

two epistles of

Peter

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two epistles of

Peter

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Introduction - (1Peter 1:1)

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the sojourners of the Dispersion" (vs1)

In this introduction we will attempt to address several different things, to set the stage for the rest of this series, both of 1Peter and also 2Peter. While the two epistles were written to two different groups of Believers, and likely separated by a few years in their writings; in a very real sense the two books also belong together because they address the Church, first from the Jewish perspective, and then Gentile. Thus, we'll cover whatever introductory remarks are appropriate for both books now, and when we arrive at 2Peter, we'll just jump into it, in sequence; if the Lord doesn't come for the Church before we get that far.

In our present western culture letters are first addressed 'to' the recipient; the message is written; and finally the writer closes the letter by signing their name. During the times when NT epistles were written the convention was to first indicate the writer, and then for whom the message is intended. Somewhat like when I drove transit bus back in the mid 70s, the caller on the radio would first identify themselves, and then say who they were calling... whether one of the other buses, or the dispatch office; and then whoever was being called would pick up their mic and respond.

For these epistles the writer is Peter. We could say a lot about Peter, but if we were to start, where would we stop? An entire series could be compiled on him, alone. So, we'll leave his background and credentials in the Gospels and Acts.

According to Smith's Bible Dictionary, it is speculated that 1Peter was written around 63-67AD. 2Peter likely in 68AD. And it is speculated that he died in 68 or 69AD. The fact that he mentions "Babylon" in 5:13 suggests to some that 1Peter was written from Babylon. Nothing is said in 2Peter to suggest its location of origin. Easton's Dictionary suggests that Peter was never in Rome, while Smith's says he was, also suggesting that 2Peter was written from Rome. Tradition says that Peter had been in Rome, and was thinking to leave; but on the road out of town the Lord Jesus appeared to him, saying to him something on the order of: Your work isn't finished. Whereupon Peter 'understood' what was required of him, and returned into the city; and as he was about to be crucified (in martyrdom), the famous words he is alleged to have said: I'm not worthy to be crucified -as- my Lord was. Crucify me upside down!

But notice a couple of things Peter says about himself; and also something he does NOT say. In 1Pt1:1 he calls himself an "apostle" of Jesus Christ. In 2Pt1:1 he calls himself a "bondservant and apostle". What is the thing he does NOT say? He does not call himself a "bishop", "holy father" or

"pope". Jesus had commanded, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in Heaven." (Mt23:9)

What is an apostle? The dictionary has definitions for both "christian" and "mormon" beliefs. But why is the expression appropriate? Why did Jesus call the Twelve, apostles? (Lk6:13) Generically, an apostle is "one who pioneers an important reform movement, cause, or belief" Is this not an appropriate term for Peter: he was the primary speaker on the day of Pentecost, as the Church was beginning. (Ac2) And the rest of the Eleven were also giving themselves to the ministry of the Word in those days, teaching. (Ac6:4) Even though Paul became the apostle "to the Gentiles" (Rom11:13), it was Peter who first broke the Jew/Gentile barrier at Cornelius' house. (Ac10,15:7-14) Thus, indeed, Peter was a leader and forger of the new path for what became the Church of Jesus Christ.

But notice also, Peter, to the Gentiles, uses a term that Paul did regularly, calling himself a "bondservant". (Ro1:1, Ga1:10, Tit1:5, etc) A place of lowliness and servitude. Jesus had also exhorted, "whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant" (Mk10:43); thus they were following in the ways of Jesus, who Himself took on the "form of a bondservant" (Php2:7)

Now this is totally opposite of what Babylon of Rome attributes to him, when they allege him to have been the "first pope". Popes are typically bedecked as royalty, wearing crowns, sitting on thrones, living in laps of luxury. Priests also typically often tend to behave as strutting roosters, ruling the roost. And yes, sadly, many protestants and fundamental baptists also believe in the (ruling) authority of the pastor, as they exhort parishioners to 'obey' their pastor; and many pastors lord it over them. When we get to the passage, we will see how Peter the "elder" also exhorts pastors not to exercise "dominion" over the flock. (1Pt5:3) Peter of the Bible is not the same mystical, imaginary "peter" of Rome. Babylon of Rome did not yet exist with their stolen false label of "christian" in Peter's day. The false "christian" label for Babylon would not come about until several centuries later. Thus, even logic tells any rational honest person that Peter could not possibly have been the "first pope".

These epistles are written to two different groups, with differing emphases and flavors. 1Peter is written to the "sojourners of the Dispersion". 2Peter is written to "those who have obtained like precious faith with us" (2Pt1:1) Who are the "Dispersion"; otherwise also often called "Diaspora"? Jews. If 1Peter is written to Jews, and 2Peter is written to those who are in the Faith "with us"; who is "us"? Jews. Who obtained, and shares in the same faith with Israel? Gentiles.

"Therefore remember that you, being Gentiles in the flesh; who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise,

having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." (Eph2:11-16)

This is one of the classic passages on this subject, written by Paul. And Peter, in writing to the Gentiles, endorses Paul's writings. (2Pt3:15) Notice that Peter follows in Paul's expression regarding the Gospel, that it was "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Gentile)" (Rom1:16, 2:9-10) And even though Paul (a Jewish pharisee) was the apostle to the Gentiles, whenever he went to a new place, he would always -first- seek out the synagogues. (Ac13:5,42, 14:1, 17:1,10, 18:19, etc) And if you look up these passages, you will also notice that when he would leave the synagogues, that the Gentiles would also follow him, wanting to hear more regarding the Gospel. But when he went somewhere, he always went 'first' to the synagogues (of the Jews); and then it says that the Gentiles -also- were interested. When persecution arose, it was typically the "Jews who were not persuaded" towards Paul's message. (Ac17:5) And so, as many Jews kept rejecting Christ, Paul's message was, "since you thrust it away, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles." (Ac13:46 see also: Ac18:6, 22:21, 28:28)

There are some who try to discredit Paul's ministry and NT writings. There are others who try to say that Peter's ministry was to the Jews -but- Paul was to the Gentiles. Well, certainly, these were their emphases. (Ga2:9) But if we can see how Peter, in these two epistles addresses first one, and then the other, perhaps those detractors can accept that Paul's ministry was legitimate.

Understanding the two audiences/recipients of these two epistles will help us understand some of the things that are written; some things over which Replacement theologians tend to stumble, and which Reformed theologians "twist...to their own destruction". (2Pt3:16) God's covenants with OT Israel were different from Jesus' "New Covenant" (Mt26:18) to the Church which He "washed...from our sins in His own blood" (Rev1:5) To the Jews he refers to the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Pt1:19); and to the Gentiles "like precious faith", "divine power", "precious promises", "divine nature". (2Pt1:1-4)

The Law came through Moses, but "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn1:17) The Law involves judgment and death. Grace involves expectation and life.

Due to Israel's continual rebellions against God, He had to punish them often. The very fact that they are called the "Dispersion" is a label of God's

judgment. People often talk of the "ten lost tribes". The ten tribes were never "lost". If we keep in mind that these were written prior to 70AD, that means Judah was still a nation; Rome had not yet come and destroyed it and Jerusalem. Thus, these listed in vs1 are the dispersion prior to Judah's exile to Babylon, and then return. The ten northern tribes were carried off to Syria; and these places listed are merely an extension of that exile. Of course, we can know that others are found here and there throughout the world, in Africa, India, China and likely Japan, not to mention the US, and particularly New York City.

One of the characteristics of the Diaspora is what has become a 'byword' (De28:37, 1Ki9:7, etc)... the "wandering Jew". History has shown persecutions, pogroms, exiles, etc. In some cases it is romanticized in movies such as Fiddler on the Roof. And likely most notorious of them all, the "Holocaust" of WW2. Thus, 1Peter is filled with references to expressions like: trials (1:6), test by fire (1:7), endures grief (2:19), falsely accuse (3:16), fiery trial (4:12), afflictions (5:9) etc

On the other hand, through God's grace, the Gentile Church in 2Peter is addressed with words like: like precious faith (1:1), precious promises 1:4), power and coming of our Lord (1:16), light that shines (1:19), hastening unto the coming of the Day of God (3:12), new heavens, new earth, righteousness (3:13), looking forward to (3:14).

Both epistles are written to the Church... Believers. But they are written from different perspectives. Jews come from a background of Law, dealing with death for infractions, showing man's utter failure in being able to keep it. (Rom8:3) Gentiles come from a background of no law. (Rom2:14) When Israel demonstrated that sinful man was not able to keep the Law, God sent Jesus to condemn sin in the flesh, and to provide Salvation; thus, changing the requirements for righteousness from the flesh (keeping the Law Le18:5) to the Spirit (Rom8:3-4) through the "accounting" of "righteousness" (Rom4:3) as a "gift of God" (Eph2:8)

So, with that as introduction, comparing the two epistles, hopefully we can keep these things in perspective as we progress through the series.

Election & Sprinkling - (1Peter 1:2)

"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied." (vs2)

So... let's address "replacement theology" first, shall we, and get it out of the way, so it doesn't cloud our understanding of the rest of this series.

Yes, the terms "election/appointed" are used a couple times regarding Gentiles (Ac13:48, 2Pt1:10), and we'll address it in 2Peter when we get there; but predominantly the term "elect" (chosen) is used of Jews. In this passage, remember to whom Peter is writing? The "sojourners of the Dispersion" (vs1) In common vernacular, the "Diaspora" It is such a universally understood term, it is known world-wide as referring to Jews. When historians of the world speak of "Diaspora", they are never -confused- about it, as though it might refer to something called "church". Historians never consider that "Diaspora" might refer to Gentiles, except as the word might generically refer to the "dispersion of -something- (anything) that used to be homogenous". But even in the dictionary, the first two definitions are related to "Israel", in agreement with the OT accounts; that aforementioned "by word".

Thus, in essence, Peter is saying: I'm writing to you, Jews, the elect.

The "church" was never 'scattered' to the winds like stubble (Jer13:24); to suggest that they, then, need to be "gathered" (Mt24:31) When Jesus spoke of gathering the "elect", the (Gentile) Church didn't yet exist. Why would Jeremiah have spoken of the scattering of a non-existent entity several centuries away from his 'then-current' audience? Not to mention the fact that Gentiles, by definition, not being Jews, -are- scattered around the entire world; that's what Gentiles are... -people- who live in all quadrants of earth, who are not Jews, by definition. But he was addressing the "king and queen mother" and "Judah" as they were going into captivity. (Jer13:18-19) It is -ISRAEL- whom God called His "elect". (1Ch16:13, Is45:4) And in case there should be confusion, just to be clear, Israel is also "Jacob"; something Paul never mentions in Romans & Galatians when addressing the "faith of Abraham", except as it relates to -unbelieving- Israel. (Rom11:26) The Diaspora is the "seed" (flesh) of Abraham; the believing Church (both Jew and Gentile) is the "faith" (spirit) of Abraham. There are individuals from within the Diaspora who are also part of Christ's Church; but they are not going to be "gathered"; they (if alive) will be Raptured, along with Gentile Believers. The Diaspora (elect) to be 'gathered' will be those who have been in unbelief. Hopefully this is clear?

Also... if the Church has "replaced" Israel, then why would Peter make a point to write from -both- perspectives? To -both- audiences? That would

be silly! To write to that which 'replaced' Israel, and then in 2Peter to those who also joined "with" (2Pt1:1) that which replaced Israel? If the Church 'replaced' Israel, then -who- is the audience Peter addresses in 2Peter? And what is the whole point of Eph2:11-16 we looked at in the previous lesson?

However, even though Paul observes that "not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b), there are those Jews (the circumcision) who -do- believe "from the heart" and "in the Spirit" (Rom2:28-29) Let's never forget that the Church in Acts started out totally Jewish. Pentecost was an OT 'Jewish' feast/observance, not some demonic charismatic event. (What charismatics do is not the same as what happened in Acts ch2) And Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was Jewish. And if it wasn't for the Jews, we would not have the Scriptures. (Rom3:1-2) No. Babylon of Rome was not commissioned to preserve the Scriptures in some mysterious dark archives; Israel was, as it was read and copied regularly.

One of my neighbors, who has been watching TV's "Kid Nation" told how the kids had 'won' a choice of two prizes: a miniature golf course, or a library of "holy books". The kids opted for the books; and apparently they started reading the Bible and Torah, side-by-side, one following the other, and were amazed that the two were the "same". Exactly right! The Pentateuch (first five books) of the Bible, and the Torah are the same. The entire Bible (except for possibly a couple of the NT Gospels and Acts) was written by Jews; yes... including the Church's New Testament.

Thus, it is -most- appropriate to speak of -believing- Jews in connection with the Church. As Ephesians ch2 says, -both- Jew -and- Gentile are 'united' together in reconciliation out of sin, unto God.

And so, as Peter summarizes to Jews this Believer relationship with God, he uses OT Jewish Tabernacle/Temple imagery: "sprinkling of the blood"

We won't look up all the passages now, but if you check out Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, there are multitudes of mentions of things done with the "blood of bulls and goats" (Heb9:13) Some blood was 'poured' out on the ground next to the altar. Solomon's temple was designed to where there was a drainage system to carry all that blood away. When worship utensils were dedicated, some of the blood would be put in the palm of one hand, the priest's finger would be dipped in blood and it would be sprinkled on them. Annually blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. When the priests were dedicated/commissioned for service, blood was dabbed on their right thumb, right big toe and right ear lobe.

When Jesus died on the cross, and His blood was shed, He was fulfilling all these OT "shadow[s] of things to come" (Col2:16-17, Heb10:1) "And according to the Law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb9:22) But "it is not possible

for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin" (Heb10:4) because they are mere -animals-. Human sin needed to be atoned with perfect human blood, thus Jesus "offered Himself" (Heb9:14) in accordance with those OT rituals. Those final days before His crucifixion He was found, every day, at the temple, just as the Passover lambs were, to verify that they were "without blemish and without spot" (vs19) Jesus, "our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1Co5:7)

And as Paul says, Jesus "became -obedient- unto death, even the death of the cross." (Php2:8b)

Please notice how all Three of the God Head are represented in Salvation. God the Father is the one who elects. It is His 'foreknowledge' that discerns "who are His" (2Tim2:19), and in His foreknowledge He 'elects' and "draws" the sinner. (Jn6:44) The Father is the one who invites "Come now and let us reason together" (Is1:18), and says: "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him." (Lk9:35)

When the sinner has been cleansed, it is the Holy Spirit who makes holy. It is the Holy Spirit who "seals" the Believer with "promise" (Eph1:13) Something that is promised to Eternal Life... it is 'set aside' specifically for that person. It is like a "lay-away" plan. We don't yet have the fulfillment of Eternal Life in Heaven. (vs8) We are yet "flesh and blood" and in physical "corruption". (1Co15:50) We have not yet experienced the "redemption of the body" (Rom8:23) But that is all preserved and set aside with our name on it, with the Holy Spirit's seal guarantying it. Something that is "set aside", by definition, "holy". That specific guarantee, with our name which is in the Book of Life (Php4:3, Rev3:5, 21:27, 22:19), is only -our- name, and nobody else. It is reserved, set aside, holy, for us who believe.

And finally, the One who paid the ultimate price for our redemption: Jesus Christ. He is the one who "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev1:5)

It is often said that the OT was about the "Law", and the NT is about "Grace". But in Jesus Christ grace is applicable to both Jew and Gentile. In the OT, while they were continually offering animals in sacrifice, they visually saw Law. But even within the Law, those animals were a foreshadow of Grace that would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. In the OT they saw Law through Moses, but "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn1:17b) As Jesus also proclaims about Himself,

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (Jn14:6)

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn14:27)

As we continue through this epistle we will see many mentions of trials and sufferings. But they will also be compared to Jesus' sufferings. Thus, if we find ourselves in times of trouble, we can remember how Jesus blazed that trail first, understand His power, and rest in His peace.

Thus: "Grace to you and peace be multiplied"

Living Hope - (1Peter 1:3-5)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," (vs3)

What is the one thing that uniquely distinguishes [C]hristianity from all other religions? (And from here-on out in this series, when we use the term "Christian", we are going to assume we are speaking of Believers in Jesus Christ, not all the pretend/false religions and cults of Babylon, Mormonism, Charismania, Apostasy, etc. This is a -Biblical- study series...TO and FOR Believers) The RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ.

Buddha died. Confucius is dead. So is Mohammed. The Japanese Shinto emperor-gods died in due course with old age. All the Greek and Roman deities were dead and mythologized.

One thing the Romans took note of Paul's preaching was about Jesus: "who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." (Ac25:19) It was also this teaching the unbelieving Jewish temple rulers persecuted the disciples for: "being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Ac4:2)

Jewish rulers demanded Jesus' crucifixion, but Rome did the deed. Then, the Romans considered His resurrection a curiosity, but its proclamation certainly nothing worthy of the death penalty. (Ac26:31) But the Jewish rulers, those appointed to represent God to the people, rejected the Resurrection, and tried to kill those proclaiming it. As Stephen proclaimed: "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they, who received the Law by the command of angels and did not keep it, killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers" (Ac7:52-53) they, then, proceeded to stone Stephen.

If all Jesus did was to -die-, and -remained- dead, how could He possibly fulfill His promises for Eternal Life (Jn10:28) and a place "prepared" in Heaven? (Jn14:3) If Jesus, Himself, could not be alive, then how can He give life to His followers? As we observed from Ecclesiastes... a dead person doesn't do or know anything. (Ec9:5) Jesus didn't say that, after He died, somebody -else- would give Life. But no! He, Himself, was promising to give Eternal Life.

