this truth and rejoice in Him forever. They had.

But there is more. We have purified our souls. How? By simply by having obeyed the truth we have received in the gospel through the prompting and power of the Spirit. And He uses the word to bring about new birth. So we are to love one another fervently (intently). We can now love the brethren, our fellow believers. No halfway love here. Why? Having been born of God we are brothers and sisters. Not by natural human birth by corruptible seed, but born of incorruptible. By the word of God. It is the means of giving spiritual life. It itself is living, abiding, enduring, not merely existing, forever. As stated in Hebrews 4 it is “living and operative.” The

life it gives is as enduring as it is. All earthly things, material and philosophical reasoning, which man is so likely to rely upon and glory in, are as perishable as grass and flowers. The first frost last month ended much life for the season. The roadsides are brown now, where hours before they were green and living. Man is no more durable than grass, naturally speaking. How good to have eternal life that has been imparted by hearing and faith in the living, eternal word of the Lord. So the gospel, the good news, is preached to all mankind by the word of God. Salvation is not by man’s reasoning, promotions, eloquence, crowds, entertainment, persuasion, or coercion, just the simple living word of God brought to them by faithful believers. As He has promised, with the Spirit’s intervention, some receive it and are born again by it. Glory to God!

By Ron Canner, November 3, 2004

3:3. The believers Peter was writing to had become born again. Have you?

They were born not with corruptible seed but incorruptible. That means the new nature cannot sin! Can never sin! John points this out in his first epistle:

1John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Any time a believer (a born again person) sins it is because he has allowed the old, Adamic, sinful nature to control his thoughts and actions. When we were first born into this world we had but one nature, SIN. When we were born again we then have two, sin and life in Christ. Soon, when the Lord returns (or if we should die first) we will be rid of the SIN nature we were naturally born with and have only one nature, a sinless nature, CHRIST. Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, Mary, was sinless from birth. He remained sinless His whole earthly life and is still the sinless Man, having laid down His life and now risen and ascended and seated on God's right hand, awaiting His Bride and His Kingdom.

2Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1Peter 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1John 3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Now by the saving and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in us we have acquired brothers and sisters in Christ whom we truly love (*phileo*, affectionately). This love is **unfeigned**, not in hypocrisy, not "put on" or faking it as we so often are likely to do with others we don't really "like." Knowing that we actually **have** in our new hearts unfeigned love for them we are commanded to love (*agape*, undeserved, unreturned tender loving care and concern as per 1Corinthians 13) them fervently (intently). This *agape* love is to be with a pure heart, (cleansed and clean) and not mere human affection which surges and wanes with our moods and our experiences with them, and may degenerate into lust. A pure heart! What a wonder! A living, breathing human being with a **pure heart**? Let it so be with us brethren. We have the new nature, the Holy Spirit in us the desire and the power and the love to have a pure heart.

Peter contrasts the eternal life with natural life. Those that are born again by the word of God have eternal life, and may not even die bodily if they are alive when the Lord returns. Those who are not born again remain subject to natural death as children of Adam as well as the Second Death. He graphically illustrates the difference using a direct quote from the Old Testament scriptures.

Isaiah 40:6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Using that quote he also is reminding them of the context in Isaiah's prophecy which speaks of the long awaited time of blessing that the earth will enjoy under the reign of the coming King. Seeing the word of God will surely be fulfilled we can rely on the gospel which is preached to us now from that same word. Preached to be received now, not simply a prophetic word for some future generation. Once received it changed us, as verses 22-23 show us.

Receiving the gospel carries responsibilities. Some things are clearly unbecoming conduct for believers, and all those who claim to be Christians. Rather than issuing a list of commands, Peter exhorts us to lay aside some behaviors that characterizes the natural man. While laying aside these things he presses us to nourish ourselves upon the word.

Malice (11verses in the New Testament) badness, i.e. (subjectively) depravity, or (actively) malignity, or (passively) trouble:--evil, naughtiness, wickedness.

Guile (12 NT verses) a trick (bait), i.e. (figuratively) wile:--craft, deceit, guile, subtlety. Later in chapter 2 Peter describes the Lord.

1Pe 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Hypocrisies (7 NT verses) acting under a feigned part, i.e. (figuratively) deceit ("hypocrisy"): --condemnation, dissimulation, hypocrisy.

Envies (9 NT verses) ill-will (as detraction), i.e. jealousy (spite):--envy.

Evil speakings (2 NT verses) defamation:--backbiting, evil speaking.

There are many lists like this in the New Testament. Lists of unbecoming conduct, unexpected of believers. Indeed the world notices when one who professes to be the Lord's slips even once. The incentive with these lists is that the Lord's name is not dishonored, brothers and sisters in the Lord are not harmed, and the unsaved are not stumbled. Yet these lists are not presented as "thou shalt not ..." commands but as appeals to the new nature of the born again saint who is no longer under the power of sin (Romans 6) and the bondage of the Law of Moses

(Romans 7) but at liberty to voluntarily do the Lord's will in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Having then been born again by the living Word of God now we are to desire it as our nourishment. Not with a "take it or leave it" attitude but as new born babies desire their milk (all too regularly for the parent's convenience and rest). Babies instinctively desire milk and so they grow. The new nature instinctively desires (intensely craves) the word of God so it can grow. It is described as the sincere milk of the word. The word sincere is literally "un-deceitful," the very opposite of "guile" mentioned in verse 1. The unadulterated word of God.

How can the word of God be adulterated? Eve added to it and in so doing tempted herself beyond endurance, making herself an easy prey for the deceit of the Serpent. Satan misquotes scripture frequently. He did so when tempting the Lord in the wilderness, leaving out a phrase, (compare Mt. 4:6; Ps. 91:11-12). Men frequently quote scripture out of context, leading themselves and others astray. We are seeing more of this nowadays, even in the secular world. Religious factions cite scripture prohibiting serious immorality and abortion. Men who resent these moral judgements, quote other scriptures attempting to show their inconsistency and discredit them if they wear clothes of differing thread sources. Scripture is adulterated by using them out of context in ways not intended by God. It has been said many times "one can prove anything by quoting scripture out of context."

Another serious issue is the increasing number of new translations now available. How does one know if these are all the "sincere" (unadulterated) Word of God? Few of us can read the original Greek or Hebrew language or know which originals are the most reliable. Some translations are based upon a limited number of original sources (KJV). Some translators attempt to adhere to literal translation as far as the languages allow. (KJV, NKJ, Darby, NASB). Others are more free to paraphrase (what they think is) the thought and intent of a passage, and are easier to read (NIV). Some have translated with a predisposition that distorts some passages. An example is the substitution of the word "church" in the KJV instead of the word "assembly." Total paraphrases such as the "The Living Bible" are useful more as a commentary by the "translator" than as the literal (unadulterated) Word of God. No matter which translation one uses, it should be used daily! It is essential for spiritual growth. Unlike our natural bodies the born again believer never stops growing and never grows old spiritually, although they do mature. And the word also sustains spiritual health and enriches spiritual well being. Good food indeed!

