

# ***From Wretchedness to Righteousness***

*1 Peter/2 Peter*



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## **Dedication**

This Book is dedicated to my home church, The Evangelical Church of Bermuda, for supporting me faithfully, and encouraging me without fail me to keep serving the Lord in every manner I can.

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## **Introduction**

This book is a gathering of thoughts from a Fisherman, a Follower, and a Failure; a Faithful, Forceful, Factual, Fiery personality. It is about the book of Peter. I hope you will delve deeply into, examine and reflect on the many writings that Peter has to share.

## An Understanding of Salvation

A little consideration of the First and Second chapters of Peter, will root us in the breadth of his writings. This man could involve himself in so many areas of the Savior's earthly ministry, that it could have made the disciples of that era, along with us in this present era, to perhaps think him sometimes to be obnoxious with his impulsiveness. At the same time, we see the initial chapters of Acts revolving around him, with the rest of Acts around the Apostle Paul. Naturally, both of them were deeply involved in the establishing and ongoing of the Church.

After Pentecost, Peter was concerned, along with many of the other disciples; with the aim of the message of the Messiah to transform people, that it not be limited to the Jews only. Thus, when we read his Epistles, he makes reference to those in, *"Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."*

I heard a preacher say that "this Book is God's megaphone in shouting to a deaf world." We have that message clearly emphasized in the context of verses 3-9. While the church in those cities was undergoing unimaginable opposition, God had called out, and unto Himself *"a people that Peter describes as being 'born again'."* (1:23) In doing so, He gave them *"a living hope"*! These groups found the truth of the "resurrection of Jesus from the dead" was not some foolish myth, but an unequalled truth. They realized that the Scriptures had predicted, and had now been fulfilled; Jew and Gentile, through Jesus Christ, had equal privilege.

The uncertainty of a confused message that had engulfed many over the years was destroyed; that when the angel said: *“He is not here, but has risen,”* (Luke 24:6) now opened the door to any who would believe on Him. It was an inheritance that was *“imperishable”* and *“undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you.”* (1:4)

When I was first saved, I floundered about my eternal salvation until I read what Peter had to say: *“who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1:5) It was exciting to read what God said, and remove the hesitation I felt. (Hopefully you will get the full picture of “protected by the power of God.”) It was a further revelation to my thinking as I discovered that my salvation will undergo a “revelation” in the last time. Oh, the fullness of what He has done and will display some-day in the future!

The words in these opening verses unveil with a certainty that the salvation I had acquired, though appearing to be an action of my own, originated in the heart of God. His words again: *“who are chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”* (v1, 2) Mighty humbling, is it not? (1:1, 2)

Unquestionably, there are moments of frustration in living the Christian life! We all take our eyes off of the aspired goal, and in those moments we also falter, just enough to “flop” or “fail”. Those are the moments when we should be aware of His promises – they are unchanging. The old saying goes: “God said it... I believe it... that settles it.”

Understanding what Peter has written means that this group of believers has a break down. They have not learned to “rejoice” in their present or “necessary trials”. The trials may vary, but by analyzing them in what God is doing through them in our lives, “distress” gives way to

victory. If there is the recognition that God has a purpose in exposing us to them (trials); ask Him to help you to recognize the purpose and correct the problem. The lady put a note above her sink: "Not somehow, but triumphantly!"

As I write this, I note the financial stress being exercised in our country. I dare to say that our "greed" has placed our hardships in our current condition. It is great to observe the many who have responded to the needs of others, but many are continuing to live above and beyond the necessities of life.

Peter does not "let up" as he reminds them of the proof of their "faith in Christ" when compared with *"gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire."* The ultimate of our FAITH... *"May be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

There is more to come from verses 8 and 9 about that action of "FAITH". Though Jesus lived and ministered in Israel, still there was the immediate action that spread like wildfire throughout many regions. The impressiveness of His birth, ministry, death and resurrection, captured the world of that day with people "loving Him", even though they had never seen Him. Peter wrote, *"Believe in Him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."* (v9)

*"Joy inexpressible and full of glory"*, words that clearly indicate the joy that fills the heart of a person who has gained the knowledge of Christ having entered his/her life. Try as we might to convey the encounter we have recently experienced, and to find the enablement to convey what it has done for us mentally, spiritually, volitionally, you name it... My sins forgiven, heaven is my anticipation; I have lost all fear toward the future. Another musician wrote: "More secure is no one ever, than the loved ones of our Savior!"

Some key words stand out for my consideration: *“chosen, foreknowledge, sanctifying”* followed by, *“work of the Spirit to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”*

## Gratitude for His Precious Blood

Much is said about the Blood of Christ - The Blood of Christ is precious because –

It was *innocent* – Matthew 27:4

It *redeems* us – 1 Peter 1:19

It *cleanses* us – 1 John 1:7

The Blood of Christ *atones* for us – Lev. 17:11

The Blood of Christ *justifies* us - Romans 5:9

The Blood *brings peace* - Colossians 1:20

The Blood *brings us nigh* – Ephesians 2:13

The Blood *sanctifies* us - Hebrews 13:12

The Blood *protects* us – Exodus 12:13

It *blots out sin* – Revelation 1:5

It *justifies* - Romans 5:9

It *cleanses* from Sin – 1 John 1:9

*Brings boldness* in the Day of Judgment –

I read on one occasion, and it is worth our reflection – “Christ left nothing on earth but His Blood!”

In the era in which Peter wrote these words, *“More precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire,”* it was not unreasonable to understand that even gold had its limits. The value of redemption was limitless. A servant had value to his purchaser that superseded what the seller comprehended. The blood of Jesus Christ was above and beyond any assessed human value.

It is to our benefit to recognize that the price of redemption was established by God. It was the skin of animals that God used to make garments for Adam and his wife. There is implication that in this action God established the use of a blood sacrifice as necessary to deal with sin. (Genesis 3:21)

As one follows that understanding of Scripture, we are able to comprehend the emerging picture of *“BLOOD”*, in that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, was that of *“perfect”* blood that was shed for man’s sin! No other purchase price met the demands of God! *“We are redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ”*. (1 Peter 1:7)

Scripture declares again and again that we were formerly far off. (Ephesians 2:13.) However it says further, *“Have been brought near by the blood of Christ”*. Understanding that truth, we comprehend what we were as aliens. We also know that a barrier was broken down. That barrier was undoubtedly the curtain within the temple that was torn from top to bottom at the crucifixion, (Luke 23:45) but let us never forget that the barrier of Jew and Gentile no longer exists when the two become one in Christ. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

The beauty of that word *“precious”* in its context means that God saw the value of redemption. He also saw that provision for that redemption necessitated perfection, and that perfection was limited to a sin free sacrifice. Such a sacrifice must originate in a perfect environment. Herein lays the explanation for Christ, the Son of God,

Who would meet such a requirement. "God so loved the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son as that perfect medium as a sacrifice" (John 3:16). Dean Alford notes: "that the application, the sprinkling of that blood on the heart is by faith." Precious, finds a beautiful explanation in the word "dear", and man has been "dear" since He made Adam and Eve, and placed them in Eden! Man is "dear" to the heart of God! Peter uses that word "precious" in 1 Peter 1:7; 1:19; 2:4; 2:6; 2:7; 2 Peter 1:1; 1:4

It was equally exciting to me, when Christ became my Lord and Savior, that I was no more "far away" as I had envisioned my relationship with God; I had entered a new relationship; He was my Father, and I His child. I could now enter His presence and speak with Him, and He with me. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, I would talk with Him about my interests and frustrations. I discovered an intimacy that I had never known previously. I was no longer "scared" to enter into a dialogue, to feel that I was intruding on Him, or even to think of Him unconstructively... intent on punishing me for faltering (sinning) here and there.