"I give them Eternal Life, and they shall never perish" (Jn10:28)
Furthermore, of His life Jesus made the claim:

"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This precept I have received from My Father." (Jn10:18)

Thus, as we mentioned in the previous lesson, that our Eternal Life is a "promise" and "lay-away plan", our hope is a "living hope". It is not like the religions of the world where their prime leader died, and so people hope for 'something', they know not what, when they die. But we who believe know that Jesus is -alive- at the Father's right hand (3:22); and so, at death, we are going -to- Him, to be -with- Him; to be "home with the Lord" (2Co5:8)

Thus the imagery of immersion: Going down into the water, and being raised back out. Being "buried with Him through immersion into death" and then "raised from the dead...to newness of life" in the "likeness" of His resurrection, that we also might "live with Him" (Rom6:4-10)

Those who "sprinkle" for "baptism" are stuck in the OT. Sprinkling (vs2) is the OT ritual of the "shadow". In the OT, even though they had the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits (Lev23:11, 1Co15:20,23), they didn't understand what "rising from the dead might mean" (Mk9:10) And so, that is what Peter is explaining to them. ("them"? Remember? He is writing to the "sojourners of the Dispersion")

So then, if Jesus is alive, is it not easy to understand how our inheritance is "incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away" (vs4) When something dies, it rots, becomes putrid, and eventually dissolves back into the ground, "dust...to dust". (Gen3:19, Ec3:20) For something to not become corrupted and rotten, it needs to stay alive. Thus, our living hope; and guarantee.

First, let's look at this word "inheritance". What is an inheritance? Does the recipient yet possess it? The inheritance is received at the death of the giver. Since Jesus is again alive, the direct correlary somewhat falls apart; except for the part where the recipient must 'wait' for it. The heir does not receive the inheritance immediately. But the legal document, notarized and sealed, the "will", is the "promise". On earth inheritances consist of property, money, and other things. Our "living hope" is the promise of Eternal Life.

We do not yet possess Eternal Life. Does this sound like false doctrine? Paul tells us that "flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption" (1Co15:50) As long as we are on this earth, we are as yet "flesh and blood". We are yet the "seed" that hasn't died and then sprung into the plant. (1Co15:35-42) But Eternal Life is "reserved in Heaven for you" (vs4) Remember: we spoke of the "lay-away plan".

And this is what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit dwells in us (Rom8:9) through the birth "from above" (Jn3:3,8) The Holy Spirit indwelling is the "seal" of that 'will' of the inheritance. (Eph1:13) The fact that we have the Holy Spirit in us is the "earnest" of the inheritance. (Eph1:14) The earnest is the down-payment, indicating honest full intention of carrying through

with the deal. And how long does the "seal" last? "...until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (Eph1:14) The "redemption of our body" (Rom8:23) Among other things the Spirit does, that is one of the key duties of the Holy Spirit. Guarantying our promised Eternal Life.

Jesus promised, "I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you." (Jn14:18) And this He does through the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised: "I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth..." (Jn15:26)

There are some who teach that a person is saved, and -then-, on some later occasion, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Such a doctrine, by definition, is a false doctrine. If a person is 'waiting' for the Holy Spirit to come, by definition, they do not 'have' the Holy Spirit; and they do not belong to God. (Rom8:9) Logic: If somebody has something, they are not waiting for it, because they have it. By definition.

When a person has the Holy Spirit, they KNOW it. And thereby is their confidence of the inheritance which is "reserved" in Heaven.

And how is the Holy Spirit able to make the guarantee? A lot of people try to separate out the God-head: the Father does this, Jesus does that and the Holy Spirit does this other thing... and they will often 'pray' to the Holy Spirit as though a -lone- entity. But just as Jesus said that He did not do anything apart from the Father (Jn8:29), the "power" behind the Holy Spirit's work is the Father. God (the Father) is "everything in all things" (1Co15:28b) Jesus sits at the Father's "right hand" (Ac2:33) The one who sits to the 'right' of someone is 'less' than the one to whose right they are sitting.

The Father draws the sinner to salvation, having sent His Son to pay sin's penalty, and sending the Holy Spirit to preserve the Believer. But just as God is Christ's "head" (1Co11:3), so God is also the "power" for preservation.

"...through faith". Even this faith is a "gift" from God. (Eph2:8) It all comes from God. He is "everything in all things".

So... 'when' do we receive Salvation? It is "revealed" (vs5) Perhaps another question is in order: 'How' will we know when we have received it?

The key is the word "revealed". Do we know of anything (or anyone) else that is to be 'revealed'?

There is coming a day that is called the "revelation of Jesus Christ". True Believers look for His "appearing" (Tit2:13) The event is called "his appearing", as distinguished from "his kingdom" (2Tim4:1) At His "revealing" is when we become changed to be "like Him" (1Jn3:2) Paul

calls it the "last trumpet" (1Co15:52); Peter calls it the "last time" (vs5) Both, the same event.

And so the event, in revealing Jesus Christ, also reveals His work. When a person wants to know something about another person, that person's identity is often/usually associated with what they -do-: their job, their vocation, their leisure pursuits, etc.

Jesus was sent to earth, by the Father, to -save- the sinner who would repent and receive Him. Believers collectively are called the "Church". The Church, in that day, is "presented" (Eph5:27); as Jesus explains it...

"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God." (Lk12:8)

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Rev3:5)

We will know we have arrived, and have received, when we hear Jesus (the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world Jn1:29) proclaim to the Father and the whole universe of angels, from His Book, our name/s, written in the "Lamb's Book of Life" (Re21:27)

And the voice like a trumpet proclaims to us, "Come up here!" (Rev4:1)

What is our worth, by which we are privy to this grand event? "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells..." (Rom7:18)

It is God's "abundant mercy" (vs3) Another way of saying, "grace". What is grace? The simple definition: "unmerited favor". Contrary to today's prevailing winds of doctrine, the sinner is -worth- 'nothing'. Thus God through Jesus Christ "has begotten" us. What does it mean to "beget"? That is a term related to "birth". Being born. As Jesus said to Nicodemus,

"...unless one is born from Above, he is not able to see the Kingdom of God" (Jn3:3)

This is why all the praise goes to God. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot give birth to ourselves. We cannot make ourselves into righteous beings; we don't have that ability. We cannot go and scoop some specified -amount- of "the spirit" into ourselves. Many people have this notion of the Holy Spirit that "it" is a "commodity" of some sort, or a 'power' or 'force' or 'energy'...some sort of 'substance'...some 'thing' that we grab, plug into, to get 'charged up'.

The Holy Spirit is a 'person' or 'entity'...just like the Father and Son. We do not go someplace and "get" -some- spirit. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us, from the Father. Everything is done -by- God. He takes a vile sinner,

gives birth to a "new creation" (2Co5:17), gives the promise and guarantee of Eternal Life.

All the sinner must do is to "receive" the gift, and we become "children of God" when we "believe in His name" (Jn1:12)

Thus: "Blessed" is God the Father! (vs3a) Praise and glory to Him.
"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and through Your will they exist and were created."
(Rev4:11)

And also: "...Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"
(Rev5:12)

Greatly Rejoice - (1Peter 1:6-9)

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials" (vs6)

"In this..." What is "this"? How is a Bible study conducted? One principle is to keep 'contexts' together properly. What -just- preceded this sentence? The "living hope" that is "reserved in Heaven" and "ready to be revealed". "This" is the contextually understood 'promise' of Eternal Life.

When we think of our future change to incorruption, and the application of Eternal Life, what is our view of it? Judging by how some people live, one would think they were totally unaware of it, because nothing changes, as they go along in life, "Ho hum!" Some, having little aches and pains, whine about the "cross that [they] must bear".

But Peter describes: You GREATLY REJOICE.

What does it mean to rejoice? Does this mean that the song leader sees all those "smiling faces out there"? And if they are not smiling, to cough up some more fast, lively, perky "praise songs", and have people stand, dance and wiggle around provocatively sensuously? Party time?

Sometimes rejoicing happens with tears. By way of personal example: My life has had various experiences, some good, some bad. Times of faithfulness to God, and also times of (in ignorance) apostasy. There was an event some years ago, likely -the- 'lowest' point in my entire life. But through that event, the Lord got my attention regarding the apostasy in which I had been immersed; I confessed and received forgiveness; and started a completely new chapter of existence; as though everything before that event was one person, and everything since, a totally new person. Almost as dramatic an event as Salvation itself. As I was growing on 'this' side of that event, I would have occasions where I was totally inundated with emotions of God's 'love' for me. And I will tell you... I was not running, jumping, shouting it to everybody... but I was in profound uncontrollable tears. Knowing God's love, and tears? Indeed! Was I rejoicing? Indeed! Rejoicing with tears? Indeed!

Paul and Silas had just been beaten and were in the stocks in prison. Hurting and uncomfortable, what were the other prisoners hearing? Crying, moans and whining? No: "praying and singing of hymns" (Ac16:25)

My trial was to bring me back close to God. Other trials are to test the Believer, to see of what sort they are. When adversity comes, will they cut and run? Many have been the testimonies that, when a Believer was being tortured or martyred, unbelievers observing their steadfastness, seeing what their Faith meant to them... turned from their sin and received Christ.

"..that the testing of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found unto praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (vs7)

How is gold (or any precious metal) refined into a pure state? By fire. It is melted, the impurities rise to the top, get scraped away, leaving the pure metal.

What do we want to present to Christ at His coming? Tarnished, dirty, spoiled works? Or pure, spotless, clean lives? Recently I ate at a Chinese buffet where the tables had been wiped, apparently many tables, with - one- cloth. Sticky! I see this at Pizza Hut frequently, where the cloth is used to wipe down several tables and chairs. By the time that cloth is wiping the last table, the cloth has collected various debris, and food remnants, and the last table can end up, perhaps "clean" to the eye... but when one sits down and rests their arms on it...it is 'sticky'. It is not really clean. When Jesus is revealed, do we want Him to find a 'sticky' table? Or a clean one? To have all the tables clean requires repeated rinsing of the rag in water. It requires more -effort-. More time. In these days, "time" translates into "value". Gold that has been thoroughly refined in the fire is more "precious" than the raw ore.

The precious value of something (anything) is directly related to the painstaking time and effort that goes into its end product. A person who has been saved out of a burning building views their own life with greater value than if the fire had not happened. And I suspect they have a much fonder appreciation for the person who saved them, than if they had merely passed each other as they were walking along.

Why should our Faith be so precious to us? How was our Eternal Life obtained? Not only did Jesus save us out of the fire, but He also gave His life while doing it. As Jesus said,

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (Jn15:13-14)

Jesus paid the ultimate price for us. Do we not consider ourselves "indebted" to Him?

Many people who get rescued often seek out the 'hero' that saved them. Often a special bond develops.

Jesus has saved us; but we have not yet 'met' Him. We know we are 'indebted' to Him, and we yearn to see Him, to complete that bond. But there is that unspeakable sense of "love" for him. HE SAVED MY LIFE!!!

"Though now you do not see Him yet, believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (vs8)

If you are using kjv/nkjv, please note the difference in punctuation, which makes all the difference in the world as to its meaning. (Jesus spoke of every jot and tittle) The LITV, MKJV, NASB (even NIV) render it more correctly, like is quoted here. Our faith is not a -blind- faith, as if to say: We don't see Him, but we believe -anyway-. But rather: No, we don't see him -yet-. We are in anticipation of seeing Him, but it hasn't happened yet. But our anticipation of seeing Him is based on faith. Our faith is not in an unseeable God. In Jesus, "He who has seen [Jesus] has seen the Father" (Jn14:9 see also: Heb1:3, Col1:15)

This joy and expectation is all FAITH-BASED. How strong and true is one's faith? How does one know, unless it is tested? Nails, bolts, screws and many other things are tested. What is the tensile strength of an item? They take representative samples and purposely stress them to their limits. At what force does the metal begin to bend, stretch or break? At what torque do the threads strip? And these limits...are they within design specs?

God knows what our limits are.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also provide a way out, that you may be able to bear it." (1Co10:13)

But what if, when the going gets tough, way before God's imposed limit, the person gives up? When trials of the "stony ground" come along, "...when affliction or persecution arises on account of the Word, -IMMEDIATELY- they stumble." (Mk4:17) They are "examined...as to whether [they are] in the faith", and they fail the test. (2Co13:5-6)

But when they "endure to the end" and they realize how God keeps them "safe" (Mt24:13), is there not a profound joy in one's faith.

It suddenly dawns on me, one possible reason God gave women labor pains? Yes, we know it is because of sin. (Gen3) But in our sinful state, how does a woman have that profound bond with her child, except that she goes through excruciating circumstances giving birth?

"A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she gives birth to the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a person has been born into the world." (Jn16:21)

A bond that is difficult (for normal people, nearly impossible) to break.

And yet God says,

"Can a woman forget her nursing infant, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Indeed, they may forget; yet I will not forget you." (Is49:15)

And when a True Believer experiences trials, either in innocence due to persecution, or because of nurturing and discipline due to disobedience, that love and bond with the Lord is of similar proportions. The Lord brought me out of my apostasy and revealed His love to me... How could I possibly go back to that gutter out of which He rescued me?!! People sometimes have chided me for being so harsh and unloving and judgmental, for being too "sticky"; sticking to God's Word. But I have already been where they want me to revert to, and know what it is; and have been lifted out of that "miry clay". I am now standing on the Rock. (Ps40:2) Why would I wish for that slough again? Does a person just rescued out of a burning building, eagerly rush back into the building because: Oh, it was so nice, non-judgmental and loving in there! ??

"..but others rescue with fear, snatching them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." (Ju1:23)

I have not yet seen Jesus face-to-face; but based on what He has brought me though, I know that my faith is not ill-placed. And I know I'm not crazy for looking forward to seeing Him. And I have no intention of reverting to the world's swill pond.

When one considers the mother-child bond, how strong that is; and if we understand that God's care for His own is even greater, does it not make perfect sense Peter's comments that the joy is "inexpressible"; and seeing as how it is God, also "full of glory".

So, what about all these people? They behave as though they don't feel that Salvation was all that great an event? No big deal? They weren't really ALL -THAT- BAD, but 'what-the-hey' (their expression of their attitude, as the world expresses such things), now I'm saved. Yippy! My insurance is paid up. Such a disregard for one's state in sin as a sinner perhaps indicates that the person is not really saved, at all?

Jesus said, "But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Lk7:47b)

If they don't seem to love the Lord, by their actions and lives, perhaps they haven't (even) been forgiven, at all? Many of them, also, tend to be the ones who don't believe in an 'imminent' Rapture. Perhaps that is because, rather than being full of "joy inexpressible" in -anticipation- of meeting Jesus; rather, they are full of dread? Perhaps their false doctrine gives away their pretend "faith"? They do not have Eternal Life "reserved in Heaven" for them? Knowing the Holy Spirit is not residing?

And then, we come to the final point....

"...receiving the outcome of your faith; the salvation of your souls" (vs9)

Let's address one aspect of Reformed theology briefly. This verse knocks one of their doctrines and arguments flat. In proclaiming their doctrines of Election, Limited Atonement and Irresistible Grace, and Sola Fide they often use an argument that: a "dead person cannot repent". They claim that some are predestined for Life, and others are predestined to Death, and the sinner has no choice in the matter. A dead person cannot formulate thoughts nor do anything, including reaching and calling out to God for forgiveness and mercy. Some of them claim that God reaches down and effects "regeneration" (first), and -then- the sinner, thus regenerated, responds in faith. Trouble is, those arguments of theirs are limited to 'spirit'.

When God created man, man was formed out of dust, God breathed into him the "breath of life", and what did man become? A "living soul". (Gen2:7) What is soul? "...the soul of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev17:11) And why cannot we get into Heaven? "..flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption" (1Co15:50) Due to being a sinner, the judgment is, "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezk18:4)

God invites, "Come now and let us REASON together..." (Is1:18) What is reason? A function of the mind. How are we to worship and pray to God? With the "mind". (1Co14:14-15) How does the mind work? Our souls (blood) coursing through the brain. Blood and brain...that's "flesh and blood".

We are saved through the birth "from above" (Jn3:3) of the Holy Spirit (Jn3:8) The "new creation" (2Co5:17) of salvation is 'spirit' based. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit who "reserves" our spot in Heaven (vs2,4) having sealed the guarantee (Eph1:13-14) who also dwells in us. (Rom8:9) But when Salvation is fulfilled, we have met Jesus face to face, and we have been given possession of Eternal Life, -what- is it that is saved? Our "soul".

This is what Jesus died to save. A lot of people don't take note of this. But when Jesus was hanging on the cross, what was it that His shed blood was doing? How did His sacrifice atone before the Father?