As having tasted that the Lord is gracious we are to, as newborns, seek the nourishment and growth available from the word of God. The same word by which we were brought forth. But there is more. Much more! Just as a baby needs to grow strong and begin to master an immense number of skills we believers do too. Peter continues describing the blessings we have been brought into by our new birth. With these privileges come responsibilities to carry out. But our spiritual growth will enable us to handle these.

We come to the One whom we have tasted is good and find He is stable and solid as a rock! One we certainly can safely rest upon. **He is the Living Stone.** Jesus is the Christ, chosen by God, but disallowed by men. They crucified Him. Yes He is the Chosen, the ELECT One, the Anointed, the Christ! (This word "elect" is the same as spoken of us in chapter 1:2.) And He is PRECIOUS! (valued, dear to God's heart and ours, most honorable.) And then Peter reveal that we are also living stones. And we are built up into a **spiritual** house. A real Temple, the House of God, on earth. A temple made up of saved people, not stone. A temple supplanting the massive, ornate temple in Jerusalem. That one was built by King Herod for the Jews, but was soon to be totally destroyed by the Romans (accomplished in AD 70). How gracious of God to these Jews who have trusted in Jesus as their Christ. He **replaces** the beautiful, but dead, stone temple they had forsaken with a far superior, living and permanent one. One with Jesus Christ as chief cornerstone. Paul refers to this temple this building as well. See 1Corinthians 3, 2Corinthians 6, Ephesians 2 and 1Timothy 3. See also number 99 in Hymns for the Little Flock.

In Jerusalem there was a priesthood founded by God under Moses to minister in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later established by David for the temple to be built by Solomon in Jerusalem. That priesthood, having become corrupt, crucified the Christ, and was also due for destruction with the temple. But we find God graciously **replacing** it with a holy priesthood. Who is this holy priesthood?. It is the believers, the living stones composing the new temple. It is those Peter was writing to (and us). They/we are **all** priests not just some elite hierarchy of Levites, originally set up under Moses. The line between the people and the priesthood has been obliterated, taken away. But the status of God's priesthood was not lowered or made common. Rather the common people who accepted Christ as Savior are lifted into a new and superior priesthood. **A holy priesthood.** A priesthood in which every priest could continually and freely approach God.

Priests offer sacrifices. That's what they do. But our sacrifices are now **spiritual** sacrifices, sacrifices acceptable to God. Those Old Testament animal sacrifices had become an affront to God, because they

represented mere empty religious ritual from a people who did not truly love God, much less honor and obey Him. Their sacrifices had ceased having any spiritual meaning, and would soon be terminated. See the Prophets, particularly Malachi, for what God thought of the old priesthood and their sacrifices. Our **spiritual sacrifices** are acceptable to God! How? By Jesus Christ. He makes them acceptable, because He, as Great High Priest, has presented himself an offering acceptable to God. (Hebrews speaks more to this.) Christ is now there at God's right hand interceding for us, and adding His incense to our **prayers**,

Revelation 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

and **praise and thanksgiving.**

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

See also number 114 in Hymns for the Little Flock.

Other spiritual sacrifices are **our bodies**,

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

our service for the Lord,

Philippians 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. {offered: Gr. poured forth}

and **our support of others.**

Philippians 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Peter regularly brings up Old Testament scriptures familiar to these Jews scattered abroad, and shows how God is now fulfilling them spiritually. He points out that the Lord is the Cornerstone of a building. This had been prophesied by Isaiah.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

But He is the stone which the builders (Israel, and in particular, the Jews in Palestine in Christ's day) first rejected. This had been prophesied by David, Psalm 118:22. Jesus himself cited this passage to those rejecting him. *Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

And He became a stumbling stone and a rock of offence to the nation of Israel then and still is, as prophesied in Isaiah

8:14. Paul refers to the fact this was their appointed fate, Romans 9:22. Much of the New Testament uses Old Testament scriptures to establish that things were being changed, but they were changing strictly as forecast.

Priests maintain communications and relationships between God and man. That is their primary function. These are two way communications, man to God and God to man. There are two orders of priests mentioned by Peter. A Holy Priesthood and a Royal Priesthood. Each believer is both.

To approach God the priest must be of the **holy** order of priests. They are authorized by God and free to approach Him with worship, thanksgivings, prayers, supplications etc. These may be personal, with others, or as spokesman of a congregation he is part of. One doing so should cleanse himself daily so he or she is personally **holy**.

Priests who bring God's word to man are of the **royal** order of priests. They show forth the praises of the Lord who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. They speak as the oracles of God, 1Peter 4:10-11, bringing to bear the inspired word of God from which they speak. In the Spirit, they bring the gospel to an unbeliever or an exhortation, a word of comfort or word of encouragement to a believer. As a priest, he or she may speak privately to another person. They use any gift the Lord has given especially suiting them him for His purpose. As a priest a man may speak publically as God's spokesman to a gathering of persons, such as a gospel meeting or a teaching meeting. He uses any gift the Lord has given him especially suiting him for this purpose. They may also speak as moved by the Holy Spirit as part of a meeting of a local assembly gathered unto the name of the Lord. Another example of a priestly function is that of the "angel," or messengers, of local assemblies addressed in the first three chapters of Revelation. Compare Malachi 2.

Malachi 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts..

God established the Aaronic priesthood in the wilderness. All descendants of Aaron were priests by birth. They had no choice, and others could not become priests. Today also, all believers are priests by new birth. Each is a member, and is to function in both roles of the priesthood. Peter announces this and encourages us to take our privileges and responsibilities seriously and diligently. He

contrasts the blessings now with those Jehovah offered

the children of Israel at Sinai 1400 some years before. He even cites features of the present spiritual blessing that correspond amazingly to that offer which Israel forfeited by choosing the law instead of Jehovah's simple offer to honor the promise given by grace to Abraham years before.

*Exodus 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a **peculiar treasure** unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a **kingdom of priests, and an holy nation**. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Now Peter reminds them that **they** are now the people of God, not national Israel. Israel has been set aside for the time being, see Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23; and Romans 9:25.. While Peter writes to scattered believers of Jewish descent, all believers are included in this blessing. Neither Jews or Gentiles deserved God's mercy although Israel enjoyed God's special favor for 2000 years. God called Israel His chosen people. In unilaterally choosing them, and blessing them, God desired to be glorified in them before the Gentiles. They were intended to demonstrate the grace and mercy of the Almighty and serve as channels of blessing to the Gentiles. They didn't fulfill His hopes for them. In fact they never laid hold upon the blessings themselves, later becoming "not a people." God, in His infinite grace, will restore Israel nationally to prominence, and even preeminence above the nations, with Jesus as their King forever. (Peter has mentioned that hope already.) But not now. Now we, all believers, are His people, a people for a possession, His treasure, the People of God, showing forth His praises. We are a holy nation. No, not America. The United States, however greatly blessed by God, is not His chosen nation. Nor is the holy nation any one sect of believers. And it is not the godly remnants God has separated out within the ruination called Christendom, though they all are part of that holy nation. God's holy nation is the "ye" Peter speaks to. The "elect" addressed in this epistle chapter 1:2. Yes, it is made up of all true believers on earth. The Kingdom of God! Not ruling here until Jesus reigns. But He reigns in our hearts now. Bow and worship, and obey. After all we are part of the holy priesthood. Tell the story. After all we are part of the royal priesthood. His treasured possession. **His!**

By Ron Canner, December 1, 2004.