It was so refreshing to know He was listening. It took me back to my father; with him sitting on an old bucket chopping away on a brimstone wall before he applied plaster; or us together, standing on the veranda of the Lighthouse, 136 feet above ground, talking about our pasts and futures; Intimacy was the Word I had discovered with God as my "FATHER".

I no longer felt that He was aloof and thinking of me as a beggar; rather, as a "come near my child". Have you ever read the story of the prodigal Son? (Luke 15) I am awaiting your return! I will be scanning the horizon to intercede if necessary! I will not be waiting to exert reprisal; I am anxious to celebrate that you are no longer "far away" and finally understood my love, and thankfulness. "Welcome Home!" I can hear that father: "It is not how much I lost or how much you squandered; it is

how much you learned, and returned. I sense you have been “born again”; you are “protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (v5) I can well imagine that homecoming!!!

Patsy and I met in College. While I was finishing my studies, she went on the road travelling and ministering with her music. Our time apart from each other was difficult, yet precious. We finally entered our marriage and service for the Lord together. The intimacy of our relationship developed considerably. So it is with the believer who is desirous of recognizing what God has done on their behalf.

Trials! You of the “scattered tribes gained from what you lost”! *“It is obvious that you have recognized true wealth and proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire”*, there is your comprehension of real value, and *“though you do not see Him now, you love Him, and believe in Him; you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”* There is very little that equals the realization of the “inheritance” which I found when I found Jesus Christ as Savior! I understood I had not been looking for Him... He had been searching for me; I had found something, Someone “imperishable”, something “undefiled”, Someone who would not “fade away” like so many who were supposedly my “friends”, but were in the same sinking boat as I had been in. The “precious”, abiding guarantee of His presence would be mine forever! I now had a reservation in Heaven.

I recall the era when we still had fountain pens, ink wells and blotters. I recall liquid ink eraser, one bottle with Clorox, and one with 50% Clorox and 50% water. I am certain that I used them as often and perhaps more-so than many students. Let us consider afresh how the blood of Christ dealt with the sin of our lives. The *“precious blood sprinkled”*, was and is *“sufficient for the salvation of our souls.”* (1:9) Sin - Erased forever!! That my friend is the grace and subsequently peace

that is now ours in the fullest measure! It is like stepping over the threshold and entering into the peace and comfort of “home”!

The “prophets of old” sought to find answers to the appearance of Christ, on the scene. The majority of them did not find positive reception when speaking of the promised Savior, but they plodded on with their studies; and when they discovered a prophecy or a promise, they heralded it forth. In most cases they were treated as alarmists. Undeterred, they stood firm! Their messages were such that when confronted by these men, they rejected their message. Never-the-less, those prophets of old refused to falter, predicting the outcome of their faith; the salvation of their souls. 1:5) Also, they, and we, now have a “reservation” secured in Heaven. (v4) It is *“protected by the power of God and ultimately revealed in the last time.”*

These were men and women who were not self-serving; they were serving others, unsaved humanity, who would only understand later, if ever. Peter reminds them, and us, *“Even the angels did not get to look into this truth, though they longed to do so.”* (1:12)

## Transformation through Grace

### *(Part 1)*

Grace creates a “new man”, which results in a transformation of thinking. No longer do I focus on me, I focus on HIM! My previous train of thinking, which revolved around self, becomes re-focused on the grace that has been brought to me in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Instead of my previous ways, I find myself seeking to be conformed to the likeness of the Savior, Jesus Christ. The One who called me and forgave me is Holy, and I want to be more like Him because of His holiness. In fact, it was written in Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7 to that effect.

Peter continues with those thoughts on the precious blood of Christ, the futility of silver and gold, in contrast to the *“lamb unblemished and spotless- the blood of Christ”*. The first word in verse 20 is “He”, and the last is “you”. In-between he speaks of eternity past and eternity future, in which He bridges the gap. He offers Himself as the perfect sacrifice and then to culminate it, He is raised from the dead and given glory. Why, *“So that your faith and hope are in God!”*

Peter progressively unfolds the effectualness of that salvation they have experienced. *“YOU ARE ABLE TO NOW LOVE ONE ANOTHER FROM THE HEART! For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God.”* The message has not changed, it has been fulfilled! Christ was not to come immediately as a King, though He met every qualification, He had come as the suffering offering, paying the price of

redemption for sin. The “glories” will come in due time, said the prophets preceding His arrival.

It is imperative that a born-again individual not think himself to be a theologian. Ego has no place for the young convert in what God has done in your life or mine. God has taken many a chip off my shoulder that originated just above; and by the way, He still has much to work on.

Verse 2 begins with the idea that we are, in effect, “babies” that need to grow in respect to our salvation. Perhaps that word “kindness” needs a special emphasis in this hour, especially as we grasp how God, in His kindness, reached out to us. His kindness should be exemplified in our lives. It is one of the best lotions that one can use on another. When we do so, it might be the other ones first experience of such for the day, or month.

Somewhere along the way I saw that another spoke of “pure milk” of the Word of God. As mentioned previously, “*babies long for the pure milk of the WORD*”. If someone professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and there is little evidence of desire on their part to study the Word of God, he cannot help but stir question marks in others minds; it is justification for doubtfulness! Baby or not, there must be evidence of the resident presence of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit having taken possession! The 11<sup>th</sup> verse of 1 Peter 2 leaves little room for “self” to remain as prominent. Also, the 12<sup>th</sup> verse is adamant concerning any possible identification as continuing, and you remaining as an evildoer. The word “taste” in verse three is all one needs to change their direction in life. In fact, our good deeds become so gratifying that we begin and continue immediately to glorify God! Here comes that word “precious” once again.

In a day as befuddling as ours, it is not easy to have a “subservient heart” to elected officials who are apparently indignant toward God and His Word! We are to abide by the law, and show respect toward it and

toward those who have vouched to be guided by those laws. It does not mean that we are free to be indignant or belligerent. Let our lives bespeak holiness with a guide to correction if and when need be! Peter admonishes again with these words: *“For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. In tallying our actions: As bond-slaves of God... Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the king.”* (Precious stones, living stones, spiritual sacrifices.)