When Jesus shed His blood He gave "His soul". And what God saw in His suffering was the "travail of His soul" and was "fulfilled" (Is53:10-11)

Yes, Paul speaks of the "spirit" being "saved". (1Co5:5) But at the resurrection, what is resurrected? Bodies. Paul spends a great deal of time on this in 1Co15. And through the blood, the soul is inextricably linked to the body.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they did so with their bodies. Their physical bodies ate physical fruit. And somebody recently in an e-mail made an interesting correlation to me: Adam and Eve sinned in relationship to a certain 'tree'; and when Jesus paid the penalty, He was hung on a "tree". (Ac5:30, 10:39, Ga3:13) Condemnation came through one tree, and Salvation through another. And so, when Saving Faith has fulfilled its course (in the spirit), when we meet the Lord, the "outcome" (result) of Faith is the "salvation of the soul". Along with it, the new "changed" body of incorruption and immortality. (1Co15:51-54) Not to mention, then, access to the "Tree of Life" (Rev22:14)

So this rejoicing and inexpressible joy can be expressed:

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? ..thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor (and trials) is not in vain in the Lord." (1Co15:55,57-58)

Mystery - (1Peter 1:10-12)

"Of this salvation the prophets have sought out and searched diligently... things which angels desire to look into" (vs10,12)

When Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise of salvation; but the promise was veiled behind symbolism. The "Seed" of the woman. (Gen3:15) An animal was killed, and from Abel's offering, we can see how they were already instructed regarding the "fat" (Gen4:4), as there would later be many mentions when Moses would come along and institute all the temple rituals. (Ex23:18, 29:13, etc) When David cries out, "My Mighty God, My Mighty God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps22:1) did he fully understand what he was prophesying? When Isaiah prophesied about the "tender plant", "man of pain", "He has borne our sickness", "the chastisement for our peace was upon Him" (Is53) did he fully understand what the Holy Spirit was proclaiming through him? When the coming of Messiah was prophesied, "And you, Bethlehem... out of you shall come One leading Who will shepherd My people Israel." (Mic5:2,6) did Micah understand fully?

If all these prophecies (and others) had been so crystal clear, one would think that Jesus would have been received by the ruling elites and scholars. The scholars were not even privy to the giving of His name, but the angel was sent to Mary and Joseph, His name shall be "Jesus" (Mt1:21, Lk1:31) Except for the visit of the wise men, asking after the new "King of the Jews", and Herod's attempt to obliterate Him, those In-the-Know DID NOT KNOW Him.

According to prophecy, and their own self-absorbed political ambitions (Jn11:48), they envisioned a completely different -kind- of Messiah. They were looking for political salvation from Rome. For some reason they didn't see Jesus coming to save the world from sin. After all, they were already (self) righteous, maintaining the "traditions of [their] fathers" (Ga1:14)

Also, the Jews apparently had forgotten the nature of God's call to them, as a "kingdom of priests" (Ex19:6) A priest, by definition, is a go-between between God and man. If they were a "kingdom" of priests, that means God's original desire for them, as a nation, was to be God's representative to the other nations of the world. By definition: being evangelists of God to the Gentiles. They rebelled; and by the time Jesus came they considered Gentiles to be "dogs" (Mt15:26-28) And so God sent Jesus to do what Israel failed to do: to be a "a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles" (Lk2:32, Is42:6)

There were 4000 years of foreshadows of Jesus, even though they didn't understand it. They repeated the animal sacrifices, sabbath after sabbath, year after year. They knew -of- the woman's "Seed"; but did not understand what would actually be happening. Just as we look ahead at

prophecy and see the -pieces- of the end-time 'puzzle', but the puzzle hasn't yet been fully assembled, so they did, too. So they continued offering the sacrifices in faith. But -we- have now become the recipients of their prophecies. They continually looked -ahead-. But we, now, look -back- "in remembrance" (Lk22:19, 1Co11:24-25) It is now past-perfect tense. "It has been finished" (Jn19:30) And actually, seeing as how prophecy spoke of it, in God's convention, Jesus had already been offered "before the foundation of the world" (vs20 see also: Jn17:24)

To have questions amongst -people- I understand. The part that puzzles me is the closing phrase, "things which angels desire to look into" (vs12b) Angels have a perspective of creation and man's history that man, himself, does not yet see. They have direct access to God's throne. From Job's account, we know that there are discussions between God and satan regarding people. When Ahab needed to die in battle, an angel suggests a method to get the job done, by being a "lying spirit" in the mouths of the false prophets. (2Ch18:21) Jesus tells Peter that Satan had asked God's permission to "sift [him] as wheat" (Lk22:31)

So, if angels have all this intimate knowledge and understanding of man, why do they not 'understand' (?) Salvation? Or perhaps, it means something a bit different? Perhaps angels don't have opportunity for salvation when they disobeyed...but wish they did? This is a mystery I don't understand. And I don't know that the passage answers it. And the first couple chapters of Hebrews don't really answer it either. John is chided for bowing to the angel (Rev19:10,22:9); and the angel tells John, "I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this Book" And yet, on the other hand, Paul informs us that we will "judge angels" (1Co6:3) Is that -all- angels? ...or just the fallen ones?

Mysteries.

The whole thing of Jesus Christ and Salvation is a mystery; which Paul reveals in many of his epistles.

But notice the -topic- of the mystery. It is concerning "the grace towards you". (vs10b) In the OT, during worship, their worship songs were of the words:

"Oh, give thanks unto Jehovah, for Hē is good; for His mercy is eternal." (1Ch16:34)

But they were bound in Law. They were continually -doing- rituals towards righteousness. They continually -kept- the Law, perhaps not being fully aware that, behind those rituals was actually God's grace.

"Through Jehovah's kindness (mercy & grace) we are not consumed, because His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." (Lam3:22-23)

David is a prime example of OT grace. For what he did, committing adultery and murder, he should have been executed. But when he confessed, was told: "Jehovah has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2Sa12:13) In a historical context of Law... Grace!

This is the prime difference between Christianity and pagan religions. Remember, we opened the series observing that Jesus was Resurrected. Pagan religions worship -dead- deities. And as for the qualifications to participate in Eternal Life... well... pagan religions cannot offer it. But they seek after -something- through works. Babylon of Rome has penances, masses, rosaries. Other religions do various forms of attempted self-atonement: climbing steps on bloody knees, self-flagellations, doing "random acts of kindness" (Oprah's religion), going to church regularly, etc.

But Salvation in Christ is based on God's -grace-. We failed, we messed up, and we cannot save ourselves; any deeds we might wish to use for self-atonement would never measure up to God's holy standard. It is hopeless. But when we acknowledge our own hopelessness, and receive the gift God offers...we receive SO MUCH MORE than any of the world's religions pretend to offer. They cannot offer Eternal Life. God does, through Jesus Christ.

And since it was fallen angels who devised the religions that man took up, starting at Babel (and before the flood), perhaps that is why they "desire to look into" it? God's grace, provided courtesy of Jesus' shed blood (giving His soul), is so far beyond anything they could devise.

Perhaps: Discussions that have been going on in the Heavens? Perhaps, in time, we will become privy to them...as we then "fully know just as [we are] fully known"? (1Co13:12)

Become Holy - (1Peter 1:13-25)

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also become holy in all conduct, because it is written, Be holy, because I am holy." (vs13-16)

Periodically, over time, we have observed some verse, cluster of verses or brief passage that summarizes, in a nutshell, the sum-total of what is necessary for Godly living and Eternal Life. We have suggested on those occasions that, were it to be the case that no other Scripture was available to us, that those verses would be 'enough', by themselves, to tell us all we needed to know, to be pleasing to God.

For this series in 1&2 Peter, given the previous five lessons, this cluster of verses here, wraps up in a nutshell the Christian life. It is a bridge between the opening lessons, and that which follows: the details. Peter opens with a clear and concise understanding of Salvation as provided by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the anticipation of its receipt when Jesus is revealed.

But... SO WHAT? Salvation has been purchased, and the offer to each sinner is 'on-the-table'. But, then what? Is it enough to Believe and Rejoice... and then forget that anything has changed? Do we go along in life as we always have? Or... if things have changed, on what basis do they change? And how do we have the strength and ability to -be-'different'?

"Therefore" What is "therefore" there for? (yes, a play on words) Whenever a person sees the word "therefore", it indicates a division. Perhaps, a paragraph mark. It is an indication of "this", therefore "that". One topic is addressed, and as a result of the understanding of that topic, it leads to another topic. The one -causes- something else. Or because of one, another is necessary.

During the era in which I was coming into adulthood in the late 60s, early 70s, those who called themselves "christian" loved to get "high" on Jesus. They loved the meetings where songs were danced to, and the expressing of spirituality was the continual repetition of "Praise the Lord", "Thank you Jesus", etc. During those times I would attend Bible "studies". If this chapter in 1Peter was under discussion, they would love to romanticize and get all ooey goeey, warm-n-fuzzy, about the "rejoicing" in Salvation. But if somebody like me would join in the "share" times and try to point people's attention to vs13 and following, what are our 'responsibilities' as Christians: Oh, you're so judgmental!

Well, folks... With this lesson this series becomes "judgmental". From here on out, understanding the 70s mentality in this point, the rest of the series is going to be, pretty much, "judgmental". It is Faith in Action. Faith, proved out through works. (Ja2:14-26, Eph2:10)

Salvation might be free (a gift), but the path to Redemption at the revelation of Jesus Christ is NOT a 'free ride'. And that's what the rest of the book is about. As Paul says, to "cultivate your salvation with fear and trembling" (Php2:12b)

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind" (vs13a)

This is the opening key in the "how to" of Christian living. What does it mean to "gird up the loins"? Think of a society where men wore robes. The writer speaks of running the "race that is set before us" (Heb12:1) In those times, if a man was to run a race, he needed to "hike up" the skirts of his robe, so his legs would not get tangled in the folds of the cloth. Women, if running with a dress on, might hike up their skirts. In ancient cultures, they would gather up the skirts and tuck them (gird) into the waist band (loins), leaving their arms and hands free to work. In our modern cultures we might speak of "rolling up the sleeves" in order to get to work.

So, in other words: Let's GET TO WORK.

How? What is it that guides and directs our activity? The MIND. Even in something spiritual like worship, Paul exhorts the use of the "mind". (1Co14:14-15) We are exhorted to be of "sound mind" (Rom12:3, 2Tim1:7, Tit2:12) as Peter also does later in this epistle (4:7) Again: Peter and Paul agree.

Thus, if it is the MIND that guides us, we need to keep a "clear head". Peter says to "be sober". Paul says, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery" (Eph5:18) Proverbs speaks much against drunkenness. Satan comes along with "arguments" (2Co10:5) and "profane and empty babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1Tim6:20) If we are to "avoid" such nonsense, how can we sort through it all if our heads are fuzzy and cluttered up with booze and drugs? We cannot.

With the clear mind, what is the first order of business? "...rest your hope fully upon the grace" which was described in the opening verses. It is one thing to rejoice in it, even with dancing and smiles. But when the trials come, of which Peter speaks often in the epistle, what is it that gets us through to the other side? The dancing and smiles, or to "rest..fully" on the promised hope? When an athlete prepares for the "race that is set before us", those who win are those who prepare in all seriousness. They have trained. And so they rely on that inner strength, and when the going gets tough, they "dig deep" for the perseverance. When the Christian digs deep, what do we find? The Holy Spirit. Remember? The Holy Spirit is our

guarantee, who dwells in us. The Christian life might be of the Spirit, but our own personal access is through the (clear) Mind. We do not "empty our minds" and become "spirit-filled" (with demons) (Mt12:44-45) We REST FULLY through the Holy Spirit, upon the grace that is ours when Christ appears. Like Paul speaks of:

"forgetting those things which are behind and stretching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are complete, be of this -MIND-" (Php3:13-15)

The Christian life is "goal" oriented. Yes, it is "purpose driven" (to borrow some terms from today's apostasy, but use them Scripturally) It is our purpose to "stretch" (in the race) towards the goal. When Jesus is revealed, we receive the "upward call"... "Come up here!" (Rev4:1)

Peter is going to speak of things that we -do-. But before we can start doing new things, we must first discard the old.

"as obedient children" (vs14a)

Those who used to whine and complain about being "judgmental" did not like these kinds of passages, because part of that whole culture was one of rebelling against parents. Of NOT -obeying-. They would riot, stage sit-ins, and other protests...against authority. Against -the- 'establishment'. Nobody can tell me what to do! I'll show you: I'll do anything I want. Thus, their disobedience of authority also extended to God. Some of those from those days, in more recent years are the ones who swooningly, in hushed pious tones utter, "Graaaeeeesss". We don't have to follow any rules to be a Christian ... Graaaeeeesss. Graaaeeeesss. Graaaeeeesss.

But there -are- rules. A ruler is something by which measurements are taken. Does something measure up? How do we make something measure up? We must follow the rules. In sports, the athlete must "compete lawfully" (2Tim2:5) otherwise they become "disqualified".

"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1Co9:27)

Where do we begin this process?

"..not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance" (vs14b)

Sorry to be stuck back in the 70s. That's my history. Many of you came through the same period, so you remember what I'm talking about. But the principles are still true today. They would chant the mantra, "Do your own thing, man!" However, if a Christian decided to take a path 'different' from theirs, the Christian's "own thing" (to follow God) was not acceptable. It was OK to do your "own thing" as long as that "thing" was the -same- as -

their- "own thing". The generation was doing their "own thing"...but everybody was expected to -conform- to the -same- "thing". Back then it was acid rock, drugs and free sex. Today it is punk rock and gangsta rap, drugs and free sex. I guess things haven't changed much have they. Except that, where the youth then, when engaged in these activities were in rebellion against parents, those youth are today's parents and grandparents, and in fact -encourage- their children to behave in the same debauchery...giving out free condoms in school, and passing laws allowing young girls to get abortions without their parents' knowledge...essentially -encouraging- immoral promiscuity.

But the Christian is to NOT be like that! Those are the "former" lusts. The former life. But as Christians, "all things have become new" (2Co5:17) Perhaps back then we didn't know any better. We were in ignorance. But that was the WHOLE POINT of God's grace...

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked (Grace), but now commands all men everywhere to repent," (Ac17:30)

If we have -repented- of (and by definition -repudiated-) the past in sin, why would we stay in it? If we stay in it, our "repentance" was false. It was not a "circumcision...of the heart". (Rom2:29)(to Jews)

Thus the cuttingly descriptive terminology. Circumcision CUTS AWAY, and it is thrown away. The very definition of "holy".

"..but as He who called you is holy, you also become holy in all conduct" (vs15)

Notice some things that "holy" is NOT. Holiness is NOT a feeling, emotions, or mesmerization over something spectacularly awesome, over which one swoons and sighs. Holiness is -action- and -position- (location). Peter equates holiness with "conduct". See what I said? "judgmental" Where the sinner does certain things, the Christian does NOT DO those things, but does OTHER things. Where the sinner goes to hell-hole dens of iniquity, the Believer does NOT GO to those places to participate in iniquity. The Believer "purposes" to "not defile himself" (Dan1:8, Lev18:24, etc) with the "works of darkness" of the world. (Eph5:11) Why? Because those things are contrary to God's goodness and righteousness. God is separated from those things... Thus, why would God's child even want to be associated with them! We are to be -like- our Father in Heaven.

Yes. Judgmental. A day of judgment is coming... even for the Believer. The "judgment seat of Christ" (Rom14:10, 2Co5:10) And, God is an impartial judge. He might have extended His grace to save us; but if we continue willfully in sin, His judgment is "without partiality" (vs17) Thus, while we may look forward to our redemption, the outcome of our faith, with rejoicing; we need to also keep in mind a fearful expectation of the accounting of our lives before Him.

"So then each of us shall give account concerning himself to God"
(Rom14:12)

Why should our lives matter? Many who call themselves "christian" think it doesn't matter. After all: God accepts us "just as we are" ... Graaaaaees!!

NO HE DOES NOT!

And furthermore....what sort of slap in the face is that towards Jesus? Jesus 'redeemed' us with His blood. The sacrifice required a "lamb without blemish and without spot" (vs19) If His sacrifice required perfection, why would we purposely trample His work into the mud?!

The reason we live holy lives is -because- Jesus died to redeem us. What we addressed in the opening five lessons, he repeats in vs18-23. Please read it, even though we won't cover it again now. These studies are intended to be read with your Bible (open) next to your computer, so you can follow the comments and the passage, side-by-side. Hopefully you will do that.

If we were sinners, Jesus died to -deliver- us -from- sin; not to stay in it. Our NOT STAYING IN IT is the definition of HOLY. God is Holy. We are to, now that we are saved, -become- holy. We -were- not holy when we were sinners. But now that we are saved, we -become- holy. Why? Because Jesus died and rose again, to provide us Eternal Life.

The Holy Spirit "sealed" us into holiness spiritually. (Eph1:13) That was done to/for us, "not of ourselves..not of works". That was the "gift". And now, because of the subsequent "renewing of our minds" (Rom12:2), our "behavior" (vs17) also becomes holy as we gird up the loins of our mind, knowing God's Word that is in our 'mouth and in our heart that we may DO it' (De30:14)

Now... just in case the attraction of the world is strong, remember: In our fleshly state we are like grass. There is no eternal value to that which would seek to allure.

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away" (vs24)

This life of flesh and blood is fleeting. We may live an entire generational lifetime on earth. We may think it is a "long time" as we grow old. But in reality, it is fleeting. Plants grow, they die, and rot. So, too, with flesh and blood. And then where are all those worldly "good times" that we were lusting after?

"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (Ja4:14b)

But Jesus died to pay our sin's penalty. And then rose again to assure us newness of life, Eternal Life. Remember: We don't see that Eternal Life - yet-, but we anticipate it. Thus, we must never lose sight of that which we don't yet see. Contradiction in terms?