On Christ salvation rests secure;

The Rock of Ages must endure;
Nor can that faith be overthrown
Which rests upon the “Living Stone.”

No other hope shall intervene:
To Him we look, on Him we lean:
Other foundations we disown,
And build on Christ, the “Living Stone.”

In Him, it is ordained to raise
A temple to Jehovah's praise,
Composed of all the saints, who own
No Savior but the “Living Stone.”

View the vast building, see it rise;
The work how great! the plan how wise!
O wondrous fabric! power unknown!
That rears it on the “Living Stone.”

But most adore His precious name;
His glory and His grace proclaim;
For us, condemned, despised, undone,
He gave Himself, the “Living Stone.”

Author unknown.
99 Hymns for the Little Flock

The holiest we enter

In perfect peace with God,
Through whom we found our center,
In Jesus and His blood:
Though great may be our dullness
In thought, and word, and deed,
We glory in the fulness
Of Him that meets our need.

Much incense is ascending
Before th' eternal throne;
God graciously is bending
To hear each feeble groan;
To all our prayers and praises
Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And love the censer raises,
These odors to consume.

O God, we come with singing,
Because Thy great High Priest
Our names to Thee is bringing,
Nor e'er forgets the least;
For us He wears the miter,
Where “holiness” shines bright,
For us His robes are whiter
Than heaven's unsullied light.

Author unknown
114 Hymns for the Little flock

conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Having described the lofty position and hope of these poor, dispersed saints of Jewish descent Peter now exhorts them as to their conduct while here on earth. He addresses them as strangers and pilgrims. But that is what they literally already were. Not by choice, but they were not in the God given land of their ancestors. Perhaps they were settling down in the place they had landed. But Peter is not concerned about that. He is concerned about their (our) attitude, manner of life and conduct because we are now “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for a possession; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now **the people of God.**” We are those who are to be, **by choice**, strangers (aliens) and pilgrims (passing through on a trip to a destination) in this earth. We are not of this world.

John 17:13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 ¶ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 ¶ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

This passage gives the Lord’s mind for all believers down through the ages and especially today.

Sometimes exhortations about conduct relate to the believer’s tendency to love the world, 1John 2:15, and to become conformed to it, Romans 12:2. But here the apostle teaches that our born again souls are subject to attack. Not only from evil teachings that attack our spiritual lives but from plain ordinary lusts that spring from within us. From the flesh. From that old Adamic nature we all are born with. These **war against the soul!** These arise from within one’s heart and wage something similar to an organized military campaign against one’s own soul. They come unbidden from within or can be aroused by things seen, heard, read, felt through the senses. Things encountered inadvertently or incidentally during our walk on earth, or things invited by our excursions to places we know where lusts will be stirred. For they are not at all unpleasant to that old nature in us. **But they war against the soul!** And sometime they overcome the soul and we fall. We sin. This is the normal course of events for the **unsaved**.

James 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath

But this is not to be the norm for believers. These excursions into sin may take us physically to a place of temptation, such as videos or TV, some novel or magazine, movies, plays shows, concerts some sporting events, some eating places, touring some exhibits, etc. Or they may simply be entirely within the mind, fantasizing the fulfillment of some lust. Fleshly lusts vary but are plainly marked out in scripture which describes such conduct of both Old Testament and New Testament characters. The Ten Commandments point up some fundamental types. We are to abstain from lusts, to flee them.

Sometimes we think we have a “besetting sin” which attacks us more vigorously and more often than others. One can become so occupied with “fighting” a certain lust that other lusts are overlooked and they conquer us before we realize what is happening. Occupation with lust is never healthy whether fighting it or indulging it. Occupation with One who is superior to any fleshly gratification we could ever dream of is what saves us from a fall. We are to **abstain from them not fight** them. They may war against our souls but the victory is not through fighting but simple abstention. Not just abstention from carrying out what we might lust to do, but not entertaining the lusts that come unbidden into our thoughts.

The other exhortation Peter gives is about their conduct toward the Gentiles they were living among. Historically Jews have never seemed to have an easy time being accepted by their Gentile hosts. Here, as Christians of Jewish descent, these believers were under double jeopardy to suspicion and distrust. Those Peter was writing to were already suffering, being slanderously spoken against as evildoers. Peter doesn’t rally them to protest against unfair treatment, discrimination, or intolerance. He, very practically, encourages them to conduct themselves in such a way that their good conduct would witness positively to the reality of their Christ. Peter asserts that God would surely visit those who were evil speaking about them with some awful hardship or tragedy in an effort to bring them to repentance. God does things like that in love to sinners. When He did, they would remember the good works of suffering saints they had observed earlier and be drawn to seek the Lord as their Savior and subsequently glorify God. Preaching isn’t necessarily involved. Just a godly life and good works, a quiet witness. These are effective to lead others to salvation, when they are later visited by tragedy. See 1Peter 3:1-2 for a similar example. So we are to be lights, shining **in** this dark world, but not **of** it..

By Ron Canner, December 8, 2004

A review of the epistle so far points up the marvelous new position New Testament saints have received as a result of the cross. Believers, Jews and Gentiles have been born again through the Word of God by the power of the Spirit, receiving a new, sinless nature. We are united together as living stones, a house and temple of God, a holy priesthood with direct access to God and a royal priesthood commanding God to others. A special, precious people, a people of God, a people who are God's own possession. A people not looking for earthly well being but longing for the future heavenly inheritance awaiting them. Yet a people remaining here in this world as aliens and pilgrims sent to glorify God and as witnesses for the Savior to the lost. A people who are to have a foundation of interactive, godly behavior amongst themselves, and then live godly lives before the unsaved around them; have good conduct despite negative attitudes of their neighbors; conduct that would ultimately lead some who were persecuting them to salvation. And even if some die in their sins, they will glorify God before the Great White Throne because of the witness to Christ in the conduct of those they had slanderously accused.