A solidified faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, will naturally lead us from malice, and all deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy and slander. This is an effect of our new relationship in Christ. A believer, with this new found Faith, is much like a baby for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. Once tasted, there will become an insatiable quest to discover as much of the WORD as possible. That will likewise enable one to grow, to mature, in their salvation.

Another effect of that gradual maturing process, which becomes a spiritual help is the protecting hand, the power of God. The assurance bubbles over that, through faith, I have a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. All that I am experiencing and have as a guarantee is the Word of my Savior, my Lord; and is likewise guaranteed to any who believe and practice that belief in the resurrected Christ!

And, as though that was not enough, Peter says your assets out-measure your current experience of trials. A trial is to assist you “for a little while”. God allows distress and trials for the proof of our faith! We could easily lose track of our faith if it did not experience a few tests here and there. The melting pot becomes an excellent test for what one sees as “gold”. Just in case we allow our thinking to get side-tracked, He, our wonderful Lord, permits a little pressure from hereto unexpected sources, so that we may be found delighting with joy

inexpressible and full of glory; *“obtaining as the outcome, your faith, the salvation of your souls”*. (1 Peter 1:9)

*(Part 2)*

Our featured, Apostle Peter, is quick to bring to the attention of the brethren he is addressing, that the One they have taken as Savior has been personified in the Old Testament as the “unblemished lamb” with the spotless blood of Christ!

Herein is a magnificent truth: He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times on behalf of YOU - ME! That reveals the spectrum of God’s thinking. Before the world was formed, before man was created, before time was instituted, God had the beginning and the end solidified. Tucked into that plan was that of redemption, and faith and hope for eternity. Our omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (all-pervading) and omniscient (all-knowing) Savior!

Our thinking has been enhanced; we are confident also of our “brothers in Christ”, having been transformed through their comprehension of the truth; and are cognizant of our love being sincere, and their love being reciprocal. This is a love that originates from the heart.

The born-again experience comes as a result of an imperishable seed, *“through the living and enduring word of God.”* Remember, *“THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”* (Isaiah 40:8; Hebrews 6:5); As previously quoted: *“This is the Word which was preached to you!”* (1:25)

The majority of us have observed “seed” which has been placed in the ground, and watched it break open and grow into a plant, a blossom, a tree, suchlike. Gradually the fruit arrives. So it is in the Christian life! It takes on a maturing process. We do not acquire full maturity until God calls us home. We just continue to grow in our

salvation. (1 Peter 2:2) It all started when we “have tasted the kindness of the Lord!”

The next few verse of 1 Peter 2, projects our thinking into the construction of a “building of a structure”. When the builders are in the process of erecting a building, they look for the cornerstone; in the process, others are discarded. Once they have established the cornerstone, the ones discarded now become acceptable. We are likened to that description used in chapter 2:6-8 concerning CHRIST, *“Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and He who believes in HIM will not be disappointed. This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone,”* and, *“a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word, and to this doom they were also appointed.”*

If you have followed Peter’s thoughts to this point, you will have come to a thinking that revolves around Jesus Christ. Like me, so long ago! I had read verse 18 of 1 Peter 1 daily, as I passed a little Brethren Assembly on my way to work: *“Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:18, 19)

As Peter unfolded his experience as a disciple who had followed Jesus for some three and a half years, he recognized that the next step in his understanding of Jesus was to GROW. (2:2) I recall how those who believed these truths, also believed that Christ was the equivalent of a “living stone”, and that they too had now become “living stones”! Their goal became my goal! *“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* (2:4) From a human standpoint, this old stone, Ted, would have been rejected. God in His sovereignty has allowed it to find a spot to continue to be used.

Someone wrote a song quite a long time ago: "There is no disappointment in Jesus!" I imagine that idea came out of the next verse (6) that is a truth the youth of our day would say is "awesome". The next few verses follow a pattern that reveals yours and my wealth: *"We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God. You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."* (2:9, 10)

These verses remind us of John 10, where we read the discourse of the Great Shepherd. He is the most self-sacrificing individual you may ever encounter. He even remembers the "name" of each of his sheep. Leaving the others protected in the fold, He searches for His "lost sheep", finds it and carry's it on His shoulders, back to the fold. What love! What commitment! Only a pitying Savior could love one so deeply. When He has extended Himself as far as love took Him, He returns rejoicing... I HAVE FOUND MY SHEEP! Such love toward us could only emanate from the heart of Jesus Christ, our Savior! That love accomplished what Christ alone could accomplish, and we became: *"A chosen race, a royal PRIESTHOOD..."*

In reading through 1 & 2 Peter, I was discovering much that was foreign to my thinking, and certainly humiliating to my egocentric conclusions about God. Those words from verses 9 and 10 placed these folk, and any individual who incorporates Jesus Christ as Savior, into a distinction that is unique, from what he was, to what he has become: chosen, royalty, holy, a possession, people of God - from darkness to light! God has showered both His Grace and His Mercy toward them; toward every believer. A Holy priesthood because we have become acceptable to God, and a Royal priesthood that qualifies us to go to the people! Only the precious blood of Christ could place us into such a position. While the proclamation of Christ as Lord and Savior had been proclaimed in the Old Testament, (Isaiah 53, or Psalm 22 being good

examples) its comprehension had now become a woven tapestry of understanding.

Prior to His death and resurrection, Jesus had spoken to His disciples concerning the One that would be sent to minister to their spiritual needs, and to those who would follow HIM in love and obedience - the Holy Spirit. (John 14) Comprehension of the Holy Spirit, which initially took place at Pentecost, (Acts 2) would be given through His enablement. This congregation was the solidifying of His message, and theirs and my understanding, plus the sweetness of it all toward the new found faith, and the brethren at Athens being called Christians. (Acts 11:26) JESUS, UNSEEN BUT LOVED! - *“Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls!”* (1 Peter 1:9)

A genuine encounter with Jesus Christ will eventuate “from darkness to light.” You have made a transition: *“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”* (2:10)

(Part 3)

As referenced previously, the Old Testament teachings concerning the Messiah projected Christ as a stone. In 2:4, He is the Living Stone; in 2:6, He is the corner-stone; in 2:7, He is the rejected stone; and in verse 8, He is the stumbling stone. The world did not embrace Him, but believers know the reality of Christ living in us. This is a reminder of the truth that nothing, absolutely *“nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus!”* (Paul’s words in Romans 8:39)

There is much more to this thought on “a people of God”. To meet such a qualification, one has to be of “a chosen race”. One is not just “naturally” qualified because of “birth”; he meets this and additional qualifications, because God has decreed it - “chosen” him out of humanity to be one of HIS own. Comprehension of such action on the

part of a holy God, toward a rebellious and sinful people, is cause for amazement. Think on those words: “disobedient to the WORD”. (2:8) Yet, God in His providence allows us to proclaim His Excellency; from “darkness to marvelous light”! Through His GRACE and MERCY strictly, I, along with other believers, have become “THE PEOPLE OF GOD”!