"...while we do not contemplate the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2Co4:18)

"..the Word of the Lord endures forever." (vs25a)

That's the whole point. And...

"..this is the Word which by the gospel was preached to you" (vs25b)

Milk of the Word - (1Peter 2:1-8)

"...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." (vs2-3)

So, if we are to live holy lives, what is the foundation for the new life? What is the energy? Yes, we may "dig deep" and find the Holy Spirit residing, but is "the Spirit" -enough-? If a runner in the race hasn't loaded up with "carbs" ahead of the race, digging deep isn't going to matter much. If there hasn't been an intake of food, the runner might dig deep, but the body is simply going to "poop out". A car running out of fuel, it doesn't matter how big the engine is, it is going to 'die' in the middle of the race track.

What is the Christian's food?

"Your Words were found, and I ate them; and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;" (Jer15:16) "I have treasured the Words of His mouth more than my prescribed food." (Job23:12b)

But when a person is first born what form do they comprise? People are born as babies. And what do babies eat? Well, they don't. They drink milk. They are not yet capable of eating solid food. Their digestive systems have not yet developed sufficiently.

So... baby gets hungry and starts squalling, whimpering or crying. As its mouth is brought to the source of the milk, it begins to suckle, and those sounds of complaint turn into contented sounds of cooing and satisfied grunts. In order not to potentially offend anybody with this next bit, lets talk about animals. A kitten is next to its particularly furry mother, the little paws do some kneading, which also parts the excessive fur away, and it is able to find what it's looking for.

In order to access the milk, the encumbrances must be peeled away. Just as fur or clothing is "laid aside" for babies; in the Christian life the barriers of malice, deceit, hypocrisy and everything 'evil' must be removed. (vs1) Sin resulted in humanity wearing clothes. Even though it is a societal necessity, clothing in a very real sense, is a reminder and symbol of sin. In order for baby to get food, that symbol of sin must be taken away.

It is the same thing with God's Word. If a person is harboring sin, intimate fellowship with God, through the Word, is not possible. How does the darkness of an evil heart possibly receive the Light of God's Word? The two don't mix. It's impossible to nurse on milk when obstructions are in the way.

Also, notice Peter speaks of the "pure Word" (vs2)

I really get disgusted with the 'authorities' who pontificate from the ivory towers of government what is "good for us" in terms of medicine and health practices. Milk is not good for us; then suddenly a "new study" shows that milk -is- good for us. People shouldn't drink wine; a "study" - now- shows that red wine is good for the heart. Take all these X, Y, Z drugs for A, B, C ailments; oh wait! Take them all off the shelves! Some people have been dying from side effects. As this is being written... People should watch their weight because obesity has so many countless harmful effects. Wait! Somebody has just come out with a study suggesting that a little extra weight can actually have some beneficial effects. So, which is it???

When I was a youngster I seem to recall that no American mom (as I was growing up in Japan) ever breast-fed their babies. The 'gods' of medicine proclaimed that mamma's milk was "bad" for baby. (Although, it was impossible in our rural area to miss the fact that Japanese mothers fed their babies the way God designed it) Now, in recent years... Ooooh, the benefits of breast feeding baby. It will reduce the chances of allergies, will increase heart health, strengthen the overall immune system, and all sorts of other wonderful benefits.

Did mamma's milk suddenly -change- from being "bad" to "good"? All those years had God created a flawed feeding system for baby?

But what do we see in christendom? Rather than feeding on the "pure milk of [God's] Word", the young in the Lord are fed "formula" and other concoctions. Instead of the -pure- Word, they are fed the -writings- of this famous person, that "church father", this other notable scholar, the consensus of "church history", "edicts" and "diets" (e.g. "Diet of Worms" Oh, how yummily appropriate!!! Although I don't suppose Martin Luther appreciated the pun!) To them the Bible must agree with "creeds", otherwise it is changed. To be a preacher worth his salt, he must have countless books of commentary on his library shelves. And if questioned, must know how to properly regurgitate the swill of Nimrod's Babylonish traditional barf food.

When a person becomes a 'scholar', they become filled with man's wisdom. But man's wisdom is "foolishness with God" (1Co3:19) But when a person feeds on God's "pure" Word, we find that its "taste" is "good" (vs3)

"The Words of Jehovah are pure Words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." (Ps12:6)

"Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." (Pr30:5)

And what results from feeding? Growth. And with growth? Strength.

While running the race and 'digging deep', yes, we found the Holy Spirit who resides. But 'how' did we have the strength to even 'dig'? God's Word.

"...man does not live by bread alone; but man lives by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of Jehovah" (De8:3, Mt4:4)

You see... this is the #1 flaw of charismania. They lay aside God's Word in favor of "spirit". Like that meeting I read about some years ago, where a congregation had been "worshiping", becoming 'high in the spirit'...whereupon the pastor abdicated his God-given duty to "preach the Word" (2Ti4:2), and announced words something like: We won't have the Word tonight, we've had the spirit. But without the Word, how do they know -which- spirit they are of? We are told to "test the spirits" and to "not believe every spirit". Not all spirits are from God. (1Jn4:1) What is the ruler against which we measure to ascertain where any spirit (of the moment) is from? God's Word. How do we know if that momentary spirit is proclaiming an "other gospel" (which is accursed)(Ga1:8-9), unless we have the -standard- that HAS BEEN PREACHED and HAS BEEN RECEIVED? How do we know what has already been given "once for all"? (Ju1:3) It's been recorded. It has been written down. Thus, when a strange spirit starts spewing forth some strange things, how does God's child recognize immediately whether that utterance is from God's Holy Spirit, or not? By -knowing- God's Word. How does one know God's Word? By feeding.

How does a young man know how to stay away from evil and keep a "cleansed" way? "By taking heed according to Your Word" (Ps119:9)

So... it starts out with milk; and then with maturity, growth and strength, the building progresses to stones. (vs4-5) Something that is solid and is not easily moved.

Indeed, the apostasy likes to be "spirit-filled", which wafts around in the breeze; and they get tossed around, to and fro, by "every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph4:14)

But if we are in Christ, Jesus is the "living stone". He is the Foundation. (1Co3:11) Sinful man rejected Him, but He was "chosen by God" (vs4) And as we are Christ's "Church"... well, we often say that the Church of Jesus Christ is not that 'building', with the sign out front, and padded pews inside. But in fact, the Church -is- a Building. A building of "living stones" that is being built up "a spiritual house" (vs5)

And here we have another Jewish picture. A "holy priesthood" and "spiritual sacrifices". In the OT when animals were offered up, they did so, typically, on stones. Thus, if the Believer -is- a "living stone" with which the Church is being built, the Believer is two things: both the building and the altar.

The building was the "house" representing God's presence, where God placed His name, to dwell. (1Ki8:27, De12:5,11, 1Ki5:5) Thus, the Believer experiences the -glory- of God's indwelling presence through the Holy Spirit. (Rom8:9)

But also, the stone was the "altar". (Ex20:25) If we experience God's glory, we also must be a living sacrifice...

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom12:1)

Now... something built of stone can be both a shelter as well as an obstacle. It can be a support or an obstruction. It can be a place of refuge or an object for shame. And these perspectives are based on either Faith or Disobedience.

To the one placing their Faith and Trust in Jesus Christ, the "chief cornerstone" (vs6), the building is precious. God "elected" Israel, and those who were obedient received blessing. They have no cause for shame.

But the same rock that supports the person walking in the light (next lesson vs9), if a person is in darkness they cannot see the stone, and they stumble.

When Israel was in rebellion God sent Jeremiah to be a "wall of bronze" (Jer15:20) Yes: different materials (different passage and events) but the same concept. A wall against which the person in darkness butts up against, and since they are in darkness, they cannot see to get up 'on' it for support, or 'in' it for shelter.

Such a person "stumbles". Why? Being disobedient "to the Word" (vs8)

The apostasy has been throwing away God's Word for ages. If they couldn't explain it away with consensus of the dialectic, they changed the words themselves with perverted translations. They eventually wrote songs, "Walls come down, walls come down" That is... "walls" of "doctrine". That's what the Bible is: Doctrine. Let's not have the Bible, we'll have spirit.

But what is the standard against which obedience or disobedience is gauged? The Bible. The Holy Scriptures (Rom1:2, 2Tim3:15); God's Word. There is a saying, "When all else fails, read the instructions" Thus, if those in darkness refuse to READ THE INSTRUCTIONS, what is the outcome? Failure. Disobedience. And the payment for disobedience is death. That Stone that is the Church's foundation; instead to the unbeliever:

"...on whomever it falls, it will crush him to pieces." (Mt21:44)

People of God - (1Peter 2:9-12)

"But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His possession, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who did not have mercy but now have mercy." (vs9-10)

While gentile preachers proclaim these words to gentile Believers as though belonging totally to them, and those who believe in "kingdom theology" use this passage to support their dogmas, and while it is certainly true that there are parallels for gentile Believers; the terminology here is uniquely and distinctly -JEWISH-. Some will even preach from the kjv about Christians being a "peculiar people"...that's why the world thinks we are "strange" or "odd"...or they will teach various forms of legalism IN ORDER THAT their followers might be purposely (but unnecessarily) weird.

Now, while the dictionary does define "peculiar" as "unusual, eccentric, odd", the further definitions as might have been the case in older usage English give us, "distinct from all others, belonging distinctively or primarily to one person". It's a word that also applies to a case where, say, a particular species of animal is found only in one limited area of the globe, it would be said that the species is "peculiar to that area"

So, let us understand the "Jewishness" of this passage.

An "elect race". Race is a word related to genetics. Seed. God called out Abraham from Ur, and as the family grew, distinct from the surrounding peoples, they became known as "Hebrews". (Gen14:13, 39:14,17, 40:15, Ex1:16, etc) God's promises to Abraham were to him and his "seed". (Gen12:7, 13:15-16, 15:5, etc) There are some who object to the term "race" to differentiate the various peoples of the world, because all of humanity is one race: if blood types are matched up properly, the blood from one person can be transfused into another from -anywhere- on earth; it matters not whether white, black, yellow, red, or purple with pink polkadots; tall, short, fat or skinny. Thus Paul spoke of "one blood" (Ac17:26) from which all the nations spring.

But the term "race" has also become, through common use, to be understood to indicate the global divisions as families spread out and became national and regional groups. Those nation groups from common ancestry way back there after Noah's flood also became known as "races". When there are squabbles between whites and blacks, it is called racism. When there were squabbles between Japanese, Koreans or Chinese, even though they are all "oriental" and of generically similar features and skin tones (although they, amongst themselves, can tell the differences between each other), it was also racism.

Thus, keeping in mind that Peter is writing to the Diaspora, the "elect race" he is addressing is the (physical) "seed" of Abraham. Israel. Jews. God elected Abraham and his seed to be a nation in the 'land' (Ge12:7, 15:7, etc) that would follow and be obedient to God.

Thus, the "royal priesthood". When Israel came out of Egypt, He commissioned them, "And you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex19:6a)

What is a priest? Looking up the word in a dictionary or lexicon doesn't do much for us. They basically say a priest: is a priest: is a priest. Defining the word by itself. Thus, we must understand from Biblical examples, based on what the priests did.

The priest was a go-between between sinful man and the righteous holy God. The priest gave God's commands to man. (Heb7:11) And he would atone for man's sin before God. (Heb9:7,25) He would adjudicate between people (De17:9) and as such they were also "rulers" of the people. (Ac23:5) They were God's servants. (Ex28:1)

God placed Israel at the crossroads of the then-known-world. (The Americas hadn't yet been "discovered" by those who had not migrated over after the Flood) Trade and traffic between Europe, Asia and Africa passed through the region where God placed Israel. As a national priesthood, Israel was supposed to proclaim "light to the Gentiles" But they failed, nationally. Instead of spreading knowledge of God to the world, they took on all the world's idols. But Jesus came through Israel, and is proclaimed to the world (Lk2:32, Ac13:47, 26:23); and fulfilled God's promise to Abraham, "and in you and in your Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen12:3, 28:14) And any Believers in Christ, from Israel, are obeying the command. When the "world" was turned "upside down", those were Jewish apostles and missionaries who did so. (Ac17:6)

Believing Jews represent God's original intent for the nation of Israel as a "holy nation". Holy, meaning to be distinct. God's -sole- possession. Yes, if a person is understanding the older English: "peculiarly" God's, as distinct from the world. In that case the kjv word "peculiar" would be another way of saying "holy". Set apart...unto God.

When Israel was in Egypt, they were as nothing...they were slaves. God delivered them out of Egypt at Passover, but "most" of them rebelled and were displeasing to God (1Co10:5) and were judged "because of unbelief" (Heb3:19)

Now, in Christ, those who believe are once again "the people of God" (vs10) What? Through the Law? No. They "now have mercy". Grace.

Is Faith in Christ a dreaded thing? Something to be ashamed of? Something to hide in the closet, lest somebody know?

"...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (vs9b)

God is -LIGHT- and "in Him is no darkness at all" (1Jn1:5)

So, let's see here: Salvation is a wonderful thing, to proclaim God's praises. His light is marvelous. It is all -GOOD-!

So why is it, then, that so many of those calling themselves "Christian" adapt the world's ways, allegedly for the purpose of "winning" them? Is it that, in their place as God's holy unique possession they are unwilling to be peculiarly distinct? The world notices that they are different, and pokes fun? After all, according to the schoolground mentality, the odd one out is to be laughed at and ridiculed. They might repeat the mantra "Do your own thing" ...but only if it is not pure, righteous and holy.

Peter begs...

"I beg you as foreigners and sojourners, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against your soul" (vs11)

The Believer has God's holiness, God's seal, God's light. Why? oh Why? would we wish to be contaminated with the world's filth? Is it -that- much fun to stumble around in the darkness, instead of enjoying the Light?

It would be like having a stop sign, or pole mounted traffic light. These objects are for the purpose of standing out in plain view to give direction to drivers. That is their function. Most everything else around them is different... plants, buildings, fences, etc. To have the fleshly lusts would be like allowing bushes and trees to overgrow, surrounding the signs, obstructing them from view. Drivers coming along, not seeing anything there, continue on, and two come at the same time, collide, and the people die. Peter is saying to cut away the overgrowth. Get those signs back out in plain view, so they can serve the purpose for which they are there.

In the case of the Believer, it is to display God's Righteousness to the world. A person cannot do that if they are grubbing around in the world's lusts. Just as a person cannot feed on God's Pure Word with sin in the way (vs1), we also cannot proclaim His praises if we are covered in the mud of the world.

How does this translate into specific behavior? After all, Peter earlier said to "behave yourselves" (1:17) Our holiness and the praises of God are seen by the world through our behavior. They cannot see our hearts or thoughts; but they can see what we do and say.

"...having your behavior honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (vs12)

What is honorable behavior? Do not most people know? What are good works? Do not all people have a "conscience" (Rom2:15) Yes, some consciences are "seared" through repeated disobedience and rebellion. (1Ti4:2) But if you have a room full of guys engaged in course talk and conversations, and some high official comes along, or a supervisor commands to "Clean it up guys", do they not immediately know proper behavior? People know they should not steal; otherwise, when they have stolen, and are asked if they stole, why do they lie, saying they have not stolen, if stealing is OK? Thus, at the least, we should behave in universally known 'goodness'.

However, we also know that righteous people are falsely accused, mainly because they are God's 'possession', and the world hates God and anything belonging to God; and the righteous person's goodness brings to light their own evil. And this has certainly also been true of Jews, particularly the Diaspora. Somebody spreads false rumors that Jews drink the blood of children, or this or that; and pretty soon the rumor becomes "fact" as far as the population is concerned, and persecution ensues.

Believers should live lives that are at least as "good" as the world's standards. Then, when an accusation is made, and investigation conducted, nothing will be found; like in the story of Daniel before he was thrown to the lions. (Dan6:3-5) There was nothing they could find by which to accuse him, except as they then contrived a law which they knew Daniel would disobey, because it involved his relationship with God.

When Daniel's three friends, and himself were tried, by fire (Dan3) and lions (Dan6), what was the outcome when they were exonerated? In both cases the king/s gave due credit to God. (Dan3:28-29, 6:26-27) God was glorified.

There might be persecution, but if the accusations are false, and there is eventually any shred of justice, the Believer who has "behaved" himself will see God glorified.

These are the guiding principles and foundation. In the next lesson, and following, we will see some specific cases with specific guidelines in several key areas of behavior. Some which the world recognizes, and some which the world might not be attuned to; but which the Believer, adhering to the Higher calling, should observe in obedience to God.

Ordinances of Man - (1Peter 2:13-17)

"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man because of the Lord; whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good." (vs13-14)

Did not Israel have their own laws? Was not Israel distinct and different from the other nations? Did not their laws come directly from God, Himself? Hammurabi had given laws several centuries before Moses and the Exodus. They were not "good enough"? Israel was God's distinct people, with His distinct laws. Some laws were moral in nature. But others Hammurabi could not possibly have devised, because they dealt specifically, prophetically with the 'future' coming of Jesus to save sinful mankind.

So...what is this that Peter is saying? If God's Law is special and holy, why the exhortation to obey man's laws? Well, here we have another case where Peter and Paul agree; and they, in turn, agree with Jesus' teaching. Jesus taught:

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mk12:17)

Paul preached to the gentiles...

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell everywhere on the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings," (Ac17:26)

And also...

"Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are ordained by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will receive judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." (Rom13:1-4)

Notice Peter says to obey the "ordinances". What are ordinances? When our local city government passes laws, they are call "ordinances". The rest of the state may differ, but in Spokane (where I live), people on bicycles, skateboards, roller blades, pocket scooters, etc must wear helmets. Fireworks are illegal within city limits. If a business posts a "No Loitering" sign, the sign might include a "City Ordinance" number. If a "No

Trespassing" sign is posted, there might be an included Sheriff's dept "ordinance" number. Things such as that. At state and national levels there are other ordinances such as speed limits, smoking bans, and many other such things. In our nation they require that we pay income tax, even though the constitutional ammendment was never officially, legally ratified...thus, that whole practice is totally unconstitutional and illegal. And yet the "governors" require it, and punish those who don't comply.

Peter exhorts to "submit" to the ordinances that are enforced. Paul continues by exhorting to "pay taxes" to whom taxes are due. (Rom13:6-7) A Believer might think to rebel: I don't want to give my money to government, but to God. Well...do you drive on the public roads? What pays to build those roads? Tax money. If you have an emergency, do you hope that somebody from "911" will come and help you? Who pays for those services? The governmentally collected tax monies. You enjoy living in a secure nation, free from warfare? What pays for the military? Taxes.

There was a particular tax that apparently Jesus and Peter shouldn't have needed to pay. But what did Jesus tell Peter? To go catch a fish, take the money out of its mouth and pay. For what reason? "...that we not offend them.." (Mt17:27) As Paul says, "giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry not be blamed" (2Co6:3 kjv) "offense" or "cause of stumbling"

We might be tempted to reason: I follow a "Higher Calling", so why should I obey the world's rules? True... in Christ we may have certain freedoms, but we are not to "use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh" (Ga5:13) Our behavior, even though we may have personal liberties, should not be a cause of stumbling for others. (Ro14:20, 1Co8:13) We are here to proclaim the glorious Light of God. People won't see that Light if they are stumbling because of our deeds.

We should never forget that, as Believers, we are citizens of Heaven. (Php3:20) We are on this earth as "foreigners and sojourners" (vs11) When somebody travels to a foreign country, they do not go with the idea of ignoring and trampling that country's laws. If they do, they get imprisoned. And as some American's have found, who have done this, many other countries do not afford prisoner 'rights' like America does. Sometimes they have been known to languish indefinitely without due process; in accordance with 'that' country's typical practice.

If a Believer gets it into their head that they are somehow "above the law" - because- they are a Christian; they should never confuse the terms "prosecution" and "persecution". If they break the law, they are not suffering "persecution". There's some outfits where the government goes after them, who have it in their minds that God wants them to "take over the government" and make it "Christian"; and when government agents come around, confiscating property or this or that, they wring their hands in dismay at the way the government is "persecuting" them. Where, if they "behaved themselves" and stayed within the ordinances, the government

would leave them alone. After all... one of the purposes of government is to guard against, and 'prosecute' perceived "threats" to its authority.

Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (Jn18:36) And what was Pilate's verdict upon Jesus? "I find no fault in Him at all" (vs38)

So now... from a Jewish perspective, the Diaspora finds itself in a country that says it is illegal to circumcise. (I don't know if there is such a country; but we are contriving an example to understand a Scriptural principle. Bans on other rituals have been placed on Jews throughout history.) Circumcision is Judaism's #1 ritual, begun with Abraham. To many, circumcision -is- what it means to -be- "Jewish". But the 'ordinance of man' says "No". What to do?

For the Christian Jew the -physical- ritual no longer needs to take precedence. It is not the physical, but the heart. When Israel was in rebellion God chides them, "I hate, I despise your feast days; and I will not savor your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not be pleased; nor will I regard the peace offerings of your fat animals." (Am5:21-22)

"What good to Me are your many sacrifices, says Jehovah? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of well-fed cattle; nor do I delight in the blood of bulls, of lambs, or he goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more vain sacrifices; its incense is an abomination to Me. I cannot endure the new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies, and the wicked festivals. My soul hates your new moons and your appointed feasts. They are a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them." (Is1:11-14)

Today's Judaism seems often to be of the mind that God is not pleased with them because they are not taking a proper stand (against the Arabs) and going ahead to observe physical rituals. But God was never nearly so concerned with Israel's ritual, as He was their heart...

"Wash yourselves, purify yourselves. Put away the evil of your doings from My eyes; stop doing evil. Learn to do good, seek justice..." (Is1:16-17)

"For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteousness of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the naturally uncircumcised, if he fulfills the Law, judge you who, though having the writings and circumcision, are a transgressor of the Law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one

inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:24-29)

In Jesus Christ the Jewish Christian is...

"...circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ," (Col2:11)

If anybody should have been concerned about ritual, it would have been the pharisee, Paul. But he says...

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths," (Col2:16)

When in a pagan setting, there might be occasions, in certain cultures, where the Believer has no choices. When Naaman was healed, and also became a believer in Jehovah, he knew he was returning to his pagan master/king...

"Yet in this thing may Jehovah pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to bow down there, and he supports himself on my hand, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down in the house of Rimmon, may Jehovah please pardon your servant in this thing. And [Elisha] said to him, Go in peace." (2Ki5:18-19a)

Just as another example, since we have on other occasions addressed the matter of marriage and "weddings": I have firmly concluded that a "church wedding", going up the steps of the altar, and having a priest or pastor "pronounce words" over the couple, is rooted in paganism. It is something a Christian couple should NOT do. Without revisiting the specific references now, in God's eyes, the marriage occurs when there is physical consummation. No piece of paper is necessary to make the marriage "legitimate". Children from that union are NOT "illegitimate"

But not all people are convinced of this. They feel that some ritual is necessary to make the couple "honest". As far as many governments are concerned, today's habits of "living together" is not a crime. In some countries there may be governmental ordinances. There might be cases where the couple, to appease whatever ordinances or offenses of family and friends, will choose to go to their local courthouse and register their union in whatever 'legal' ways that are appropriate, so she can also take on his name... WITHOUT having to submit to Godless pagan fertility religious rituals and idolatry. Local governments typically have ordinances, that are not connected in any way to Babylon of Rome. A case where submitting to the "ordinance of man" would be better than a so-called "church wedding".

"Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."
(vs17)

Servants to Masters - (1Peter 2:18-25)

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and fair, but also to the perverse." (vs18)

This was written to a different culture than most of you, likely, who are reading this. Today there still are countries that have slavery; but most have changed, and it is a Boss/Employee sort of relationship. Back when Peter wrote this a fair share of people who worked did so as slaves. They were purchased on the market, and became the property of the master. In the Law through Moses God even addresses the topic how slaves are to be treated, etc. (Ex21:7, Le25:42,44,46, etc,etc)

Thus, the act of acquiring slaves, or of being a slave (in such a culture), was not necessarily a "sin". Back in ancient times it was more of an 'economic' necessity. The slave might be the master's property, but then also, the master provided food, clothing and shelter. The master would even match up males and females to be married to each other.

However, God also made differences for Israel. If you check out the topic (which we won't now) Israel was not to enslave fellow-Israelites. They could buy and sell slaves of other nationalities. However, if an Israelite became in debt, and could not pay, he might go into servitude to pay the debt, but he was not to be treated as a "slave" but as a "hired servant"; with dignity. And then, you who have read in the OT, you will remember the whole thing about the 7-year sabbaths and 50-year Jubilees where those, thus indebted, were sent out free, debt paid, to return to their own lands. (Lev25)

In some nations there are caste systems. More and more these are going the same way as slavery. Is the caste system "sin"? God's grace and Salvation are not related to slave or free, or one's station in life.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Ga3:28, Col3:11)

I've heard that in some church meetings involving military personnel, the speaker (especially if that speaker has a military rank) might say something like, "There is no rank here". In other words, when walking into the building (mentally) leave the stripes outside; because in God's eyes all are of equal rank to each other. But then, when back on duty, observe the proper rank protocols of military duty.

Paul even says...

"Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you are able to be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord

while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God however he was called." (1Co7:21-24)

Yes, freedom is a good thing, to be desired. But if a Believer is in human bondage with no foreseeable way out, don't worry about it. In whatever "state" a person finds themselves, "be content" (Php4:11) Paul is specifically talking about finances there, but when the next verse speaks of being "abased", is that not the condition created by slavery; and slavery might have been caused by financial adversity. Thus, "be content" with the Lord while in slavery.

But what about if the master is a nasty mean ol' buzzard? He is snarly, rude, and dishonest. Peter even says "perverse". That word can include a whole host of offenses. Female slaves were often also the play-things of their masters. Even today, when western females get abducted and sold to Saudi (or other Arab) masters, that is often their fate; as part of the master's harem. What does the Believer do?

There are two scenarios as given in Scriptural examples (perhaps three?), and their outcomes:

When Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were captives in Babylon, part of their training included a different diet than what God had commanded Israel. (Dan1) They Negotiated. They voiced their concerns, and offered to be tested, with the promise that, if they didn't pass the test, they would submit to the diet from the king's table. Their trust in God resulted in their surpassing physical condition, allowing them to eat "kosher".

When Nebuchadnezzar built the statue, the three did not bow. (Dan3) They were thrown into the furnace, and God saved them. When Daniel refused to stop worshipping God, he was thrown to the lions. (Dan6) God delivered him. In both of these cases, due to conscience, God's people refused to submit to idolatry; suffering the consequences. In these cases it was God's will to rescue them; and the incidents resulted in God being glorified. When the apostles replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men", they were imprisoned and beaten. (Ac5:29,40)

When Naaman was healed of leprosy, he was also saved spiritually, vowing to worship Jehovah God. But his station in life saw him as servant to the king. Part of his duties entailed accompanying the king to the pagan temples in worship, so the king could lean on his arm as he bowed...thus, Naaman would have to 'bow' along with the king; and asks Elisha about pardon in this. Elisha replies, "Go in peace" (2Ki5:18-19)

Depending on the master/servant relationship, the slave may have the option to try to humbly negotiate; which in effect, becomes a situation and

opportunity to witness for God and righteousness. In some cases, when something is just, plain, wrong; and "because of conscience" (vs19) the slave refuses to comply, such a Believing slave should then also be prepared to receive the consequences...which, in some cases in history, and even today in some cultures, can be quite excruciating: beatings, burnings, dismemberment and all sorts of other tortures. There will also be the case where the slave will obey the master, even knowing that, were they free, they would not do such behavior, knowing it to not be pleasing to God; but in subservience, obeying the master; and in God's eyes, due to the obedience to the master, even though the deed itself was bad, that servant would be pleasing in God's sight -because- they were being submissive to their master, in obedience to God. In such a case, the wrong deed would not be the servant's, but the master's, for demanding it.

This last case might include the female who is the play-thing? Perhaps the servant who is commanded to execute somebody, even though the victim might not actually be guilty, but the king commands it. This would include those in the military, where the primary function is the 'killing' of people. How many innocent civilians get killed in warfare, and yet the government commands it, and soldiers obey. As David says to Joab, "...for the sword devours one as well as another" (2Sa11:25) With that comment David was salving his conscience at having murdered Uriah, but it was a -verity- of warfare. The soldier, while killing, was not committing "murder". (Ex20:13) If murder was committed, it was the government and its leaders.

Sometimes a slave may not have the option to observe strict Black-and-White like a free person might; -because- they are not free. Being a servant, by definition, they become an extension of their master. Peter says to "be subject" to them, even the "perverse" ones.

But the slave also has a conscience. And if they determine in their heart that the matter in question is such a matter to take a stand on, that it is a line not to be crossed, then they should also be prepared to endure the consequences, and trust their souls to the Lord. (Mt10:28)

However... the Christian servant should NEVER be guilty of a personal offense, deserving of punishment. Such punishment is not 'persecution'. It is just deserts. (vs20)

When a Christian slave takes a stand for righteousness, and suffers; 'why' does the Believer submit and endure it? Why does the slave not escape and run away?

"...because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (vs21)

Paul even viewed his own sufferings...

"I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of His body, which is the church," (Col1:24)

Paul, even though a Jew, was also a Roman citizen (Ac22:28), and could have moved anywhere in the Roman empire and lived in safety from the persecutions of the unbelieving Jews. (Ac17:5) But he chose to live in continual danger for the sake of those to whom he was ministering, for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ.

Jesus, when He suffered, He could have had EVERY RIGHT to speak up, state His case, wield His Godly power, call upon the angels (Mt26:53), and be outta there! He could have told Pilate, Herod and the soldiers off, sent them directly to hell, and said "Phooey on all of you! Dude, this is bogus! I don't need this!" (vs23) And truly it -was- 'bogus'. But He fulfilled the prophecy that He "opened not His mouth" (Ac8:32, Is53:7) He kept His mouth shut so much so that Pilate "marveled". (Mk15:5) All this, even though He was -perfect-. There was no sin in Him. He was not guilty. He was totally innocent. And yet, for our sakes, He submitted to the "death of the cross" (Php2:7-8) He "gave" His back and cheeks to those who beat Him and plucked His beard. (Is50:6)

Thus... if we stand for righteousness, who would we think to be if we did NOT submit to wrongful persecution? We might be slaves to our earthly masters; but of even greater consequence is that we are slaves to our Master in Heaven.

"A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (Jn15:20)

If Jesus "gave" Himself, so should the wrongfully accused slave. Or if the accusation is true, but it is for righteousness because of conscience...

"Blessed are they who have been persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." (Mt5:10)

Wives to Husbands - (1Peter 3:1-6)

"Wives, likewise, be subject to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the Word, they, without a word, may be won by the behavior of their wives, when they observe your pure behavior with fear." (vs1-2)

"Wives, likewise...."

The word "likewise" means "in the same way". In 'what' same way? What has been the context? In the previous section we observed the servant (slave) before the master; both the good master, as well as the dirty rotten scoundrel. Thus, the principles we observed there, still apply here. Still keeping in mind that Peter was writing to the Diaspora in an age and culture where slavery was common practice. In the same context wives were also often considered to be little better than a slave. Or even, perhaps, 'lower', since she was a -woman-.

Thus, in the same way the slave was exhorted to be towards the master, so also should the wife be towards her own husband.

Now... before we go any further, let's get one thing on the table and cleared up; what this passage is NOT about. So often, when this topic is addressed from the Scriptures, there will inevitably be the complaints and downright anger; alleging that we are teaching that "it's OK for the husband to abuse his wife". That: teaching Godly wives to submit to their husbands is license for the husband to be a piece-of-work; and that she has to "take it".

For more on this please see the Q/A –Divorce & Abuse?
www.a-voice.org/qa/divorce1.htm#divorce

Please notice that 'this' study is vss 1-6. It addresses the Godly 'wife'. Nothing is said about the husband, other than the fact that the husband might be an unbeliever. Exhortation to the husband will be in the next lesson, vs7. Many people react like Peter did, when Jesus was having a very pointed, difficult and painful conversation regarding his denial of the Lord, his commission for service, and the manner of his death in martyrdom. He didn't want all the 'heavy' talk to be directed at him, so pipes up with: What about John? (Jn21) Jesus wasn't talking to John; He was talking to Peter. In the same way, this lesson is not addressing the husband. It addresses the Godly wife. The Godly wife's Godly behavior is not predicated on what the husband may or may not do. This is -TO- the Godly wife. Period.

Thus, we notice that the wife is to be "subject" to the husband. No provision for women's lib. Paul gives the chain-of-command:

"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." (1Co11:3)

Notice that she is subject to her "own" husband. She is not subject to other men...not even the pastor and elders of the church. Notice in the passage where Paul tells women to keep still in church, he directs them to ask anything they want to ask of "their -own- husbands at home". (1Co14:34-35)

What if an unsaved husband wants his wife to wear makeup and fashions that perhaps the pharisees at the "fundamentalist" church might snoot their noses in the air about, and might wish to tell her to present herself differently? What if her hemline doesn't quite meet their preconceived notions of holiness, but it is what her husband wants of her...who does she obey? What hem length is Godly? A couple centuries ago skirts were at the ground, and if somebody showed their ankles, it was considered disgraceful. Then the hemlines came up. When the populace was wearing knee-length, the pharisees were insisting on mid-calf. Mid-calf was "Godly", but knee-length was not. Well...just a few years prior, the view of ankles was a scandal...but now mid-calf is OK? Does the Bible anywhere indicate "how many inches"? And if one was Godly, did God's standards change in the intervening years? This topic is more complex than this...but over the years the pharisees have been known to use the tape measure to determine Godliness. And the woman who wore any makeup was considered ungodly...worldly. To whom is the wife subject? The pharisees, or her own husband? We'll come back to the true spirit of attire in a moment. Right now we're making a point to define the extent of the wife's submission.

Why is the wife to be subject to her husband?

First of all, we already noted that it is God's 'order'. The hierarchy of things. Just as Jesus is subject to the Father (we won't look up references now; if you know your Bible, you know where to find it), so is the wife to be towards her husband. God first made man, and then Eve. (1Tim2:13) That which came first was put in charge. That which came after was the "helper to complement him" (Gen2:18) That which complements is 'less' than that which it complements. And yet together, they make a complete package. Without that which complements, that which it complements is incomplete.

And even though we just used the word "less", that is a position of rank, not level of importance. Lower in rank, not in relationship to God's Kingdom and Salvation. (Ga3:28) In Christ we are all one.