Now Peter opens up another avenue for our conduct to glorify God; our open respect for authority and those in authority. And beyond that, our respect for all men and certainly for all brothers and sisters in Christ. We honor those in authority beginning with God Himself who establishes all authority. One basic form of giving honor is to honestly pay our taxes. All levels of authority are included, even that of masters over servants, verse 18. Respect for authorities includes both obedience to the laws of their jurisdiction and an honoring attitude in public and private. One should address a public official with his honorable title because of the God given office he is occupying (even if he is personally corrupt and a scoundrel). This may sound incredibly naive to some. But remember that Nero, one of the most notoriously evil men to ever come to power ruled about the time Peter writes this. Note how Paul addresses Roman Governors and King Agrippa in Acts.

(The campaigns and results of recent elections in this country may have frustrated some believers but Peter guards our tongues and attitudes. We are to be as aliens and pilgrims here. We are citizens of heaven with our interests and inheritance there, not here. Therefore some refrain from involvement and do not feel free to vote at all.) The Lord Jesus is our example. He paid whatever taxes were due. He was always respectful to governmental and religious authorities and when speaking of them. He was respectful even when they were unjust or acting beyond their authority, verse 23. Jesus doesn't denounce their incompetence or their willful miscarriage of justice in condemning Him to death by crucifixion. He refuses to rise to the bait the rulers (and Judas) set out tempting Him

to take a stand against the Roman government. He does not condemn the death penalty even though it was truly, this time if no other, being applied to an Innocent Man. Any protest, while fully justified, would have diverted attention from this pure and righteous Man. His silence but exposed their sin, putting it in stark relief against the Standard that was before them. His was a simple, yet profound, submission to God, and to the hatred and whims of sinners.

What are the legitimate functions of government on the earth? Peter tells us, "for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." They usually do less of the latter than the former. Men are always trying to limit the powers of government over them while seeking to expand the duties of government to benefit them. Men try to improve things by changing the form of government. Even more effort is put into trying to change the leadership. There are revolts. But nothing is ever found truly satisfactory. We await the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet any form of government is far superior to the anarchy of Noah's time. No matter what the form of government or who is in charge, our willing and complete obedience to the laws of the land and rules of the workplace (or school) will silence the ignorance of foolish men and honor God.

The hearts of men lust for independence from parental authority, from classroom authority, from governmental authority, and at the bottom of all, independence from God (sadly, even in His own House). But the believer is to be characterized by subjection to all authority. What about Peter's own answer to the religious rulers of Judea who forbid speaking about Jesus. "We ought to obey God rather than men." (We are to be in obedience always to someone.) There are very, very few situations in which we may be called upon to make that choice. And if we are we should not resent receiving the judicial punishment of the government. (Would that we were evangelizing enough to be forbidden.) While enduring such punishment, Paul and Silas glorified God to the salvation of their jailer, Acts 16:20-40. Peter calls attention to Jesus' example in verses 21-23. See also the example in Acts 4:1-33.

Currently, we shudder to hear professing Christians boldly speaking against authorities and of defying them and seeking their overthrow. This is not conduct Jesus or any of His apostles sanction, much less encourage. Peter denounces such in his second epistle (ch. 2) as does Jude. Instead of bringing about conviction, repentance and salvation, these unnecessarily offend government authorities and citizens, closing hearts against the testimony to Christ borne by faithful believers.

Being born again, a people of God, we have freedom (not independence) all men would envy. But we

must beware that we not take advantage of our liberty for fleshly ends and use it to cloak malicious acts. Liberty is not License. Though believers are free we are not yet free of the flesh which moves us to sin. But we are now free to not sin, and free to willingly subject ourselves to the Lord and His wishes.

We are free to love the brotherhood. Here again is that filial love, mentioned in 1:22, awakened in us when born again. Every believer on earth is part of that brotherhood. Do we love them and pray for them? Share with them the things of Christ, His assembly, the hope of His return for us and with us, etc.? We even love those who we cannot not fellowship with fully. In faithful love

for these and for the Lord, we are not to receive them at the Lord's Supper because of their unscriptural conduct, or teaching, or associates

But we are also now free to honor all men. After all, they are each made in God's image. We are free to whole heartedly fear (respect, honor, obey) the awesome One who gave His only Son to save us for Himself. And we are free to honor the king, as God's appointee, w h e t h e r a good man or not. These are not inconsistent Christian behaviors. God give us grace to pursue them fully.

By Ron Canner, December 15, 2004.

Peter moves on to another area of a believer's life where subjection is called for, marriage. These admonitions are not just for those married to believers, but those who are married to unbelievers. Paul has spoken about this in 1Corinthians 7 and reminds us that believers should only marry another believer. Yet through various circumstances a believer might have an unbelieving spouse. Becoming saved while married, or marrying while away from the Lord, etc., will lead to difficult times. There is no guarantee the unsaved spouse will eventually be saved. First the wife is to be subject to her husband, whether he is a believer or not. A husband is primarily to be won by the silent witness of his wife's chaste manner of life and her fear (unfeigned respect) and love for him. This is the same principle as given in chapter 2:15. The Christ filled life, a meek and quiet spirit as He had is "in the sight of God of great price." While referring specifically to women here the principle is universal. The inward person is what counts with God, and with most other humans

Matthew 11:28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

We, male and female, are to be as meek and lowly at heart as was the Lord Jesus. There is nothing wimpy about Him. Machismo has no merit before God. Men are to be masculine, neither machismo or effeminate. Peter was a hard working fisherman. He was strong and courageous, ready to fight with his sword for his Lord in the garden. But as the Lord's disciple he was not aggressive or domineering. He was the most obviously masculine of the disciples yet he knew and respected women. Unlike some of the disciples he was a married man. (The Lord healed his sick mother in law.) Later, as an apostle, he took his wife with him while traveling, 1Corinthians 9. He warns women against trivializing their lives by being preoccupied with outward appearances, hair, clothes, jewelry. This has been the way of the world since before Noah. Brothers, our attitude toward women has a great influence upon how our sisters in Christ adorn themselves. Fathers who ignore or downrate their daughters as compared to sons, unwittingly move them to dress and act to attract men. Men of the world tend to choose a wife primarily by her looks, sometimes an object of his lust or his desire to gratify his pride displaying this showpiece. This is not according to the knowledge given godly men. Is she to dress like a showpiece, a trophy wife, displaying his prowess? This denigrates her and undermines her integrity and responsibility to walk becomingly before the Lord. This practice stumbles younger girls, tempts other

men, and impedes other women from seeking Christ. On the other hand, there is no merit in lack of care for the body, shabby or dirty clothing and unkempt hair. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy spirit, 1Corinthians 6:19, and we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, Romans 12:1-2. Simple, neat, becoming and modest clothing that does not attract undue attention but conducts interest to the face, not the body, is appropriate.

As our example, Peter cites Sarah the mother of us all spiritually whether of Jewish or Gentile descent. Did Sarah obey Abraham? When did she refer to him as "my lord?" It was a very significant occasion. When the Lord and two angels appeared to Abram and he served them a meal He promised Abraham Sarah would bear him a son in about a year.