Do you wonder why I found Peter’s Epistles so beneficial in my early Christian life? Surely you will become as excited as I, as you think of Christianity! There was much to be appalled about - nothing to boast about; Christ and His redemptive qualities applied, made all of the difference... Sin to Salvation!

The transition of redemption, from a sinner, to a sinner that was now saved by grace, meant I was now a member of “a chosen race; a royal priesthood, a holy nation, A PEOPLE OF GOD’S OWN POSSESSION”. Through this action of God I even obtained royalty; I was a CHILD OF THE KING! I NEEDED TO LIVE LIKE IT! What a challenge!

Have you ever eaten “Humble Pie”? Just when you think of “Royalty” as a part of your “New” family, Peter launches into “*fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul*”. (2:11 and following) The excitement of this New Found Faith can activate “fleshly lusts”, which he indicates “wage war against the soul.”

Criticism of Christians is a “go for it” accusatory action. Many are they who will try to knock the wind out of your sails. They find joy and delight in their accusations, while justifying their own activity. (v12) Remember that we are dealing with the devil and his associates. We must take the advice as offered by Peter, and respond in such a gratuitous way, that “the tables are turned” and they are left, “*glorifying God in the day of visitation.*” Recall how Jesus spoke to the crowds on the mount, when He shared what the Kingdom age would be like? “*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see*

*your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)*

On our trip to the Holy Land, we visited that mount. As we stood there, Patsy gave our choir members their notes, and we sang together: “How Great Thou Art”. Most of my involvement was spent wiping the tears from my eyes. Equally effective is the response when we “let our light shine”.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges that a believer faces is *“submitting ourselves FOR THE LORD’S SAKE to human institutions, kings, governors, authorities.”* Again we must recognize that these are placed there for the punishment of evildoers, and the praise of those who do right. (v14) One may find it a problem to administer that attitude always, but we all need reminding that we need to be flexible because we are bond-slaves of God. We must refuse to yield to sinful activity! The 17<sup>th</sup> verse of 1 Peter 2, clarifies our response to both men and God. *“Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”*

Bending, bending, and bending! *“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.”(v18) Sorrows may come, unjustly so, but learning the art of endurance with patience, leads to favor with God.”* A suitable illustration can be found in the lives of Joseph and Daniel, but even more so in the life of our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ: *“Called for this purpose”* or *“an example to follow in His steps.”(2:21)* Shortly after my salvation, a fellow Christian invited me to read: *“In His Steps!”* (Oswald Chambers) One can expect opposition once they make a commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ; it is a repeat of what the most religious people of that hour did to Him. Suffering just means that those, and you / I, are at opposing poles. If you must suffer, *“for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed!”*

Rejoice that you are “worthy” of such ridicule, and that you refuse to be intimidated or troubled. (v14)

Beloved, stick to that commitment you have embraced. Those words “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts”! More than sixty five years have passed, but I can still hear “Brother Brown” singing in his Scotch accent: “Cheer up ye saints of God, there’s nothing to worry about; nothing to make you feel afraid and nothing to make you doubt; remember Jesus never fails, so why not trust Him and shout; you’ll be sorry you worried about tomorrow morning.” He has set you apart... Keep Him “set apart” always.

I have strived not to be an argumentative person. I have endeavored to make it an objective in my life, and more so, after reading 1 Peter, not to engage in extended verbosity. The Holy Spirit is waiting to do His part in softening the hearts of those who delight in criticizing God and His Word. A reminder is worthwhile for all of us, *“...It is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”* (Zechariah 4:6)

The reminders that Peter keeps throwing at us is so beneficial. Instead of arguing, one of the best weapons in warfare is to let the other person make blunders while you retain “coolness”. A little suffering can do us a world of good. In the event you feel you have been affronted, allow a person to make a fool of them self as over our trying to make a fool of them. A little “space” can often erase high temperatures and balance solutions. The last part of verse 18 is a masterpiece... alive in the spirit! It allowed a completely new avenue to share the gospel! Noah took 100 years to build an ark –together let us learn patience.

I would be remiss if I failed to take some of the thoughts that I found about suffering as I began the process of streamlining my view to

that of Peter. Instead of puffing myself somewhat, let us see what the verses, 2:19 and following to 2:25 did to pop my balloon.

The opening thought concerns the conscience before and after salvation. Peter clarifies what has transpired by calling attention as to how one should grasp that we are called “to suffer”; this is exceptionally poignant when the suffering is being performed unjustly. How must I respond? Patiently endure! Doing so guarantees a “clear conscience” before our Lord! Also to be noted is how I evidently, in following in His Steps, find favor with God!

It was called to my attention that Christ, Bore my Cross, V22, 23; Bore my Curse V24; and Bore my Crown V25. A reflection on this will prove to be a blessing.

Just how much more did I discover as a new-born follower of the Savior? Peter does not make following an exciting role! You follow Christ and you establish a goal. *“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”*

*“For you were continually straying like sheep, but now (1 Peter 2:25) you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”* Thirty three years, approximately, and in the end He has an obituary that is filled with perfectness! The “new born Christian” has an immediate challenge, and inasmuch as he has been clothed in the righteousness of his Savior, he is challenged to imitate Christ each step along the way.

Our problem in life is no different than that which Peter clearly indicates was a problem for the “scattered Jews” of Asia: *“Continually*

*straying like sheep, but now they have 'returned'*", which indicates they have re-established their position with the "Shepherd and Guardian". They strayed, but He stayed, occupied with their restoration. What a rebuke! He did not, nor does He give up on His sheep. At the same time we rest in the knowledge that He is ever present to convict and convince us of our failures, and His "Welcome Home!"

## Lessons in Conduct

*(Wives, Husbands)*

In Chapter 3 of 1 Peter, the tenderness that displays itself from Peter also enjoins itself upon the wives. The words, “in the same way” ties itself in-separately each to the other. It challenges the wives directly. For instance, when Rome conquered and ruled Israel, they no longer allowed people to be stoned to death for certain crimes.

Obviously, the women were in need of instruction as to their conduct. They had found Christ as Savior and were now misrepresenting Him with their conduct. Their mouths were distancing their husbands, rather than encouraging them toward a personal relationship with Him. It took a lot of effort to learn “balance” in all of these areas. My wife, Patsy, was the epitome of balance in our marriage. I was learning, from her, until the day the Lord called her home. The external is not as important, (although it is sometimes more readily observed). What really counts is *“the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”* Noticeably we are not instructed to straighten out some-one else’s wife! Did you notice that word precious once again? It is God, Who is most notably pleased!

Every lady should be accorded “honor”! The NASB translates that verse (7) *“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”* Gentleness, tenderness, toward the one you share in producing and caring for a family!

The “magic” of any relationship is found in our prayer life. Together, husband and wife learn the blessing of praying for themselves and for family members. Improper personal relationships will “hinder” our prayers.