When a believing wife is married to an unbeliever, how will the husband be won to the Lord? By the wife nagging and yapping off with her mouth, persuading herself that she is 'preaching'? Peter says, "without a word". "But!" the soulwinner whines. There are many who believe the only way to witness is by putting the mouth in gear, and tromp on the gas pedal! But what do most men feel about chatty women? That's the "contentious woman" of whom it is proclaimed that "it is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than to share a house" with her. (Pr21:9, 25:24) Are there not

many sitcoms and comedic jokes on the matter? But the thing that will win over the unbelieving husband is the "meek and quiet spirit" (vs4) Actions. The life that is lived. Words are empty, if the life does not mirror those words. Words are only words, but actions and behavior is the true heart behind any words.

And on this topic Paul and Peter agree. Paul exhorts the Christian wife NOT to leave her unequal yoke husband...

"And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, if he is willing to live with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1Co7:13-14,16)

So... what does the woman -do-? Since Peter speaks of it, it must have been similar to how things are today? What does society say a woman should be? Beautiful; perhaps even sexy. How does the world define beauty? It starts with the hair, goes down to the eyes and lips with makeup, and continues on down with how the clothing fits. Fashion seems to be a balancing act of what to show and what to hide. I happened upon a minute of Oprah the other day where she was having some sort of fashion show, and for one of the items she made the comment that it "covered all the right places", even though the material felt to the wearer that they were "wearing nothing". As time progresses, it sometimes seems like women are uncovering more and more; and yet when I see the occasional snippet of older movies or TV footage, they were actually dressing pretty much the same back then...revealing as much as they think they can get away with.

What is Peter saying? That fashion should not be of concern to the Christian? He says...

"Do not let your adornment be outward; arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on apparel" (vs3)

There are many pharisees who use this passage to tell their women not to wear makeup or any accessories. Well, if they take the verse to its ultimate conclusion down that path, then they would need to go naked; because one of the things he says that it should "not" be is "putting on apparel". What is the "not" of "putting on apparel"? Is it not "nakedness"? Thus, is it not obvious he is not dismissing women's beauty practices totally?

But what is he saying? The "adornment". What is adornment? Things that "lend to beauty, ornament, enhancement" If jewelry was a sin or indication of worldliness (as many pharisees say), then God likens the Righteous to sinfulness, speaking of the bride's "ornaments" (Is49:18, 61:10, Jer2:32, etc) If God uses such examples in a positive light, the pharisees must be missing something...

But what is it that adorns the Godly wife?

The "...hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (vs4)

Since we spoke of hem lines earlier, let me share a particular case from my college days back in the early 70s. Girls then were wearing basically three different kinds of things: pants/slacks/jeans, hippy granny dresses or mini-skirts. What should a Christian girl wear? If she wore a full ankle-length skirt, due to the culture of the day, she would have been associated as being a "hippy". Is that an association a Christian wants to emulate? Many who wore mini-skirts were also, by their behavior, "available" in that era of so-called "free-love".

There was a girl at this particular church I was attending. She wore mini-skirts. I knew more of her because she was also a musician, and we occasionally shared that experience. But she was not a person you would assume was "available". If I may say something that might seem, on the surface, to be a contradiction: She wore her mini-skirts "modestly". There was an "adornment" to her persona that bespoke "pure behavior" (vs2) She was of a "meek and quiet spirit". (vs4) She, with her mini-skirts, was more modest than many who wear floor-length, but who behave like the "strange woman" that Proverbs speaks of so much.

What is in a face? Lipstick and eye-liner? Is that what makes a face "beautiful"? Or is it the "hidden person" coming out through the persona of spirit and soul, which is distinct from any makeup? If the soul is dark with sin, no amount of makeup will make a person beautiful.

When Esther found herself in what the pharisees might have considered a "compromised state", when she went in to be with the king, it says that she used only those beauty products that were required. But because of her Godly heart, her beauty was such that "she rose in favor in the eyes of all who saw her". (Es2:15) And through her submission, even in a pagan setting, she became the queen, who was also instrumental in saving the Jews from extermination.

Peter says...

"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being subject to their own husbands" (vs5)

Related Topics:

Wives toward their Husbands (Eph5)

www.a-voice.org/main/voice041.htm

Wives to their Husbands (Eph5)

[www.a-voice.org/library/eph1.htm#5\(22-24\)](http://www.a-voice.org/library/eph1.htm#5(22-24))

Husbands to Wives - (1Peter 3:7)

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be cut off." (vs7)

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter towards them." (Col3:19)

There's a couple of interesting words used here: "understanding" and "bitter". One by Peter, the other by Paul. Why is a wife something that needs to be understood? Professor Higgins had troubles with this: "Why can't a woman be more like a man!" Peter says she is the "weaker vessel". Why might a husband be bitter towards his wife? These things were written a couple millennia ago; let's address them with 'today' in mind. At NewsWithViews there is a particular writer who seems to specialize on this topic: the writings of Carey Roberts. He documents many various items related to feminism, its militance, how law enforcement and the (in)justice system has been tweaked to always favor the woman, and toss the man out on his ear...no questions asked. In the previous lesson we linked to a Q/A on this subject. And in reality, while feminism seems to be a 'new' thing these days, down throughout history there have always been the individual feminists here and there. Jezebel comes immediately to mind, as well as Herodias who had John beheaded. Not to mention the warnings in Proverbs about the "strange woman". If it is said to be better in the corner of a housetop, than sharing the living space of a contentious woman (Pr21:9, 25:24, 27:15)... but there are not the same kinds of voluminous Scriptures warning the woman against the man... When the woman who wants to "get" the man only needs, when the police arrive after her call, to be huddled in a corner crying and -pretending- to be fearing for her life, even though her husband may not even have been around but is at work, and there is not a 'mark' on her, but with such play-acting, even without investigation, the husband is thrown out of his own house... Or if the husband and wife are in another room of the house from their children, and there happen to be other visiting adults in the house to witness when they are raising their voices in argument, and she yells to the children, "Daddy is hitting mommy!", even though the adults present do not witness any such thing...

Suddenly, we begin to perceive what a husband needs to "understand". And with such behavior from his wife, what red-blooded husband wouldn't, perhaps, become "bitter" towards her. If we understand how a person of the world, an unbeliever, behaves and reacts to confrontation, does it not become easier to understand 'why' some men (that statistically smaller percent) come to where they have taken all they can take, and lash out. Perhaps they have gone to the bar, alone, and drunk away their sorrows and commiserated with others in like-dilemma, and then come home to the object of those sorrows...and their unregenerate soul takes over, and he gives her "what she's got coming".

Now ladies....don't go ballistic on me. Just reason this out, whether it does not make sense. No, I'm not suggesting it is -always- the woman's fault. There are, truly, some scumbags out there that treat their women like dirt. But honestly, now...as you think about how many women behave; put the man's shoes on your own feet for a minute, and think about how -you- might feel if you were treated the way many women treat men. How would -you- react? And remember, the highest percentages of abuse, statistically, are among lesbians...women against women. So, please stifle the righteous indignation at the hint that, if a man abuses a woman, she - might- have "asked for it"...thinking from the worldly perspective. If one considers how today's woman -proliferates- with contentiousness, and then consider the relatively -smaller- percentages of men beating on women, I think it becomes obvious that men, as a whole, are getting a bad rap.

Peter is talking to Christian husbands. Christians are to "lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking" (2:1) We are not to be like the world.

If a Christian husband, yoked with an unbeliever, receives the emotional abuse of his wife's contentiousness and false accusations, and she is not submitting like Christian wives were instructed (previous lesson), is there not a similarity to the discussion about slaves submitting when the "perverse" (2:18) master falsely accuses the servant, and the servant endures grief.

Not to mention the 'understanding' that she is a woman. She has certain 'disadvantages' that are a result of sin. God gave women "pain" related to child birth. (Gen3:16) The process of that pain also includes hormonal variations from time to time, which directly relate to her emotions. Not all women are the same in these things. And if she had been on the "pill" for a time, and then stopped taking them, that can further mess up her chemistry...and emotions. Some women seem less-equipped to exercise "self-control" during those times. (Ga5:23, 1Tim2:15)

Thus, Christian husband: Understand her. Give her "honor" with the understanding that she is the "weaker vessel"; but also remember that (if she is a Christian) the two of you share "together of the grace of life".

It's not much of a "man" who would beat up somebody weaker. Like the old saying: Pick on somebody your own size.

But also like Paul says, as you are understanding her, don't go around with "bitterness" in your heart, grinding the teeth in frustration.

Instructions are given to wives to be homemakers and to raise the children (1Tim5:14) The husbands are commissioned with the children's Godly rearing, and subjection (Eph6:4, 1Tim3:4); but similar exhortation to him

regarding his wife is not given. While there are various cultural practices (in various parts of the world) how men force the women to be subject, and God did give certain other laws within that context; I don't know of any such direct Scriptural command. The woman is an adult and should know right from wrong. God has instructed her how to behave; and whatever she does with that comes from her heart.

But also, Christian husband: Just because your wife -claims- to be a "Christian" -might- not mean she really is. And if, in her heart, there is unregenerate darkness, don't necessarily count on her abiding by God's Word. I know first hand the experience of living with someone for 15 years who claimed to be a Christian, only to announce that "your God and mine are different", and then up-and-leave. Just as Paul proclaimed that "not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b); not all [c]hristians are [C]hristians. And if she is not a Believer, a reading of 1Co7:12-17 might be in order for you.

Also, as we said in the last lesson to the wives, that their behavior is not predicated on the husband's behavior; neither is the husband's conduct contingent on what sort of wife he is married to.

Paul gave instructions to the Godly husband, likening it to Christ's love for the church. Before Believers were saved, were we lovely and obedient? Were we not self-centered, self-willed, and in control "of our own destiny" (so we thought), and lashing out at God; much like today's feminism does towards men? As we understand that, Paul exhorts...

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." (Eph5:25-28)

Related Topics:

Husbands toward their Wives (Eph5)

www.a-voice.org/main/voice040.htm

Husbands to their Wives (Eph5)

[www.a-voice.org/library/eph1.htm#5\(25-33\)](http://www.a-voice.org/library/eph1.htm#5(25-33))

Defense: Good Conscience - (1Peter 3:8-18)

"...turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it...having a good conscience, that when they speak against you as evildoers, those who falsely accuse your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed." (vs11,16)

Thus far we have had exhortation regarding good behavior towards government (2:13), masters (2:18); wives (3:1) and husbands (3:7) to each other. Those to whom we submit, and those over whom the husband has the headship. The government creates ordinances that the Believer should obey, just like other citizens. Masters give commands to be obeyed, just like to other slaves. And there are the Godly ordered roles between husbands and their wives. But what about the relationship between co-equals? Since we are to submit to those over us, do we then suddenly have license regarding co-equals, to be any ol' way we like, and treat them like dirt?

"..be of one mind, sympathetic" (vs8)

What is my life experience? Likely the same as my fellow-servant. Jesus addressed this in the context of forgiveness, when a person who had been forgiven a debt from one direction, but would not extend similar compassion in another direction. (Mt18:23-33) If my life consists of whatever it consists, is there not a way in which I would like others to behave towards me? Being of sympathetic mind will cause me to behave towards others in the same way. Why? Because we are commanded to "love the brothers".

"By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love mutually with one another." (Jn13:35)

"And as you would have men do to you, you also do likewise to them." (Lk6:31)

"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Jehovah." (Le19:18, Mt22:39)

If we are "tenderhearted" and "kind", and we see somebody lashing out in anger, and some of that anger spills over in our direction, what do we do? Go over there and beat them up; punch them out? No. Kindness will understand that they've got some 'issues' going on, and they need a "blessing". (vs9)

If somebody is being obnoxious and vile with their tongue, what is the usual response to them from others of the world? Hand gestures, words, raised voices, and perhaps some "getting in their face". If left unchecked,

such activity often results in blows, injury, law suits, and perhaps some jail time.

"In the abundance of words there is no end of transgression, but he who restrains his lips is prudent." (Pr10:19)

You don't want to go through all that? You wish for "life and [to] see good days"? Then "refrain [the] tongue from evil" and don't speak lies and deceit. (vs10)

The formula is quite simple. For all the complexity that man wishes to insert into the pursuits of "gray areas", the "HOW TO" of a good life is simple.

"...turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it" (vs11)

It's kinda like a situation that is unfolding where I work; and the matter was just (now) raised again (as I'm writing these sentences). A few weeks ago the customer of one of my neighbors dropped a couple of sizable money bills along the front walk-way, and I happened upon them to pick them up. I asked at the two neighbors where it might have likely originated. The one neighbor is quite sure she knows 'who' likely dropped it. It is a regular customer; but she doesn't want to inform him next time he comes in, and ask if he lost the money. She would rather I use the money to buy some pizzas and our building neighborhood have a 'party' with it. The other neighbor is upset that, since the money was found in front of her window, that it should 'belong' to her, that she didn't see it there first, to pocket it. Periodically the one neighbor pops her head around the corner, "Are we having lunch today?" (with the money)

She did that again just 'now'. I replied, "I'm waiting for you to do the right thing first." (based on our other conversations: to 'ask' him next time he comes in.) Her reply? "I don't want to do the right thing." (both quotes, verbatim) She reasons that, since he drives a BMW, he probably hasn't even noticed that he dropped it, he can 'afford' to lose it. If she had found it (before I did), she would have just pocketed it. (Same thing the other neighbor said)

I found her reply quite telling. On one of their cars they also have a bumper sticker that says, "Life is short, break some rules" This is her manner of life. Break some rules. I DON'T WANT TO DO THE RIGHT THING. On another occasion she has also specifically said that she does not want to talk about the things of God.

You see, this is why Peter specifies to "turn away from evil" and "do good". We often say that dogs bark, ducks quack, and sinners sin. Most sinners don't like to admit, like this person, that they "WANT TO" do evil; they squirm their way around, trying to put themselves in a "positive light" while

not considering themselves to be "bad people". Most people have excuses for why they consider their evil to be good. And in that, this person is at least 'honest' about her heart.

But remember that Peter is talking to those who have been "sprinkled" with Jesus' blood, who have obtained "grace" and "mercy", and are "obedient children" who are being "holy in all conduct". Such a person, a Christian, by nature, turns away from evil.

Some years ago I was cleaning some old painted lettering off an acrylic panel in preparation to re-letter it for a customer, and in the process was developing a pile of smelly towels. At the time a neighbor (different than the current neighbors) used to bring his dog (basset hound) to work, and that dog got a whiff of those rags with paint and acetone mixed (yum yum!!), and his nose was -drawn- to those rags. He would come up and bury his snout in the pile and just sit there. You pull him away, and he would strain to get his nose back in it. Over and over, this tug-o-war. He had to be pulled away and the door shut on him in another room. In the same way sinners are -drawn- to evil. As long as they are sinners, they can't imagine anything other than evil. A team of horses will hardly pull them away. It's like trying to shoo flies away from a smelly pile of manure on a hot summer day.

But when a person is saved, and has the promise of Eternal Life, the focus changes. That pile of smelly rags no longer draws, but the fumes rather cause choking and gagging, and one is repulsed by it. The other day as I was waiting for my 'personal pan' at Pizza Hut, I was trying to make sense of the words of the songs being piped in over the sound system, and found myself becoming rather depressed and almost to a state of tears -for- those singing their dreary songs of desire and lust...visualizing people at a party, dancing to that music, thinking of themselves that they are having a good time; but realizing how dark and hopeless it all is. Satan has them in a spiritual head-lock, not letting them go. And why is it that so many, calling themselves "christian", still like that stuff? The Believer has been Saved OUT OF IT, instead, into God's "marvelous light"!! (2:9)

Now, just because we "do not see Him yet" (1:8), does not mean He does not see us. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous" (vs12a) He is watching over us, and when we call out to Him He hears our prayers.

But if we behave like the unsaved, those doing evil do not have access to His face. Same thing God said to Israel during Isaiah's day...

"Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, that He will not hear." (Is59:1-2)

Around the time this is being written, lately I've been hearing from various places (radio and TV) the expression to "Pray... Pray... Pray REAL HARD" If God's ear is not "heavy", then what does it mean to pray "real hard"? Why would such a thing even be necessary? The only reason a person might feel the need to pray "hard" would be if they feel as if their prayers are not being heard. That they need to, somehow, "break through to God"..??

Well, if God is watching over the righteous, and His ears are open; but iniquities separate from God; what is the cause of unanswered prayers? Those needing to pray "hard" must be in sin. By definition. Yes? If they weren't in sin, prayer would not be a "hard" thing. They would be in the center of God's will: They would know God's will, they would see God's will being fulfilled, and they would have comfort in knowing God's workings. There would be no need to pray "hard", but instead they would have the assurance...

"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps46:10)

Thus with such assurance...

"And who is he who will harm you if you become imitators of what is good?" (vs13)

If a Believer follows the rules of the road, even though the rest of traffic is frantic due to the spirit of the god of this world, the Believer will not be the one with police lights flashing behind them. If the Christian is behaving "good" towards others, they will not have cause to become angry in retaliation. If the Believer does not disregard property boundaries, and do damage to neighbors, they will not be dragged into court. If a congregation refrains from engaging in illegal picketing, vandalism and injury or murder, the government is not going to come snooping around and issue sanctions against them, and confiscate property.

"But..." (vs14)

Okay...these are the basic rules. You "behave yourself", you'll stay out of trouble. Treat others well, they will typically reciprocate. Like the saying: What goes around comes around.