Genesis 18:12 *Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*

She was reacting in disbelief to what was to her a preposterous promise, but in doing so she, almost incidentally, referred to Abraham as her lord. The words just came out, out of her heart. Nothing hypocritical, just a genuine respect. It was not putting up a godly front. She was out of sight and just mumbled it to herself but the Lord heard it and called her on her quiet laugh. She had little reason to respect her husband. He had denied her twice to save his skin, jeopardizing her and God's promise. Meanwhile she had failed her husband once in coaxing him, against faith in God's promise, to take matters regarding a son into his own hands. Ishmael was born to her handmaiden, to Sarah's later shame and chagrin. But now, thirteen years later, she is found to be in the proper humble spiritual condition to miraculously conceive. She was to bear the promised son who was to father God's chosen earthly people from whom the Jewish saints, to whom Peter was writing, descended. He would be called Isaac ("laughter") because of her laugh of disbelief when she overheard the Lord's promise, and their laugh for joy when he was born. She is referred to as one of the "holy women" of old time. They adorned themselves with a wonderful meek and quiet spirit. Who are some others? Jochebed, Ruth, Abigail...

There is more to the story of Sarah. See the box below.

Now we husbands have a "likewise" to heed. Our demeanor and conduct is to adorn the doctrine and honor the name of the Lord as well. Our attitude and treatment of our wives speaks much of Christ to the observing world.

The husband is to dwell with his wife. Simply put, to ordinarily come home after work. Dwell with her as your companion. This is according to our knowledge of why Adam was given Eve. Plan recreational activities around the family's needs. The traditional domineering, self

serving, worldly man is to be set aside. She is not a slave, though she may indeed be totally devoted to you. She is not a servant, though she in her deep love for you uses her energy and many talents to serve you. See Proverbs 31 for the description of the woman of excellence you have been blessed with, or if single to look for in the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD.

31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Her husband rises up in honor to her.

So we men are to honor our wife. Honor her as a weaker vessel, under the care and protection of her man. (It doesn't say she is weaker.) As a weaker vessel, but really a coequal in the marriage, in the home, over the family.

And serve her. Even if she is strong and capable, open doors for her. Carry the groceries in from the car. Walk together, let her be ahead of you when going into or out of a building or room. Be courteous with her and in her presence. Be respectful of her when with her and when with the guys. Help her with her coat, or her boots. All that little stuff that marks a real man, and marks her as a woman of worth. Never stop courting her. After all you are partners together, not only now but heirs together of something. The grace of life! What is that? You will be together, as close or closer to each other for eternity with the Lord in glory. Meanwhile in the here and now, our prayers may be hindered to the extent that we do not respect and honor her.

By Ron Canner, January 5, 2005

The Story Behind Verses 6 and 7

While Peter barely mentions Sarah he clearly was thinking of Abraham and Sarah's systematic denial of each other, and of their marriage, at least twice. Sarah was so beautiful that they had **fearfully** agreed early on in their marriage to claim Sarah was his sister when in the presence of men who might kill Abram to get her. Despite her willing part in the deception, how **frightened** and forsaken she must have felt when they carried it out. But all this was based upon **unfounded fear** due to their faltering faith in the God who had called Abram, and promised him an heir. Peter admonishes women as her daughters to emulate her faith but not copy the **fearfulness** that led her and her husband to deny each other twice (v.6). Husband and wife are to live together despite perceived threats to one or the other.

With a “finally” Peter winds up his admonishments for the believer’s testimony on an inhospitable earth in a hostile world. As believers our lives are to vouch for the truth of our words. Mutual love with subjection to one another, and to all earthly institutions, is to highlight our walk in Christ’s footsteps and the path He marked out for us. Peter echos the Lord and the other Apostles in urging unity through lovingly considering others as brethren. After all, we anticipate inheriting a blessing together. This prospect reminds us the promised blessing is not earthly and not now. Faith lays hold of that and acts accordingly. He gives both positive examples and negative examples.

Our conduct here on the earth will have a huge influence upon whether we enjoy good days while on this earth. He is not talking about “good days” of self indulgence in pleasures and ease but the good days of spiritual blessings of walking in fellowship with the Lord and His people. Walking in righteousness, peace and love, as channels of God’s blessing to all around us, including the unsaved. Yet as we do live according to these exhortations we generally will experience a good life from an earthly standpoint, for God is watching and in His providential goodness we do reap what we sow.

Peter, in his customary blunt but heartening way, tells it like it is to be. We are called upon to bless, for that is what we are here for. And we can bring much blessing and good to a person’s inner being with heartfelt words and references to scripture.

In verse 12 we are reminded the Lord is watching our conduct, delighting in righteousness and in hearing our prayers but turning His face against them that do evil, believers or not. We are to be found doing good, seeking peace, eschewing evil. (This was Job’s reputation and it should be ours.) That means nothing in our manner or walk hindering our prayers, certainly nothing in our walk that would turn the Lord’s face to be against us. It is indeed possible for believers to sin and do evil, but it is impossible that God will let us get away with it. God is faithful! While we are here on earth God will chasten those who He loves. But it is also impossible for anyone to undo the work of Christ on the cross causing us to lose our salvation. God is faithful! How wonderful then that His eyes are over the righteous and His ears open to their prayers. We are righteous before God because we have been born again. But will we sin and then seek answers to prayers without confessing and forsaking the sin? He turns from answering our requests while He deals with convicting us about the sin and restoring us to Himself.

If we read Psalm 34 we will discover that Peter has been referring to this Psalm more than once in this epistle. Note the verses adjacent to the scriptures cited in

Peter’s epistle:

Psalm 34

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: [1Peter 2:3] blessed is the man that trusteth in him. 9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. 10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. 11 ¶ Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? [1Peter 3:10-12] 13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. [Peter 2:22] 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles [1Peter 3:12-16]. 18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David was a man after God’s own heart, Acts 13:22. Yet David wrote Psalm 34 upon finding himself in a very precarious position resulting from his failing in faith and doing a foolishly dangerous thing. He sought refuge from Saul in the courts of Abimelech, King of the Philistines. Peter too had experienced failure when he denied the Lord three times. But here he encourages us by quoting from the psalm commemorating David’s experience, a telling reminder for us who may feel there is no way out of a predicament but compromise or denial of Christ. And we who have failed have a God that will retrieve us, 1John1:8-10. Praise be to the Lord.