When the members of the congregation practice the principles that have been stipulated by Peter, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a family relationship is epitomized as a “Godly” one. I found those and these *“harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”* (1 Peter 3:8-9)

Each person in the family is of value, not one more than another; one will never hold anything more valuable in their hands than a member of the family, beginning with the husband. Rest confident in the words of Peter which include husband, wife, children as well as extended members!

In reading Dr. Ryrie, I was sure it was ideal for covering verses 8-12 of 1 Peter 3. In a summation, Peter tells the saints what they should BE. Harmonious is one of the words that has been lost in music, and discord is lacking in personal intercourse in conversation. There is virtually the coarsest era of history in effect today as ever. It is a disappointing time, especially considering where much of it originates. Between the wars of our countries, along with the styles of warfare, roles have become intermingled to such a degree that women’s rights and men’s responsibilities no longer find an acceptable Biblical balance.

First, Peter addresses the wives; and he does it by referring to the Old Testament wives who showed submissiveness to their husbands. Too many homes have become a “battle-field”! It has turned that way for numerous reasons, the first being unreasonable inequality. In our modern society we estimate our importance to such a degree that we

live like the caps in the middle of dynamite. Not only is there a charge waiting to explode; it is a matter of waiting for the time it will discharge!

*“Sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit”* are all virtues that are unquestionably void and lacking in general. We can find individuals or even pockets where these are in effect; but overall, that is not the case. We are extremely self-centered. Peter, you might be inclined to believe, was writing about the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

I have endeavored to handle what Peter said to me personally since I first read it. I cannot say I have always been successful. I have narrowed it to a little saying: “Never reduce yourself to the others level!” Rise above the world’s attitudes! While I may desire in the flesh to re-act, I have spent these many years learning instead to RESPOND. He said: *“All of you!”* (v8)

Our Apostle had little fear as he dealt with the prolific problems besetting the “brethren” in Asia. Herein he lays a challenge: *“Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”* (1 Peter 3:9) DO NOT REACT... RESPOND! Do it God’s way!!! The first is fleshly, the second, (RESPOND) is positive!

Here was God needling me, point by point, in my new found faith in Christ. Would I try to maneuver Him, or allow Him to nurture me through His Word and the leadership of the Holy Spirit? I chose the latter, because I had made a commitment to HIM on which I would not renege.

Choices will be necessary in our walk with the Lord. They were for me then, and they have continued over these many years. In spite of my supposed “maturity”, I look back at some very D-U-M-B ones. However, when aware of them, I have quickly remembered: *“The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from*

*evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and “do good”; He must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (10-12)*

Rise against the enemy; re-focus on this One, JESUS, who forgives and instills new goals and fellowship with Him. He is our guarantee... do not allow the devil for a moment to distract or detract us from our Lord “*whose eyes are ever toward us.*” (V12)

*(Elders)*

Ships need a steering gear, but they are also in need of a competent helmsman. The helmsman is readily identified by his ability to analyze his surroundings using riggings, the rudder, wind directions and intensity; his crew’s ability and ultimate goal. He is held in high esteem because these factors are visible above the average.

Leadership in a congregation is discerned by a mature understanding of its Leader, Jesus Christ. He must be cognizant of the fact that his abilities do not make him a dictator, but one who helps steer the ship, (HIS SHIP, not his own ship) toward the goals established by Christ Himself. No man should approach his role as an elder with less than being an example. Jesus gave the example as He washed and wiped the feet of his disciples. (John 13:5) He need not look for a “position” among the brethren; they will be looking for him.

Peter advised the Elder’s that he was also an elder, and his expectations of them were no different from what he expected of himself. The first responsibility was to recognize that those involved in this position know that it is voluntary; it is according to the will of God; it is not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; and in the process of

executing the desired assignment, fulfilling it with the realization he is an *“example to the flock.”* (v3)

Suddenly, Peter addresses the “younger men”. In doing this, I knew that he was dealing with “my” age group, and that we probably had that “chip” on the shoulder, carrying ourselves as above the “old timers” that needed to “change things in the assembly all too quickly.” I began to watch them as though I had more answers than they. Then I became enlightened as to who was “paying the bills”, filling the pews at prayer meeting, encouraging our younger people to seek higher callings”, and seldom criticizing. I saw this portion of Scripture manifesting itself in the lives of the “Senior Saints” ... it was exciting!

Reading on is enlightening: *“Be subject to your elders; clothe yourself with humility toward one another... God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* I was learning quickly, and I could hear Peter saying: “Ted! Wise up!” I know he said it a little differently, but it was easily understood. God alone may exalt us in the proper time... if He so chooses. And again, in my language: *“Casting all your care, all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”* A much needed deflated balloon.

Where else could I have found so much in so short a time? I began to sense that God was leading me into the ministry and immediately became quite anxious about how it was possible. I had a good job, and was promised a great future. There was little money available! There was a transition to another country to which I had never been, and paperwork that was almost unattainable in so short a duration. Peter came to my rescue once again: *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.”* (5:8)

With others joining my existing ranks, prayer went up to God and Peter continued to remind me: *“But resist him, firm in your faith,*

*knowing that the experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To HIM be dominion forever and ever. Amen!"*

It is considered simply as "Remarks!" (Verses 12-14) Peter writes at the conclusion of this letter to Corinth how he has appreciated Silvanus, as his Secretary, but far more is found in those words: *"I have written you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the TRUE GRACE OF GOD, STAND FIRM IN IT!"*

He is quick to also give extra attention to Mark. (Remember how they had a disagreement? – That has been settled!) They are seen to be laboring together. He makes note of how they are *"brothers"*. Pass on a *"Kiss of Love"*. (This was a kiss of reverence.) *"Peace be to you all who are in Christ!"*

Peter was that disciple who seemed to be ready to ask a question before the conversation was completed. He was not trying to be braggadocios, or chief among the disciples; just a man with a desire to have a complete understanding of what had just been said, or how that might fit into the ministry that Christ was conducting. Inquisitive, from day one, of Christ calling him to follow Him!

Each of the disciples had a characteristic that set him apart from the other disciples. Peter was probably the most forward in seeking understanding of the events, and as a result, his questions assisted the group in securing answers that would have left the others in a quandary! Certainly those answers were helpful to them, and even more so to me, as I sought the content of Christianity, and especially my new found faith in Christ.

The foundational truths of this man who had followed Jesus from day one of His ministry, gripped my heart. This great man considered himself a “bond-servant”. Understanding those words, “bond-servant” would mean that even when he had a chance to be free from his servitude, this man had spoken to his Master and shared his desire to remain, not just a servant, but a “bond-servant”. It meant going to the door post and having his ear pierced with an Awl; and ever after to be identified as a servant of love; a servant of choice. (Leviticus 25:39) It was an indication of love and commitment. In addition, Peter noted that he was an “apostle”. He had been chosen by the Lord Jesus as one who would accompany Him. He travelled with the Lord during His earthly ministry, anointed by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, (Acts 2) and had been entrusted to carry the message of Christ wherever possible. A further reading of the Book of Acts revealed that God anointed Paul, who became the replacement apostle for Judas-Ischariot. (Acts 9) If I might digress for a moment- I am told that Paul has had more books written about him than any other, apart from Jesus.)