But... However... We are Christians. We are citizens of Heaven. (Php3:20) God is our ruler, and satan is this world's ruler. (Eph6:12) While as flesh and blood, we share that characteristic with the world, and the basic rules of good being reciprocated are basic verities; we have the added dimension that there is warfare going on between God and satan. Thus, as God is satan's enemy, we being God's children are also satan's enemies, and enemies of many of satan's followers. God is more powerful than satan, so satan doesn't have a chance against God directly; but satan does have permission to attack us, and he enlists the assistance of his

followers to attack God's followers. The ones who do so will typically be the ones who are, to evil, like that basset hound was to those acetone towels. They've got their noses in there with evil, and don't budge. But, do we need to worry?

"But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, you are blessed (Mt5:11). And do not be afraid of their terror, nor be troubled" (vs14)

This was written by one who had been imprisoned and then beaten. (Ac5) He was also imprisoned, expecting execution, and the Lord rescued him. (Ac12) He had been through persecution, and says "nor be troubled".

It's possibly like that fellow over here in Moscow, ID who got shot by a madman about a year ago, as he himself had gotten his own gun and gone to see how he might "help" people from getting hurt. In the hospital bed when asked: If confronted by a similar situation, would he do it again? That is: Would he put himself into harms way. His response was of the order that, now having been shot, he was no longer afraid of 'being' shot...he knew what it was like.

Peter knew what it was to be persecuted "because of righteousness". As if to say: No big deal! Why no big deal? Because "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous" (vs12) The Believer has a sanctified heart.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;" (vs15)

If the Lord's eyes are watching over us, we know that He will not allow us to sink in the water when He says to come and walk on the water with Him. (Mt14:29-31) The sanctified heart is one without known active sin. There is constant communion with the Lord through the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit gives us what to say. (Mk13:11) And with His eyes watching over us He will not allow any testing to come that is "beyond what [we] are able" but will also see to it that there is a "way out, that [we] may be able to bear it" (1Co10:13); because Jesus Himself was also "tempted as we are, yet without sin". (Heb4:15)

But like we learned a few lessons ago, 'how' are we "ready" to give a defense? On what basis does the Holy Spirit give us words to say? Because we have been feeding on God's Word. (2:1-3)

And when we are on trial, do we lash out, pumping our (communist) fists in the air, and mouth off to the authorities? No. We give answer "with meekness and fear". We "submit" to the authority convened, even if bogus. (2:13, Ac23:3-5) If reviled, we do "not revile in return" (2:23)

And in this context, then, consider the bumper sticker I've seen on various occasions:

"If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

In other words...

Having a clear conscience, "that when they speak against you as evildoers, those who falsely accuse your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed" (vs16)

And again, as in the case with ruling masters, it is better to suffer for doing good, than for having been found guilty. (vs17) If a person is guilty of meddling and stirring up things, and suffers for it, that is "just deserts". But why might it be "better" to suffer for righteousness? How can suffering even be called a "good" thing?

As Peter says several times throughout this epistle (therefore we will, too)...

"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (vs18)

Now certainly our suffering does not substitutionally 'save' anybody, like Jesus' death did for us. But how many sinners, when seeing the courage and conviction of Believers under trial, have come under conviction and received Christ? And furthermore, if the servant is not "greater than his Master" (Jn15:20), and Jesus promised, "In the world you have affliction..." (Jn16:33b), who would we imagine ourselves to be to expect that we might not experience trials at least occasionally! As long as we are in this world, which is under satan's rulership... we are presently in enemy territory. (More on this later in a future study)

However, Jesus also promised...

"...be of good courage, I have overcome the world" as in Christ we also "have peace" (Jn16:33c,a)

Spirits in Prison - (1Peter 3:19-22)

"..by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." (vs19-20)

First of all, let me start this section by saying: I DON'T KNOW.

Over time there have been a myriad of explanations, and likely an equal number of cult-like false doctrines supported or generated from these next few verses.

If the matter of our present Grace was a mystery to OT prophets, and the angels who have had a ring-side seat to man's creation and history "desire to look into" it (1:12), who today would be so brash as to claim full understanding of things that happened regarding the angels 2000 and 6000 years ago, based on merely a single brief sentence? There are many who speak of "things they do not know" (Ju1:10); so we will be brief with this study. Even though we cannot claim exclusive unerring understanding, there are nevertheless some things we can make observation, and then 'wonder' about; and trust for more perfect understanding when we are with the Lord. (1Co13:12, 1Jn3:2)

First of all, we know the context. vs18 speaks of when "Christ also suffered for sins". That's Jesus' crucifixion and burial for three days and nights. One of the things Jesus did during that occasion, but since His body was buried, He did this in the Spirit: He went to the "heart of the earth" (Mt12:40), wherever that is, to the "prison", the place where the disobedient spirits are "reserved in everlasting bonds under darkness" (Ju1:6) In the next epistle he speaks of "Tartarus". (2Pt2:4) In the vernacular of that day "Tartarus" was a mythological place where "god-like ones" were banished in judgment. Is this the same as the "bottomless pit" where the "dragon" is bound for the thousand years? (Rev20:1-3) from which, after the Millennium, they are brought out for judgment to then be cast into the Lake of Fire? (vs10)

What was their offense? These spirits, also known originally as the "sons of God" (Gen6:2, Job1:6, 2:1, 38:7), "did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode". (Ju1:6) What did they do? They intermingled with the "daughters of men" and corrupted the human gene pool. (Gen6:1-4) Noah's family was not thusly corrupted, but was found "perfect in his generation (genetics)" (Gen6:9) This corruption of the human gene pool was the reason for what we often call Noah's Flood.

God had given angels a realm in which to exist. They were created as "ministering spirits". (Heb1:14) And of course, satan himself was the "anointed cherub that covers". (Ezk28:14) But when this anointed cherub

decided "I will be like the Most High" (Is14:14), he apparently took a third of the angels (stars) with him in this rebellion. (Rev12:4, Job38:7)

Here, now, we get into the "I don't know" areas: Perhaps as the angels "desire to look into" (1:12) the things reserved for mankind and his salvation, some of those fallen angels decided to try to get this salvation for themselves, by attempting to -become- human? Leaving their spirit realm, and intermingling with humans? Trying to effect a 'works' salvation for themselves? Or was it merely satan's effort to corrupt the human race to where the woman's "Seed" (Gen3:15) could never arrive and effect salvation? Whatever the case, they are "in prison"; wherever and whatever that is. Some things until we know fully, we take in faith.

So then, the next question: What did Jesus "preach" to them? and Why? There are many teachers who speculate all sorts of things. One is that Jesus, through His death and upcoming resurrection proclaimed to seal their everlasting doom, as He proclaimed 'victory' over death. (1Co15:55) Another is taken from 4:6 ("judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit"), in conjunction with 3:19, to suggest that Jesus was giving those who died in sin back during Noah's day, before the flood, a "second chance" at salvation. They combine the fact of Jesus preaching to those spirits, and the following verses about "saves us". (vs21) There are still others who combine these verses with Peter's preaching of the "restoration of all things" (Ac3:21) to support the false doctrine called "Ultimate Restorationism"; that: once all is said and done, nothing will have mattered, because God is going to "restore" everything back to perfection, including those who refused to repent and receive Christ in Salvation.

We will not address Ultimate Restoration at this time; we have done so on other occasions. And 4:6 we will leave for next lesson. And, the fact that there are no 'second chances' is clear...

"..as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment" (Heb9:27)

But when it comes right down to it, the passage does not tell us 'what' Jesus preached. And for that matter, it doesn't exactly specify -which- 'spirits'. The evil -demon- spirits, the sons of God; or the spirits of the disobedient -people-? They -both- were "disobedient". However, he also does end vs22 referencing the angels, authorities and powers; so there does seem to be a theme there. But remember my opening comment regarding certitude: I don't know.

But we should see one thing, that vs19-20,22 is not the same group as vs21. Vs19-20 he speaks of "spirits", and vs21 about "us" who are more than -just- spirits. We are body, soul and spirit.

It appears that vs21 is a parenthetical thought where Peter makes the connection for us about what immersion (baptism) is. He has talked about Jesus' death and resurrection, and about Noah's 'salvation' through the waters of the flood. Noah went into the flood waters, and came back out. As Paul says,

"Therefore we were buried with Him through immersion into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom6:4)

But also notice how Peter is voiding that other false doctrine called "baptismal regeneration". Yes, the going down into the water is a 'picture' of Jesus having gone into the grave, and of our dying with Him. But Salvation has nothing to do with the "removal of the filth of the flesh".

Again, speaking to those of the Diaspora: Something I notice in my readings from Jewish sources... that there are many who, even though they reject "this man" (Jesus), they are soooo picky about the exactitude of their rituals, that they must be observed JUST SO. One of those rituals is their "mikvah". Many of them think it has to do with getting the 'dirt' off.

But just as Paul speaks of -true- "circumcision" being "of the heart" (Rom2:28-29), Peter says that the mikvah is NOT about the removal of physical dirt, but a "good conscience toward God". In other words, a pure heart. Again: Peter and Paul agree.

The mikvah dips the person into the water, and back out. That was the forward looking -type-. The Church dips the person into the water, and back out. That is the hind site -type- of what Jesus HAS DONE. But Jesus Himself, His crucifixion, burial and resurrection, is the -antitype-; that which those types look/ed to.

Whatever Jesus might have preached to those spirits (much of this lesson is not as much learning 'what?'; but to beware some of 'what' false teachings to look out for); He is now in Heaven (where Stephen saw Him as the rebellious jews were about to stone him Ac7:56) ...

"...at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him" (vs22)

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Php2:9-11)

Mind of Christ - (1Peter 4:1-11)

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind..." (vs1)

Dear Reader: If you call yourself a "Christian", and are expecting that life should be sunshine and roses, continual pleasure and smiles, dancing jubilations, and everything is like a beautiful meadow of blessings, where the birds are merrily chirping and squirrels gayly hopping next to the babbling brooks...you subscribe to a different sort of Faith than what Peter preaches. It is not the Christianity of the Bible! Yes I know... many preachers have conned their hearers into "giving their lives to Christ" from the emotional heart tugs of how miserable your life was, with the promise that Jesus will take that all away, alleging to usher you into a life of health, wealth and prosperity; of naming and claiming. That is an "other gospel" which Paul calls "accursed". (Ga1:8-9)

Wow! Way to go, PB! Just turn them all off right at the get-go! How do you expect to have lots of followers if you spew that sort of hateful venom?

Well, folks: Any of you who have been around for any length of time know that PB is a straight shooter. What the Bible says, is what we proclaim. Jesus already said that those going to Heaven are "few" (Mt7:14), so 'numbers' are of no concern around here. And furthermore, if you are 'following PB', then please unsubscribe. You should be following Jesus Christ, not PB. And... What would you rather hear: all sorts of flowery words of praise and sunshine to make you feel wonderful, but get to Heaven with no rewards because your life was all carnalled out; or straight shooting words of honesty, but when you order your lives accordingly you get to Heaven to hear "well done good and faithful servant"? (Mt25:21) This latter is what I aim for. And yes, I used to be called "judgmental" for such straight talk; but I no longer care about such labels. Such people will answer for themselves to the Lord. And so will I, for whatever I proclaim...or fail to.

But, if you are not willing to "take up the cross" and follow, you -CANNOT- be Jesus' disciple! (Lk14:27) Those are not my words, that's what Jesus said. If you are not carrying the cross behind Jesus, your heart is not of the sort that is a Real Believer. You have not "counted the cost" (Lk14:28) You might be repeating the name "Jesus", but your "Jesus" is a different one than the Christ of the Bible.

Paul exhorts to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php2:5) In another setting Paul speaks of the spiritual Believer that "we have the mind of Christ" (1Co2:16b) You see again: Peter and Paul agree.

Jesus Christ suffered for us...and we are to be of the same mind. And when we have this same mind, we are "released from sin". And what is the

result? We will "no longer" engage ourselves in the flesh, in lusts... but "in the will of God" (vs2)

And Peter uses an interesting expression. Remember on the day of Pentecost how Peter points to his audience and says -YOU- crucified Jesus. (Ac2:23) Well, here he says,

"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles" (vs3a)

In today's vernacular, "We've been sinning like the world. ENOUGH ALREADY..!!!! Stop messing around!! Get your act together!!" All the stuff the world does: drunken orgies, licentiousness, sex parties. The other day in a conversation with somebody about her son I learned something about how far down the swill trough this nation is sludging. This 'son' has some knowledge of the Bible, and has been seeking...but is also young and likes to socialize. He finds it frustrating to even go 'out' with the world because everything seems to revolve around sexual perversity. For all the talk about rainbow and gay/lesbian issues, the population at large apparently is so far in the gutter that pretty much everybody considers themselves to be "bi". There is no straight, gay or trans. Apparently pretty much everybody is 'game' for just about "anything". Just do some drinking, and "let's party!!" Whatever turns you on, DO IT!

When the Believer considers how Jesus suffered to take away our sin, why would the True Christian even consider participating in any of that? When Jesus died, in effect He reached down and pulled us up "out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock" (Ps40:2)

Oh, of course, they will 'notice' that you don't partake with them. (vs4) In my younger days when I was around those types, they would notice that, "Hey! He's not laughing!" when everybody else was busting their guts at the dirty jokes. Or the mock "invitations" to join them at the bars after work; or the suggestions that they had some special female they wanted to introduce me to.

But as Christians we don't need to worry ourselves with them, because

"They will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (vs5)

"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (vs6)

In the previous lesson we noted that this is one of the verses the Ultimate Restorationists use to support their false doctrine. But notice there is a difference between this verse and 2:19-20. 2:20 speaks of those who "formerly were disobedient". But this verse does not say so.

Peter on another occasion proclaimed:

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men that is required for us to be saved." (Ac4:12)

Here we are again in the "I don't know for sure" realm. But let's consider: When God instituted animal sacrifice with Adam and Eve, He promised Salvation through the woman's "Seed" (Gen3:15) Throughout the OT they continually sacrificed animals, and when David came along the promise was further clarified to be David's Seed, as well. (Is9:6-7) But nowhere was Jesus' -name- ever given. Nor was it spelled out that He would die on a cross, as we now know it historically, and as we "remember" it through the Lord's Supper. (Lk22:19, 1co11:24-25) When Jesus was raised, the OT saints were also raised. (Mt27:52-53) That which the prophets prophesied, of which we are the recipients, but which they did not understand (1:12); perhaps Jesus' preaching was to explain it all to them, as He then raised them along with Himself? Remember, the disciples, even when Jesus spoke of it, didn't know "what rising from the dead might be" (Mk9:10) The "Gospel" is that Jesus died, was buried and ROSE AGAIN. (1Co15:3-4) This is what Jesus preached to those dead who "live according to God in the spirit"; and then He raised them. If I may romanticize a bit: Perhaps He then said to them, "C'mon, let's get outta here!" ??

However, in vs6 is another little tidbit of basic doctrine. Just like he tucked in the little bit about immersion (baptism/mikvah) in 3:21, here he explains the difference between the physical death, and the spiritual life for the Believer. Again, Peter and Paul agree. Paul explains how "flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom of God" (1Co15:50) because it is corrupt. Peter agrees: As long as we are flesh, we die. But Paul also says that at physical death, we go "to be at home with the Lord" (2Co5:8) "And as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment" (Heb9:27) but Peter clarifies that the spirit of the Believer is alive with God.

And so, if we have the mind of Christ in His sufferings, have shed the world, and are alive with God in the spirit, what is the nature of the Godly life? Is it like the OT Law where everything was "You shall NOT"?

First of all, as he will speak of the "last days" (2Pt3:3) to the Gentiles, he gives the same word here,

"The end of all things is as hand" (vs7a)

Therefore what should we do? Get all crazy and fussed about how terrible everything is? Get all worried trying to figure out 'when' Christ will return? No...

"..be of SOUND MIND and CALM in your prayers" (vs7b)

Like the old song that I haven't heard sung in ages, Jesus is a "shelter in the time of storm". In the next lesson Peter talks more about 'sufferings'. When troubles come along as we share in Christ's sufferings, we don't need to be troubled. That's just part of the "territory" of what it means to be a servant of Christ. We don't need to get all frantic and PRAY HARD to God to "Help me!!!" when we are in trouble. Remember, "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous" (3:12) he already knows all about it, and everything is in His hands. Just stay calm with His assurance.

Thus, in this sort of context, how should Believers behave towards each other? When some are suffering, does not the love for one another become that much more "fervent" (vs8) And if troubles are coming at us from the world, what need do we have to stir up troubles amongst ourselves? "love will cover a multitude of sins" Those little annoyances that some get bugged over, in the context of the world's pressures, those things become so insignificant. (Please read these verses for all the details) In the same context, if there is fervent love, it naturally follows that hospitality will be "without murmuring" (vs9)

And whatever is done in service to one another, or as ministers teaching and preaching, it all comes from God. It is God's grace, God's words, God's strength. (vs10-11)

What is our purpose? To become wealthy and famous? The fact that we have rejected the world's ways (vs2-3) pretty much puts the kibosh to such notions, eh. That's what the world seeks after. (Lk12:30) No...