Peter has admonished and encouraged believers experiencing suffering while pursuing what might be called normal walk and service for the Lord. We, like they, are in a foreign land, enduring hardship and rigors of the way and the sometimes unfriendly attitudes of the natives dwelling here. Those he was writing to were Jewish refugees or descendants of refugees and suffered simply as such. But now they also suffered unjustly despite their righteous manner of life, and sometimes because of righteousness, for conscience sake. They were serving the Lord while peacefully going about normal Christian life. Just as they, we are aliens and pilgrims passing through on our way to glory. As they, we are not tourists or vacationers nor are we settlers. But we are ambassadors for Christ recruiting others to go to glory with us, 2Corinthians 5:20. Doing this is more likely to excite conflict with the god of this world whose territory we are passing through. We are seeking to free souls now subject to him through their pride, self indulgence and bondage to sin. This increases the probability of suffering for the Christ who has chosen us as followers. Satan hates the Lord Jesus Christ and those who take that Name become targets of both his attacks and subtle wiles. Fiery trials are to be expected. And many are recorded in the Acts and epistles, on down through history and in the news today. Not that we should do things deliberately that simply provoke and antagonize unbelievers but neither should we hesitate to reverence the Name of Christ and proclaim the Good News to all who will listen. Suffering for Christ here is rewarded at the appearing of the Lord of glory to reign.

Matthew 5:11 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Acts 5:41 *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 1:29 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

2Timothy 2:12 *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:*

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {temptation: or, trials}*

Yet the Spirit through Peter finds it necessary to again remind us not to return to the ways of the flesh and

fall into a pattern of sin no different from those of the world around us. Furthermore the possibility exists, yes the danger exists, that a believer can fall into **heinous acts** that would bring forth punishment by the authorities of the world and bring a terrible smear on the Name of the One who died for those very sins. Note the sins named together here. Murderer, thief, evildoer (criminal), and what? Busy body??? A meddler! How does one suffer being a busybody? By being told to "buzz off"? Losing friends? Yes, but perhaps the apostle has something else in mind. W. E. Vine comments in his "Dictionary of New Testament Words":

BUSYBODY

C-1, Noun, 244, **allotrioepiskopos** - from **allotrios**, "belonging to another person," and **episkopos**, "an overseer," translated "busybody" in the AV of 1 Pet. 4:15, "meddler," RV, was **a legal term for a charge brought against Christians as being hostile to civilized society, their purpose being to make Gentiles conform to Christian standards.** Some explain it as a pryer into others' affairs.

Another translator (TCNT) puts it:

I need hardly say that no one among you must suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a criminal, or for interfering in matters which do not concern Christians. [Emphasis above are mine.]

The repercussions that might fall upon well meaning Christians who would undertake to attempt to reform the world around them were NOT to be confused with persecution for Christ's name, or even as suffering for righteousness sake. No, we are aliens, pilgrims, ambassadors. Such "meddling" is characterized as sin along with murder, theft and evildoing. The teaching of Kingdom Theology incites just such meddling which only unnecessarily antagonizes lost sinners who need salvation not reformation. Christendom will succeed only in bringing on worthless persecution (and ultimately its own destruction) if it forsakes its pilgrim character and seeks to dominate the world it was sent to evangelize. Not only is the world unchanged but souls that might have heard the gospel and listened are turned off to the gospel and turn against God and His Christ.

So we are again warned that not all suffering glorifies God. If we suffer for wrongdoing we have dishonored God. Note how many times Peter reminds us in this letter of our propensity to revert back to what fleshly men enjoy.

On the other hand Peter strongly encourages those who suffer legitimately for Christ's Name. They are partakers of Christ's sufferings. One with Him, in fellowship with Him, walking in His footsteps,

experiencing the reproach He experienced. No shame in this! We are not a failure if they will not hear the gospel or accept us in their communities. We are not to be surprised by rejection and worse. We are to rejoice in it, and glorify God because of it. He is glorified by the suffering of His own for His name, even though the persecutors speak evil of Him.

Peter connects this persecution with **judgement**. Judgement beginning at the House of God. Persecution has a cleansing effect on the House of God. It weeds out empty profession which tends to infests it otherwise.

Judgement is said to “begin with us” but proceed onward and outward to reach the ungodly and sinners. The “righteous” are those counted righteous by faith in the shed blood of Christ on the cross for them, the **elect** mentioned in Ch 1:2. Even though elect, saving us is “with difficulty.” Not that difficult works or attainments on our part were necessary. Far be the thought. The thought is that the believer’s path toward his salvation from this world is not without difficulties along the way. Once saved the believer has eternal life and cannot perish. He then walks in newness of life on earth until reaching the glory that shines before him. Not that we are in any danger of being lost, losing the salvation freely given on God’s part. That is based upon the finished sin-bearing of Christ on the cross and His shed blood as Peter reminded us early in the epistle. But the way of the Christian is difficult while passing though this scene, fraught with difficulties and trials in a sin-cursed earth and rejection and persecution from a hostile world.

But judgement does indeed characterize the House of God on earth. What is the House of God? Peter doesn’t mention that it is the Assembly, the Church of the living God, but Paul tells us,

1Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth..

But Scripture is clear about the holy character of it and the cleansing judgement He expects in it.

Psalm 93:5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

The Lord Himself instituted judgement of His House in Matthew 18:15-21. **Peter** heard this first hand. At the first appearance of sin in the newly formed Assembly, God demonstrates very clearly His thoughts about it. Through **Peter**, He judges the hypocrisy of Annanias and

his wife.

Acts 5:13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

Then Paul instructs the local assembly on this cleansing:

1Corinthians 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

1Corinthians 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. {damnation: or, judgment} 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

The fact that God requires holiness in His House testifies to the coming judgement upon sinners and the whole rebellious world. All are responsible to Him if for no other reason than He is their Creator and they are responsible to Him. Those of His own are kept by Him as their faithful Creator, Creator both of their natural being and the born again person they are now. No undeserved suffering comes upon us that is not permitted by a loving all-powerful God. As Sovereign Creator-God He may for His own good reasons allow occasions of suffering to enter our lives. If we suffer according to His will we are beckoned to let Him enfold our souls in His keeping, devoting ourselves to well doing until He takes us Home. If we suffer for our own faults, even then in His infinite grace, He works all things together for good for the believer.

By Ron Canner, February 16, 2005

NOTE: This issue of Dig Deeper will largely be devoted to remarks enlarging on two points in previous Dig Deepers, particularly on chapter 4.

4:9 Gift and Speaking

While God has always bestowed natural gifts on all men, the ascended Lord bestowed spiritual gifts on each believer. The natural gifts are to be presented to Him as part of the living sacrifice spoken of in Romans 12 1-2. We have laid them at His feet. We only pick them up again and use them at His specific direction for His glory. All Humans are responsible to use these abilities for good, to glorify their creator and to bless others. We are authorized to enjoy created things with thanksgiving. We should not use them to glorify self, gain power over others or harm them.