Peter was rebuked by the Lord, (Acts 9) because initially he focused his ministry to the Jews, whereas Paul ministered to the Gentiles. Shortly thereafter, both ministered to Jews and Gentiles.

## To the Believer

Approximately three years after his First letter to those *“who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ,”* he writes 2 Peter. Probably the emphasis on their joint relationship in God our Savior, along with the righteousness and imputed righteousness of Christ, allows him latitude to speak strongly, especially because three years have slipped away. I have thought often how God injected me with thoughts of yesteryear to awaken me to some strengths and weaknesses, and reminded me, as Peter to these brethren, *“Get your act together!”*

*“Grace and peace”* be multiplied to you! God knows how much both of these are needed in my life. He also knows that because of my weaknesses, it takes more than just *“added”*, but *“multiplied”* when my eyes are faltering, and I am not *“catching the vision”* that will get me back on track... and you?

What will be the *“trick”* to such a need in your life or mine - further knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord! These fading memories... and they come at any age, need more than some drug or rebuke from my co-workers. I need a fresh injection of the ministry of the Holy Spirit! That will come when one spends time in the Bible, the Word of God, and Prayer. I must (1) Read afresh what has been said by others, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. (2) I must learn the secret of prayer to the Lord, where I speak with Him and He speaks to me. (3) I must practice to apply what I have learned.

An essential that will be put into action in every facet of my life – *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”* The one inspires the other into action and effectiveness to *“them”* (You and Us) that will become obvious to others. Let us

remember that such a possession is drawn from the “well” of God, and of Jesus our Lord. (v1) They are our indwellers, our possessors, who manifest themselves thru us in multiplied fashion.

Peter reminds us that these possessions became ours as we embraced Him, Jesus, as our Savior. In fact, he goes further and enhances our thinking with that statement, *“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”* Get the picture! I am what I am now, in Christ, and I am granted this holy position by God. Nothing of myself I bring, simply by His grace and love I possess this new found relationship!

Still more to come! Through what He has granted, I possess: *“His precious and magnificent promises”*; and by them I have *“become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”* (1:4)

Picking up at 1:5, we have additional potentials encased in Godly living: *“In your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.”* (2 Peter 1:5-7)

We all seem to take notice of professing Christians who either adopt or adhere to this “additional” challenge, or subtract from adherence to them. In the process, we become the “officials” and “authorities” on any situation that should be handled appropriately by those of official assignment.

It is appropriate that following the challenge toward “increasing” there is the warning, that a failure to advance will render us *“useless, unfruitful”* in the *“true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”*. There is no

tolerance toward lethargy, for that would be blindness or shortsightedness. There is a reason for such conduct, *“you have forgotten your purification from your former sins.”* (2 Peter 1:9)

In my younger years I recall a little chorus: “Let thy WORD Oh God, be fire in my soul, burning out every sin—make me pure within.” Again we are confronted with the words of 1 Cor. 5:6; Galatians 5:9, *“a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump”*. One has to ask: “Is there fire burning in my soul?” “Have I forgotten from what and whence I was delivered?”

In the event there is coolness or coldness, review, make certain that you have been genuine in your decision for Christ. Stoke up that fire that once emblazoned your life! For certain, those attacks you are undergoing were efforts to stymie your decision to follow Christ as your Savior; in doing so, you were made a member of His family, a child of God, and absolutely nothing can remove you from HIS family. (For further reading; John, chapter 3.)

As an added word of assurance of whose you are and serve, Peter writes that you will only stumble if you become negligent in your walk with the Lord! Only! If! You will not stumble if you walk in close proximity with HIM! *“For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”* Jesus will never “short change” you! It was like a bolt of lightning the first time I read: “will be abundantly supplied to you”. Christianity guarantees it’s product in Jesus Christ...“Abundantly supplied”.

One can get excited about the opportunity to stir up your brethren about spiritual truths. Surely, one who loves his Lord should not be offended for you to spur each other into a continued or deeper walk with the Lord. If a reaction occurs, it is likely that the other individual is sensing that you might be prodding into unacceptable areas; whereas

on such an occasion, we should appreciate the encouragement, even though the brother did it in an offensive manner. We should immediately engage in prayer, each for the other.

Peter lets it be known that even though he is aware of their “established position in the truth”, there is always room for encouragement amongst the brotherhood. He is aware that Jesus has indicated to him that he will be putting aside this “earthly dwelling” soon, and that is all the more reason he must share what the Lord desires.

As I get a little older, I sometimes remind my family that according to Scripture, I am living on “borrowed time”. Also, like Peter, to these brethren, when I am gone, recall what I said, “call these things to mind”. (2 Peter 1:15) I would be remiss if I did not remind you likewise!

There are those who will charge “us” with spreading “cleverly devised tales”; they did then and they will resort to it again. (2 Peter 1:16) Peter again vouches for his observations and what he heard from Jesus himself, and so emphasizes “*we were eyewitnesses of His majesty*”. (Remember the experience of their observation on the mount with Jesus in prayer.) Verses 17 and 18 give credence to the message they are sharing. Hear again that voice from Heaven: “*This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.*”

Here in 2 Timothy 3:16-21, are verses of Holy Writ that emphasize the authoritative message of the INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE. Someone said: “Prophecy is not darksome! It is a lamp shining in a dark place”.

Peter continues: “*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*” The searing messages in Scripture, the inspirational messages, the Holy Spirits satisfying messages of Holy Writ, the warring

and warning messages of the Bible did not originate with man; it was and is directly from God. These have no equal! Man has received them from God and we can say with authority and confidence, they are the FINAL WORD on matters pertaining to HIM!

Peter then moves to “false prophets”! The message of Christ immediately draws the false teachers out of the closet. They are quick to assert their heretical diatribes among the “brethren”! They “secretly” introduce “heresies”, even denying “the Master” (Jesus) who “bought them”. No words are minced about these corrupters who are “bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” (2 Peter 2:1)

Close proximity to the “cross” or the “resurrection” is not sufficient to impede their corrupt thinking. Sensuality and maligning of the truth means little or nothing to such individuals. “Greed” will lead them to *“false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction if not asleep”*. God has decreed their finality. They bring judgment upon themselves! “God is not asleep!”(2 Peter: 2, 3)

Peter was captivating my thinking about who I should listen to and what I should select for further consideration. To instill his message, I noted the facts of previous judgments. God did not spare the angels who sinned against Him. He cast them *“into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment”*. (2 Peter 2:4)

God did not preserve the world, *“but spared Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly”*. Then there was Sodom and Gomorrah that suffered destruction to which Peter notes: *“reducing them to ashes”*. He states further, that they were an example to those who would live ungodly lives “thereafter”. (That included all who so lived then and now!)

Hand - picked is “righteous Lot”! God observes everyone and every detail of our lives. Our country, our world, is being run by the “sensual conduct of unprincipled people”. But He rescued “righteous Lot”. Why, because God saw and heard “that righteous man”. Again, we are reminded that *“the righteous man, while living among that godless people who were practicing their lawless deeds”*; that man who *“felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds.”*

It was easy to look around and see how many people were caught up in a lifestyle that could only be described, as Peter writes: *“unprincipled men”*. (v7) In spite of his surroundings and choices, this man was still pricked in his conscience by the choices he had made, and the life-style he was willing in which to reside.

How re-assuring the words of 2 Peter 2:9, *“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for “the day of judgment.”*

Two cities, one man and his family! To think that God would see me in the midst of every day corruption and ultimately rescue me! And, He has done that time and again. Sometimes I have “followed the crowd”; only to have God tear me away and rescue me, as was the case with Noah and his family. It is not a surprise when a professing, but not living in a committed fashion, individual, is caught away and punished by the Lord. That was clear when we read: *“those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority... warned multiple times, without repentance, and a change of heart and life-style, will ultimately experience God’s rebuke in one way or another!”*

Gradual decay of God and His Word, by both Christians and non-Christians, has become more evident says Peter. Each day with man doing what even the angels would not do, has surfaced. We are “self-willed”! Corrupt throughout!

In 1 Peter 2:12 and following, accusations are presented both then and now. *“Unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed.”*

Riveted in my thinking was what I had read in verses 4, 5, and 6: *“If God did not spare... He condemned”* – Then verse 9 says: *“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the Day of Judgment. The Lord, and the Lord alone deals with the just and the unjust.”*

In the process of serving the Lord, there are moments when we falter, and there are moments when we are falsely accused. Peter reminds us that we are serving the Lord, and we should rise above those moments of intimidation and “do not be troubled”! Move on with *“gentleness and reverence”*. (3:15) Most importantly, *“Give account for the hope that is in you!”* I often hear my mother, with her quickness saying: “Empty kettles make a lot of noise!” Refuse to be lowered to another’s level!

What a summation for all situations: *“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”* There are further lessons in dealing with people who insist on solving what they see as everyone else’s problems. God, allowed people to resort to their thinking for over a hundred years before Noah finished the ark! Following that, only eight people were “brought safely through the water.”

Here again we hear Peter addressing the brothers who are intent on accusing or belittling others for one sin or another: *“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”* (3:18)

Two more verses on the subject of God having dealt with accusations of sin: *“but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”* (3:21, 22) Christ is our protector and perfecter, and He is gone into Heaven with all other powers subject to HIM!

What a relief! He, Jesus, represents me in Heaven. He is without sin, and is not subject to the lusts of men. He is my representative before the Almighty, with the ongoing qualified responsibility of the will of God! (4:2)

Peter reminds them of their prior conduct: *“sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking, parties and abominable idolatries. And now, they are surprised that they no longer run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”* (V 3-5)

Some may call Peter “crude and rude”, but he hits the nail on the head. Sin is sin! One may not appreciate his “rudeness or roughness”, but I understood with clarity my previous depravity and the righteousness that He expects and demands. It was time to judge these fleshly robes and “sprinkle” them in the blood of the Savior, Jesus! I knew that living in the SPIRIT was what God desired, and I had heard it from this boisterous man called Peter.

In examining those verses carefully, one notes that they are applicable to both believers and non believers. Caution with handling people must originate from the heart and our new relationship with Jesus Christ. The old nature desires to surface in an accusatory manner. A tamed tongue reveals our new relationship with Jesus Christ. If I might reword the 8<sup>th</sup> verse, which covers this area... KEEP LOVE TO THE BOILING POINT! The 9<sup>th</sup> verse does little less than enforces my

relationship to others: *“Be hospitable to one another without complaint!”*

Had I met Peter about the time I experienced salvation, he probably would have thought: “What a piece of work!” When Peter writes that *“each one has received a special gift that God wants to employ”*, he probably might have asked God for an explanation that included Ted. He did not change his opinion, and only enhanced his writing... God has supplied, God is to be glorified in my service, and God alone is to be praised. He, God, is to have “His dominion” forever and ever. To that he adds AMEN! (So be it!)

Remember how we mentioned that at the revelation of His glory we are going to be an excited people as we behold Him and our transformation? When it takes place we will “rejoice with exultation”! I remain just as excited as I read again the Books of 1 and 2 Peter!

While travelling through this “Pilgrim Land”, I am reviled on occasion for the name of Christ. And when it happens, I can hear Peter saying, (4:14) *“You are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”* Just make sure that you have not developed as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler. Paul reminds us that we are *“New Creations in Christ Jesus”*. If in the event you suffer as a Christian... glorify God in His Name!

Together we know that Christianity has encountered opposition, in one form or other, since its inception some 2,000 years ago. The sins of the flesh were, and are, opposed to the message of Christ. After all, man does not “basically” want to be exposed to his sinfulness; nor does he want to change his acts toward God or Christ. He remains a lustful lunatic! To expose himself to the truth of God, and follow the dictates of Holy Writ, he must expose himself to the Gospel and obey it! He must acknowledge his sinfulness and God’s righteousness, and submit himself in exposure to truth. It remains “difficult” for the godless man to

turn from the error of his way, but it is necessary. Analyze the thought of a perfect man becoming the sacrifice for a sinful man, so that the imperfect man could become acceptable to the perfect God!

In summation Peter says, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is RIGHT.”* (1 Peter 4:19)

Touched and cleansed by the Holy Spirit, one can hardly be satisfied with anything less than to begin immediately showing his appreciation to the Lord for what HE has done, and continues to do on his behalf. The reality of my new found benefits leaves me with a deep sense of trust toward a creator who does “everything right”! (19) What marvelous rescuing, and then support, is promised on my behalf. Reminder after reminder of my position in Christ, and guarantee of its continuing through eternity!

## Words of Warning

Begin at verse 10 or chapter 2... When I was quite young, I recall a statement my mother oft repeated: "God does not like ugly!" Where it originated, I do not know. I can say that I knew exactly what she meant! Without using the word "sin", she jabbed us in a pointed fashion, indicating that whatever any of us had done, or said, was totally unacceptable. I confess that I had my mouth "washed" several times with a bar of soap that did not meet the specs of strawberry short-cake.

God has decreed that a "Day of Judgment" has been reserved for conduct that violates His majestic and pure character. Some of those violations include: *"fleshly desires, indulging in animalistic interactions, blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, carousing, adultery, the enticing of unstable souls, greed, they are "accursed children".* Peter even uses the phrase *"gone astray like the way of Balaam, the son of Beor who loved the wages of unrighteousness"*. Peter reminds them of rebuke by a *"donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."*(2:15, 16) He continues: *"These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved."* (V15-17)

Unrestrained words from the mouth of the prophet: *"For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be*

*better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,' and 'a sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire'." (2:18-22)*

There is no end to how far one can begin to “wallow” once they have started out and refuse to repent, confess their weaknesses, their sin, and be restored in accordance with the instruction that was given. In most cases I have observed that they become more firmly engrossed. You see, in blatant disregard, what a little leaven can do to leavening the whole lump!