The spiritual gifts, on the other hand, are freely given to be freely used for the Lord who gave them to His own. Some of these are named in Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. (Of course they are to be laid at Jesus' feet as well.) They are spoken of in these passages as free gifts, available for our free use, misuse or disuse. But they are clearly given, as Peter says here, for the benefit of others and the resultant glorifying God, not to bring glory or power to one's self.. They are to be used under the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit Who gave them. No human ordination is mentioned here or anywhere else in the New Testament. No human authorization or empowerment is needed for using these gifts. No human intervention or restriction on the use of spiritual gifts is authorized by scripture. Instructions for use are given in 1Corinthians 12 and 13. Instances of misuse or abuse are rebuked in 1Corinthians 14 but no human arrangements were instituted to control their use. Rather each is put under personal responsibility to govern themselves before God as servants and good stewards of the gift(s) given them. What liberty! What a privilege! What a responsibility! Each servant is accountable to his Master, Romans 14:4.

Peter speaks of the manifold grace of God. The gifts are as varied as the colors of the rainbow. Each beautiful in its own way, yet best when shining together in harmony. Each member of the body doing what he or she is gifted to do as assigned by the Lord and empowered by the Holy Spirit as outlined in 1Corinthians 12:4-11. Therefore we have Peter's instructions to speak as the oracles of God. Whenever we speak, whether to a small child's Sunday School class or before an audience of 10,000, privately one on one or in assembly, we are to speak as the oracles of God. Speaking as an utterance from God, with befitting sober (not somber) urgency and focused clarity.

However, while use of an individual's

spiritual gift is always his or her personal responsibility, there are additional limitations when in assembly. There brothers only speak, gifted or not and then only two or three. Gift takes no precedence, distinction or prestige whether when remembering the Lord, in collective prayer, or even when waiting on the Lord for a word from Him. Let the gifted or the naturally eloquent be careful not to impose on the liberty of the Spirit, quenching Him. Let those who do not consider themselves gifted for public speaking be careful not to resist the prompting of the Spirit to speak because of their sense of inadequacy, thereby quenching the Spirit. He is adequate!

Indeed whatever we do for the Lord is to be done diligently with the ability the Lord gives. He may indeed use our "natural" abilities and acquired skills along with Spiritual gifts He has given, but it is all for the glory of God and the blessing of those He wishes to bless. All is to be prayerfully done with the ability God gives and the immediate direction and power of the Spirit for that occasion.

4:17 Judgement begins at the House of God.

As was mentioned last week the Lord demands that His House, the church, be holy and maintained that way. Early on God had demonstrated how seriously He views sin by taking two sinning members out of this scene through death, Acts 5. Each local assembly is responsible for this, Matthew 18 :15-20. When sin was tolerated in one local assembly (Corinth) Paul intervened and led them in purging it out, thereby "clearing themselves" and the Lord's Name. That faithful action led to a later repentance and restoration of the brother who was sinning. Those instructions are preserved for our benefit and use today, 1Corinthians 5. If we ignore this we may be disciplined directly by God, as were the Corinthians. They were weak and sickly, and some deceased, because they dishonored the Lord's Supper, 1Corinthians 11:30.

The Lord uses another means to purify His own collectively. One of these is by means of division. Divisions leave behind faithful remnants called out from an unfaithful mass. Examples include Noah, Abram, the kingdom of Judah, the Jews carried into captivity, the returning remnant of the captivity under Zerubbable, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jesus and His disciples, the Church, the Reformation and yet to come, the Rapture.

In the 1800's another remnant was separated out, this time from among the Protestants. These were gathered solely to the Name of the Lord, relying on His

promised presence in the midst to lead and empower their meetings. They re-instituted scriptural order in the assembly and the practice of assembly discipline long neglected (or abused). Sanctified, set apart, a remnant who would in turn faithfully yet lovingly deal with any sin arising among them.

Sadly, however, a distressing and bewildering array of additional divisions among these have occurred since them. All of this history, disturbing as it is, was allowed of God to purge out and maintain faithful remnants in the midst of pervasive decline and departure from the faith. Down through history God allowed the professing Church to be broken into many pieces, among the little remnants maintaining holiness becoming to His House. Yes, judgement has indeed begun at the House of God and will continue until the final calling out the Rapture of His own to glory.

Have you responded to His calling out in separation from the **mixture** of those who seek to honor and those who dishonor His Name? Do you walk with others who seek to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, calling upon the Lord out of an undivided heart? With those seeking to comply with the original intent of the Lord for His Assembly?

Soon the Lord will rapture to glory a remnant out of the professing church. After the Rapture He will somehow call out a godly remnant from among the nation of Israel now restored to its land. Only this remnant will enter the Millennial reign of Christ on the earth.

Yes, judgement begins at the House of God. Now.

By Ron Canner, February 23, 2005

At the end of chapter 4 the suffering saints are distinguished from those who suffer for their own faults and trespasses. Those that suffer according to the will of God are encouraged to commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator. The Creator is a watchful Guardian and Nurturer of those under His care. And He shares this blessed duty with elders among us. These older spiritual men are mentioned several times in the New Testament. They are here pictured as shepherds who feed the flock. Peter presents himself as one who is also an elder. Remember he was restored by the Lord Jesus on the sea shore to his original calling. Peter, having denied the Lord in the night hours before the cross, had wept bitterly when the Lord had looked at him. On the very day the Lord arose He sought out Peter and met him privately, Luke 24:34. Now Peter, though assured of his salvation and Jesus' personal acceptance, felt he had proven himself no longer of useful service to the Lord. So he decided to go back to fishing, his former vocation. But the Lord had other plans. Even this terrible failure did not disqualify Peter from being serviceable to his Lord. The Lord did not release him so easily from His calling. He gently but firmly called him back to the work He had called him "to feed My sheep." See John 21 for this touching, gracious encounter. Peter heeded and the rest is history. Much of it is recorded in the Acts. If one of us fails the Lord will in grace restore us to Himself. He may use elders in this restoration. And He may call us back to serve Him in His own good time and way as well.

So Peter himself is evidence of God the Creator's faithfulness to His own and of the Lord's grace towards those who fail Him in some way. Don't wallow in shame or self pity, warding off the healing hand of the Shepherd.

Peter does not claim to be chief shepherd. Some make him to be the first bishop of Rome. He makes no claim to any form of officialdom or hierarchy among the believers such as existed in Israel. Moses had established an elder-hood and an official hierarchical priesthood in Israel, but that system was not carried into Christendom by the Lord or His apostles. Believers of Israeli descent knew well the respect to be held for elders. But they knew the Jewish elders who had ruled them before they were saved. They had crucified the Lord. So Peter shows them the new order for elders replacing the old. They were called to **feed** the flock of God.

feed: to tend as a shepherd of (figuratively, supervisor):--feed (cattle), rule.

The flock of God that was **among** them. They were part of the flock. It was among them. They are to exercise oversight.

oversight: (*episkopeo* - English: episcopal, bishop to oversee; by implication, to beware:--look diligently, take the oversight.