I discovered in these verses how the believer can either adjust to his new found faith, or he will shortly pursue worse things than previously. While having acquired a “new nature”, he had begun to feed the old nature that remained. Warning after warning after warning!

A reminder is essential for us. These were people who had made a profession of Christ and were driven back to their previous life style. In doing so, their corruptive actions toward those who desire to follow the Lord are now creating problems in the assembly of believers. They had the way of “righteousness” made known to them, but they now “*turn away from the holy commandment made known unto them.... wallowing in the mire*”.

Peter had said so much, but sensed that he should say a little more, thus this Second Letter. It is one of a “reminder”. It is not his intention to hammer them, but to remind them; he wants to stir up their minds. No one knows better than I at how when the sun sets, there is the fact that “men loved darkness better than light.”

There is the guarantee that what they knew and should remember, the words of the prophets spoken in the past and reiterated and spoken

by the prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior, spoken by your apostles, should be echoed over and over again.

There was, and remains to be “mockers”. They follow after their own lusts, they mock those who follow Christ; they saturate their minds and hearts with any thought that is contrary to sound doctrine. They especially snub the promise of His coming! They continue to do what they have done since the beginning of creation.

## Sound Doctrine

Beginning in Chapter 3, it became obvious that there are impediments in the roads that I would be travelling; and I could follow “sound doctrine” or “bunny trails” that would hinder my walk with the Lord. By the way, they came; I succumbed more than I would have thought, but I always corrected my relationship with the Lord as soon as possible, and hastened on life’s journey with HIM. I would hear God speaking through His Word, ministering to my need, and reminding me that He had not given up on me.

*“Stirring up your sincere mind”* Peter says in verse 3:1 of 2 Peter. He, God, uses *“the holy prophets and commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.”* Peter shows how *“in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’ For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”*

While they have their say, they obviously have taken texts out of context. Peter notes: *“But by His Word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”* (2 Peter 3:7)

The response to the hecklers was significant. *“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:8, 9) It was easy to see how perverted twisting of the Word of God was used to accommodate their misgivings; Christian interpretation

was mocked, but God has always had the last word; and will have it ultimately.

Just this week I was reminded of what David said in Psalm 24: 1 and following... *"The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it; for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers."* Here in verse 5... *"The earth was formed out of water and by water."*

In those early years, I wondered why God had not passed out judgment to those, and me, for stupidity and arrogance; but the patience of God has no competition! *"The day of the Lord will (in actuality) come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works be burned up. Since all these are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"* (2 Peter 3:10-11)

I admit that initially I was a little confused when first reading this, but as time lapsed, and I studied other passages of Scripture, (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) I recognized that the sequence of Scripture would indicate the Rapture of the Church, and the events following would take place first, then the heavens and earth would be destroyed with burning and the elements with intense heat. Then emerges a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. The entire sequence made sense, for God was going to remove all of this, and allow only *"a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

There is an old saying, "When you see a "therefore", be certain of what it is there for! That is what we have in the context of these verses. We are living in the moments of holy anticipation. Transpiring before our eyes are indications of confused Christianity. The "infection" that

abounds in the so called Christian Churches reminds me of hitting a glob of quick-silver that scatters in different sizes and direction. The only difference is that mercury will rejoin into a single glob if you wipe it off and allow it to merge. Interpretations of Christianity, the Bible, and Church doctrinal distinctiveness, has yielded to “it does not matter” attitudes. It reminds me of my fisherman cousin throwing out his net and catching whatever happens to be in the area. He used it all for “salted bait” in his fish pots.

Peter reminds these individuals, and us, that time is limited. God has “reserved judgment” and fire for earth’s destruction. He is “patient” and not wishing that any should perish. This thought is paramount: “*not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*” Two things are solidified in my thinking as I read these verses: God’s LOVE AND God’s RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Added to my excitement, because I was a new “believer”, was the thought that is immediately inserted—Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people (Person) ought I to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat. But according to His promise we are looking for “*new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwell*”. (2 Peter 3:11-13) My friend, and spiritual earthly father, used to say: “I am not trying to scare the hell out of you; I am trying to scare you out of hell”.

2 Peter continues: With my limited background I recalled the account of Noah and the Ark that He had been instructed to construct. It took 100 years, and during that time he had to listen to all of the jibes to which he was subjected. Without going into the entire story in Genesis 6, along with other portions of Scripture, I recalled the rainbow and God’s promise that the world would never again be destroyed with a flood. You can believe God, or the persons that are afraid that when

the ice fields melt, we will be destroyed. God said “fire”, Peter said “fire”, and I will remember the accuracy of Scripture over the years-- it will take place as God has declared. (“intense heat”...2 Peter 3:10-11)

It was not easy to comprehend all of the end time events, and their sequence, but it became the motivator to “search the Scriptures” and that in turn led me to the conclusions that I hold dear. I learned about the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and the importance of living in light of the Word of God immediately.

In reading Peter’s Epistles, I was finding great joy in the discovery of how meaningful the action of obedience to the Scriptures can become. It was not burdensome at all. It does not mean that I should abandon them if I faltered or fell; it just meant that confession to the Lord produced forgiveness, and I could move on in the knowledge that He had accepted my confession, forgiven my failure, and would recall it never. (1 John 1:9)

There is the promise in the 13<sup>th</sup> verse of 2 Peter 3 that I should always be anticipating a new earth and new heavens wherein dwells ‘**RIGHTEOUSNESS.**’ Beholding the mess that we have made of this present abode, and the sinfulness that encases us every moment of every day, I find myself excited about leaving this old world and being a part of Heaven and that new Heavens and new earth.

Perhaps you noticed, as I, that we, with knowledge of these things *“should be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation;”* (3:14, 15)

Peter, in knowing that Paul had already written to them, admits that some of the things he and Paul presented to them are not a simple task; one of the main reasons being that “unstable” individuals “distort” the Scriptures. Everyone who makes a claim to be a disciple of Jesus may be unprincipled, untaught and in error. They can cause us to *“fall from our*

*steadfastness.*” As I continued to grow in the Lord, I discovered that I could spot these characters quickly.

A word of warning! Locate a church that is Bible believing, and ask pointedly: Does this church teach that the Bible is the Inspired Word of God? Does it believe and practice Biblical principles without reservation? Those two questions will be answered with clarity and brevity if you should want to attend or not. If the answer is a discourse from those facts, look somewhere else. Meanwhile, ask for a copy of their Doctrinal beliefs and Church Manual. It never hurts, and is quite beneficial.

Check me to see if the following verses are appropriate! *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen!”* (2 Peter 3:18)

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