Christ the Chief Shepherd was on duty over the flock for

God the Owner. The elders are specifically told not to be **lords** over the flock, it was God's heritage. (They couldn't rightly say "my flock" though some do ignorantly today.)

lords: *katakurieuo*, to lord against, i.e. control, subjugate:--exercise dominion over (lordship), be lord over, overcome.

It is God's **heritage**. He is cleric over it and no one else.

heritage: *kleros*, (English: clergy) a portion (as if so secured); by extension, an acquisition (especially a patrimony, figuratively):--heritage, inheritance, lot, part.

The idea of an earthly, human clergy or dominant clerical position is warned against here. God dominates. Elders watch, guard and tend His sheep in service under Christ the Chief Shepherd. He will reward their service when He appears, at the end of the age, to begin His reign over His Kingdom. Rather than lords, elders are to be examples (models) to the flock. However they are not to shirk their responsibilities. Yet their work is so blessed and necessary it is not to be viewed as duty. It is to be a willing labor of love, not by constraint, not having to be dragged to the work each day.

Humility is what is needed for God's provision for care of His own to function without some dominating others. The younger are to voluntarily subject themselves to their elders. Respect those older than yourself. Go to the spiritual among them for leadership, counsel and guidance. Listen to them if they come to you with encouragement, admonition, advice or warning. Weigh what they say. And this subjection is to be broader than younger to older. Each of us, young or old, are to be mutually respectful and to subject ourselves and interests to the needs of others and graciously give and receive ministrations of benefit to the flock. The Lord's desire is that we be one flock. He is the **Good Shepherd** who gave himself for the flock, John 10:11,14. Being aware of the sufferings of Christ that Peter witnessed, we are to serve one another as shepherds of those He died for, see Psalm 22. He is also the **Great Shepherd** of the Sheep, Hebrews 13:12, who leads us day by day, see Psalm 23. And He is the **Chief Shepherd** who directs the shepherding of His flock and rewards those who endure the hardships of a shepherd, see Psalm 24. They love Him and His sheep.

Note again that **appointment or selection** of elders is **not** contemplated here or elsewhere in the New Testament, (other than by the authority of a living apostle). The assembly is to know (recognize) it's elders and accommodate and encourage them in their work, but it is the Spirit that makes elders and guides them, Acts 20:28. Those who seek to exercise oversight are not to be accepted if they are unqualified according to 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The work of an elder is characterized as a good thing. Make room for it. Tend to it.

By Ron Canner, March 2, 2005

With this passage Peter concludes the main part of his letter to the scattered, suffering believers, pilgrims and aliens on a inhospitable earth and in a hostile world. A world under the domination of the devil. A world promised to the Lord Jesus. A world that had rejected and crucified the Lowly One, who is in reality the Lord of glory. He is now biding His time, so to speak, awaiting His exaltation and we with Him. For we who have been bought with His blood shed on the cross will inherit with Him. While we anticipate exaltation we do not seek it now without Him. It is sure, but in due time. A time is set but, as Son of Man, even the Lord does not know the day or the hour, Matthew 24:36. Meanwhile, He was lowly and suffered hardship, rejection and worse. We do too. (Are we?) So we are to humble ourselves. We humbly place ourselves under the Mighty Hand of God. Gladly. What a place to be. No one can pluck us out of His mighty hand, John 10:28-29. No one can reach in under His mighty hand and harm us. Therefore any suffering we experience is said to be "according to the will of God," 4:19. And we know that it is for our good and the glory of God. (He even turns the suffering we deserve due to our misdeeds to good, Rom. 8:28).

But there is the adversary whom God allows to have sway on this earth for a while yet. Satan often uses wiles as a serpent to deceive and defeat believers, but here Peter characterizes him as a lion. He is said to be walking about as a roaring lion seeking a victim to devour. A roaring lion is obviously fearlessly proclaiming his ownership of his territory, challenging all comers who might seek to invade and take over. And he is not viewed here as stealthily prowling about seeking a good meal as members of the cat family, large or small, are wont to do. Satan is openly persecuting saints. Why? Because the Lord is "spoiling" Satan. Through the gospel we bring He takes those who are Satan's dupes and slaves and frees them to serve a new Master. Believers are sent to live for God in the earth, the light of the world exposing it for what it is. The civilization man has established to satisfy his needs and lusts apart from his Creator God does not attract the believer taken up with Christ. The faithful saints on earth represent a threat to Satan's continued domination and his competition with his Creator for men's allegiance and reverence. So he aggressively attacks the faithful. This is the side of Satan Peter exposes for us here. We are to resist him in faith, knowing that the same afflictions we might suffer have been and are experienced by our brethren elsewhere worldwide. The resistance depicted here is not aggressive but an alert, steadfast, solid stand against an attacker. Satan cannot conquer those who do not flee, fight or fold. Historically, Satan's persecution, even to killing the saints, has never succeeded in destroying the faith or deterring the spread of the gospel.

The Acts, chapters 7 and 8, documents this in the faithful last stand and stoning of Stephen. So we note that God's mission for us does not include attacking Satan head on in violent acts against those serving him or attempting to unseat the worldly powers that seem to be under his control. Paul speaks to that in 2Corinthians 10:3-5. For example, bombing abortion clinics, The Crusades against infidels in other nations, election campaigns against lawmakers that promote homosexuality are not on Peter's agenda for believers in the world. We are to stand! Stand against evil rather than attack it. Satan is the attacker, the roaring lion in charge. Our mission is bringing the gospel to lost sinners, teaching the truth of deliverance from the power of sin, and holding the truth of the assembly. We are to stand for the truth, for that is Satan's greatest foe. Paul equips us with weapons of defense for this, 2Corinthians 6:7, Ephesians 6:10-18 and 1Thessalonians 5:8. Put them on and use them. Our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit. Use it!

The suffering of saints at the hands of men is neither prevented or alleviated. We are not instructed here to even pray for that. Rather we are told it will end after we have suffered "a while." Peter instead pronounces a blessing on the sufferers. This suffering will have very desirable results in us. God will make us perfect (complete, restored together). He will establish us (set firmly in the right direction). He will strengthen us. He will settle (ground) us. Solid, positive blessing results from hardship, pain, sorrow, rejection, injustice and persecution. Peter experienced these. No wonder he leads us in glorifying and blessing God, giving Him glory and dominion for ever and ever. AMEN! Obviously in one sense we can't give God dominion. He is God! He is Sovereign! He does what He pleases. But how blessed and refreshing to Him when we, as His created and redeemed beings, voluntarily give Him glory and submit to His dominion. Satan didn't do that nor do his followers. Note that among all the forms of suffering Peter mentions in this letter, illness and death due to disease are not named. Other scriptures encourage prayer and visiting those who are ill and sorrowing but Peter's focus seems to be upon the suffering at the hands of men or, at the most, as pilgrims and aliens on earth. Many believers on earth today are indeed suffering as did the saints Peter wrote to.

Are we? Why not?

John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

By Ron Canner, March 9, 2005