"That in all things GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and might forever and ever. Amen." (vs11)

Fiery Trials - (1Peter 4:12-19)

"Beloved, do not be astonished at the fiery trial which is to try you, as though something unheard of was happening to you; but rejoice in so far as you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also rejoice with exceeding joy." (vs12-13)

What is a "fiery trial"? Is it like when I went just now and clicked through the seven (air) TV channels I get, to see if there was anything I needed to be watching, and there wasn't...but on one channel they had some downhill ski racing going on in Canada: the fellow comes out the chute, and as he passes some check point and is some miniscule decimal fraction of a second behind the leader, one of the announcers makes commentary how the racer had come from a background of "adversity". What started the list of adversities? "His parents were poor...." At which point I muttered in disgust, "Aw shut up!" and turned the TV off.

What is adversity? Having to drive a Chevette with rust holes in the fenders because one cannot afford a shiny new BMW? Shopping for clothes at Value Village because one cannot see wasting money on the ridiculous 'new' prices? Living in a \$100,000 house in a modest safe neighborhood because the mortgage company won't approve you for an upper-crust mansion? Is adversity being 'behind' (.1 second) in a ski race?

Or how about this:

"And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and floggings, yes, and of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tried, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, oppressed; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth." (Heb11:35-38)

Compared to this, how many of you reading this have suffered "fiery trials"? Yes, there are places in the world today where some of these things are going on. Considering the state of christendom, one has to wonder how many of them are suffering as True [C]hristians; or is it a generic state in those parts of the world for -anybody- who doesn't happen to be Muslim. After all, they condemn a woman to 200 lashes for being in a car with a non-family member; or 40 lashes for giving a teddy bear the name "Muhammed". [vw: I would have thought that would have been a 'compliment' to their prophet; not something worthy of stripes :]

Peter was writing to those who understand the mentality of those parts of the world. He had experienced his own share of it. And if we read Acts, we see how Paul suffered much, too. And what does he say of his own trials?

"I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of His body, which is the church," (Col1:24)

Jesus explained:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction; but be of good courage, I have overcome the world." (Jn16:33)

Thus, Peter says: "...do not be astonished" at it when it comes. Don't be in dismay as though "something unheard of" was happening. But -rejoice-. Here, too, Peter had practiced what he is now preaching...

"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Ac5:41)

Why? It is a "partaking" of Christ's sufferings.

What happens when there is a dispute between somebody and a married - individual-? What happens when the married person's spouse comes along and observes the dispute? Do they not typically join in, in support of the spouse? There is oneness.

Well, in Christ, we are also "one"...

"I do not pray concerning these alone, but also concerning those who will believe into Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made complete in one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and love them as You love Me." (Jn17:20-23)

When the Believer partakes of Christ's sufferings, it proves Christ's existence to the world. When they do to the Believer as they did to Jesus, and the Believer 'partakes' in it, the suffering Christian becomes proof of the reality of the Salvation that Jesus provided on the cross. The world may not see Jesus, directly; but they see "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col1:27)

Of course, the 'dramatic' sufferings are the spectacular ones, where there is blood and gore, burning, the sounds of the cracking whip, breaking bones, the screams of pain, and whatnot. The stuff that makes for popular reading in such as Foxe's "Book of Martyrs".

But what about the not-so-spectacular? What about the temptations from fellow-employees at the work place. What about the endurance of the Believer married to an unbelieving spouse, and what goes on is behind

closed doors, and nobody else knows about it? What about the words and politics in the apostate congregation, and the True Believer hasn't yet surmised that the rest (including the pastor) are wolves, even though they have Biblical-seeming rhetoric, and so this lone individual struggles with their sly and clever arguments for why he is in (alleged) "rebellion" because he is not submitting to their "chain-of-command", even though he knows in his heart that what is going on is not Godly or Scriptural, but he is also trying to obey the command about "not forsaking the assembling" (Heb10:25)

Peter says,

"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. According to them He is blasphemed, but according to you He is glorified." (vs14)

Jesus also said...

"Blessed are you when they shall revile and persecute you, and shall - SAY- every evil word against you falsely because of Me. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven, for in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a grain measure, but on a lampstand, and it shines for all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." (Mt5:11-16)

If we (Believers) are doing our job as "salt", when salt gets into wounds, it stings. It really hurts. And the unbeliever does not like it. Thus they will yell out, flail around and "gnash their teeth" (Ac7:54) If we are doing our job as lights, the Light exposes sin for what it is, and those who were having fun find themselves naked and bare; and embarrassed people often lash out at what they perceive to be the 'fault' of their embarrassment... the one who exposed them.

But again; and Peter repeats this how-many-times in this epistle?

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a meddler in other people's matters" (vs15)

Are not the first few items obvious. But what about the "meddler"? We shine as lights...but we are not called to be "holier than thou". When Paul says,

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts." (1Co4:5)

God does not commission us to go 'digging'. If we know or suspect a neighbor is involved in immoral behavior, does our "light" come on, we go bust in their door, march into their bedroom or whatever and condemn them right there, on-the-spot? That's not our job. And if they get riled up for our having busted in, they will have every right to toss us out on our ear and sue for damages to the door...and maybe we can expect to be properly whacked for invasion.

This may be an extreme, but is given as an example to make the point. If we make the example extreme enough, perhaps it will allow the generic concept to infiltrate into the hard hearts of the pharisees who seem to think it is -their- duty to go around, looking for every fault that lies in everybody else...as they self-appoint themselves to clean up EVERYBODY ELSE. How many pharisees think it is their responsibility to tell everybody in the world to STOP -DOING- all the little things they do? Or they will take the approach to tell the unbeliever that their behavior "offends" them because... "I'm a Christian" (snif, sniff, hoity, toity)

How many times have I not heard of "christians" telling a non-believer to stop saying "X, Y, or Z" words, because "I'm a Christian and it offends me".

Remember, we often use the example: Dogs bark, ducks quack and sinners sin. Sinners use profanity. That is the nature of the sinner. To tell off a sinner, commanding them to stop swearing, would be every bit the same as to tell a dog, "Stop barking". The dog continues to bark, so we yell loudly, "I SAID...!! STOP BARKING!!!!" What is the dog likely to do? He's not only going to keep on barking, he's also going to show you his fangs, and don't be surprised if you maybe get bit. Dogs bark. That's what they do.

Sinners sin. That's what they do. Sinning includes the use of profanity. The only way a sinner will stop using profanity, from the heart, is when the heart changes. Instead of trying to stop profanity, Christians should be living righteous lives displaying Christ's Light and goodness, and reasoning (Is1:18, Ac17:2) with them regarding Salvation.

When a Christian "meddles" in things not their business, and the sinner gives them trouble for it, well... the Christian just "got bit". Thus, Peter says, "Don't meddle". Like the saying: Let the sleeping dog lie. It's owner (in the sinner's case, God) will take care of it.

Don't be a Christian who is deserving of judgment. (vs17) If we do wrong we will experience the testing fires. (1Co3:13) Don't worry about the world's judgment. God will judge them in due time; that's not our job. And if

we get the kind of punishment we do for our wrongdoings, just imagine the fate awaiting the unbelievers. (vs18) Please read those verses.

But if our lives are righteous, and the trouble that comes our way is truly 'persecution' (not 'prosecution'), there is no cause for being ashamed, but...

"...let him glorify God in this regard" (vs16)

And if God wills that we suffer...

"...commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (vs19)

Of this Jesus said...

"And do not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who has power to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Therefore whoever shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father in Heaven..."

But don't you dare deny Him! Because...

"...whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in Heaven." (Mt10:28-33)

Elders: Shepherd the Flock - (1Peter 5:1-4)

"The elders who are among you I exhort: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly..." (vs1-2)

Where do Biblical pastors come from? What are the requirements to be a pastor? Or... did we just change terminology just now?

For the greater percentage of people who are city dwellers, perhaps the relationships are not familiar? A "shepherd" is a person who tends to sheep. Sheep typically roam and feed in "pastures"; tracts of land with edible vegetation. Thus, working in the context of pastures, another name for shepherd is "pastor". When Jesus had risen from the dead he has a pointed conversation with Peter, and commands him to "feed My lambs/sheep" (Jn21:15-17)

Thus, let's understand one thing at the get-go: To whom does the Church belong? Whose is the congregation? Jesus said, "feed -MY- sheep". Peter opens with the "flock of -GOD-".

Over the years how many times haven't I heard from the lips of so-called pastors about: My church, my ministry, my congregation. And there will then also be typically two directions they pursue: Fund raising, and Domination.

The pastorate is a "trust" (vs3) It is God's congregation which has been "entrusted" to the caretaker, the "overseer" (vs2), the pastor/shepherd. How does the minister dispatch his duties?

Yes, as we look out over christendom today we see all sorts of things going on. Pleas to send in your "seed" money so that you can "reap a harvest". Periodically I might happen past TBN, and see this particular young-ish preacher (I don't know his name) talking to a huge stadium -full- of people. He apparently had the right program to "grow-a-church".

My background before I "came out of [Babylon]" (Re18:4) was Evangelical Free and various varieties of (conservative/fundamental) Baptist. The E-Free's didn't do these things as much... I think they were sliding into apostasy a bit quicker than the baptists were. But in how many Baptist churches haven't I seen campaigns and programs to grow a "bus ministry" to bus the kids in for Awana and Sunday school, the financial thermometers, the badgering messages to "tithe"; to bring the tithe "into the storehouse"; to make "faith promises"...even when people were too poor and didn't have it -to- give.

"For if something is presented eagerly, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have." (2Co8:12)

Also, many Baptist pastors are scarcely different from catholic priests in terms of the authoritarianism of their position. They believe themselves to be 'rulers', and the congregation is to 'obey' them. (And if you don't believe this, see vs5, next lesson; said tongue-in-cheek) Even if the pastor is dead-wrong, they will drag out the "chain-of-command" logic to keep people in subservience to their error. And boy oh boy, you had better be 'in' church everytime the doors are open, otherwise you are considered to be a "backslider". That's for those who are 'members'.

I have also been in a couple of situations to observe as an outside 'contractor' in places where I was not in attendance or membership. Once as the sound technician for a company that was providing PA sound and archive recording services for a Baptist conference. Another time as a person who free-lanced in installing sound systems...and being a Christian, I figured that my (lower) fees would be a service to churches, to other "christians", for the "Lord's work". Without going into details, I have seen pastors behave like tyrants, as people sitting on high horses on great "power trips", barking orders. Out of these that were bad experiences, there was only one (1), where a church had reneged on a deal where I had already ordered the necessary parts (with "christians" I didn't think that 'contracts' should be necessary. Christians, being 'honest', their "yes" should mean "yes" Ja5:12. I didn't yet realize that those who called themselves "christian" might not actually be so), and when a new pastor came and heard about it, in an attitude of apology on behalf of the church, saw to it to make it right, and had me go ahead and install their new PA system, as it had been originally agreed upon. (It would be interesting to know what he is up to these days.) (These things were many years ago)

This is one reason why pastors should not be in control of the purse strings. Why pastors should not engage in building programs.

What is the pastor's job? Well, actually, it is so much more than a "job"! ...but you understand what I'm saying.

"Shepherd the flock..."

Does a shepherd sit on a high horse, with sword brandished, barking out commands to the sheep? That's likely an effective way to scatter the sheep. The 'boss' for whom I had been running the sound for that conference, himself was an alleged 'new' (baby) "christian"...and he was getting a very sour taste in his spirit for that particular bunch of Baptist pastors. Little by little he got 'out' of the "christian" involvements that he was doing, with some bitterness.

A shepherd "feeds" the sheep. He "tends" to the sheep. (Jn21:15-17) When the pasture gets eaten down and trampled, the shepherd leads them to fresh pasture. He leads them to "waters of rest" (Ps23:2) When they get tape worms, he gives them medicine. When the wool gets long,

he shears them. When lambs are being born in the middle of a late spring snow, he takes them into the barn, or perhaps even the warm house, to help nurse them along. With all this personalized attention, the sheep get to 'know' the shepherd. When he comes around with some oats in a bucket and calls out, "Come sheeep!" they come around eagerly, "Bah, bah!" The sheep hear the voice and they "know" the shepherd. (Jn10:27)

That last sentence comes from Jesus' words. Jesus is the "chief Shepherd" (vs4)

Thus, the "elders" who are shepherds/pastors are not serving on their own authority. They are 'under' the Chief Shepherd. Whatever the Chief commands, they do. When the pastor is behaving as he should, the sheep know him, because they know the Chief. They see that the Chief and the pastor are working in coordination with each other. Just as the sheep come to the Chief, they also trust the pastor...when the pastor is executing his duties faithfully. The pastor is a "steward", and the most important thing regarding stewards is...

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1Co4:2)

There is not one word in this passage about all the programs and attitudes that so many preachers evince today. And the things that this passage says, most preachers are -NOT- DOING!

When a sheep is in need, the shepherd leads the sheep. The lamb is physically picked up and carried. An older sheep is nudged or guided. At shearing time there is a lot of "hands-on".

There is also "driving" of sheep. When the sheep don't know the shepherd, they can sometimes be quite willful in the direction they want to go. They will try to go ANYWHERE BUT where the shepherd wants. If there is the tiniest hole in the fence, they will ram their heads into it, trying to charge out the fence. As sinners...

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, each one to his own way;" (Is53:6a)

What did Jesus, the Chief Shepherd do for the wayward sheep?

"..and Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is53:6b)

Perhaps...like that new pastor that came to the church, in the middle of their building program that his predecessor had started, MAKING AMENDS for his predecessor's faults.

You see...being a pastor is not a "glory position". When a shepherd works with sheep, the shepherd often gets dirty and smelly. But in dealing with

the little lambs, it also involves a great deal of compassion, tenderness and delicacy.

Peter calls himself a "fellow elder". He had also witnessed the "sufferings of Christ"... not only when Jesus was crucified, but also as he shared in Christ's sufferings when he, himself, was persecuted. In other words, he "witnessed" some of Christ's sufferings upon his own person.

How many pastors that you know are of this kind of heart? And yet, this is what the call to ministry is about. A person going into the ministry, if he is truly a man of God, needs to "count the cost" (Lk14:28) If he can't take the heat, he shouldn't be "in the kitchen". If his call is truly from God, God knows his qualifications.

This is why we've made the observation on a few other occasions: If there is ANYTHING ELSE you would do, then DO NOT BE A PASTOR. If you think the pastorate is a "cush" job, where you can preach on Sunday morning, and draw your salary, then FORGET IT! You are NOT QUALIFIED. Your heart is not right. A pastor is a very special person; not because he is so 'great', but because he is a servant.

"But Jesus called [the disciples] to Himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." (Mt20:25-26)

And when the shepherd has done his job well, what is his attitude?

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do." (Lk17:10)

If a pastor is receiving accolades and great glory while on this earth (like we see many famous names these days), there may be serious question as to whether or not he is truly God's servant.

Yes, the pastor gets a reward, and it is one that nobody else gets, the "crown of glory". But it isn't received while standing behind the pulpit delivering his skillful oration; but when the "Chief Shepherd appears" (vs4) The pastor's praise does not come from men, but he works to hear, in that day from the Master,

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will appoint you administrator over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Mt25:21)

Humility - (1Peter 5:5-7)

"Likewise you that are younger, be subject to your elders. Yes, all of you be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (vs5)

Is Peter contradicting himself with this verse? When he said the elder (pastor) is not to exercise "dominion" (vs3), is he contradicting that by telling the younger to be subject to them? Some of those on their high horses, we addressed in the previous lesson, use this verse to legitimize their brandished sword and barked commands.

Let us understand that there are two kinds of "elders". There is an elder based on 'rank', and also elder based on 'age'.

Based on how Paul encourages Timothy to not be intimidated by his own youthfulness (1Ti4:12), and yet was commissioned as a minister as a "man of God" (1Ti6:11); we see a -young- (by age) Timothy appointed as an -elder- (in rank). A leader who happens to be younger in age. Something not all that different from David, who was taken as a lad, tending sheep, to become in-training to become Israel's king. (1Sa16:11,17:33, 2Sa7:8)

So when we see the two in print, how do we know which is which? Context. In vs1-4 is it not obvious that Peter is talking about leadership. Rank. But now in vs5 he speaks of those who are "younger". The direct comparison between the younger and elder. These are not exhortations based on rank, but again like 3:8, after having considered hierarchy of various sorts, now everybody together as co-equals.

The younger being subject to elders is just like "children obey your parents in the Lord" (Eph6:1) Even as Jesus did at the age of 12...

"And He went down with [Joseph and Mary] and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them;" (Lk2:51)

In rank Jesus was/is Lord of the universe. But when He took on the form of humanity and humbled Himself (Php2), as a youngster He submitted to His earthly 'parents'.

Should Christian youth be any different? But what do we see today? Please consider what predominates today in this regard, and form your own obvious Biblical conclusions. If you are a young person reading this, consider what changes may be necessary in your own attitudes. If you are an adult with youth under your care, how might this change your interactions with them?

However, this attitude of humility and submission should be a generic Christian quality. Remember how the disciples were verbally jousting with each other as to what?

"...as to which of them should be considered greater." (Lk22:24)

And what does Jesus say?

"And He said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But not so among you; rather, he who is greater among you, let him be as the younger, and he who leads as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves." (Lk22:25-27)

And who can forget how Jesus washed the disciples' feet...

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (Jn13:14-15)

Peter says to "be clothed with humility" (vs5) Covered in humility, like wearing clothes. Uh, let's see... where's the part where he says to be sure to have plenty of "self-esteem"? Hmmm! I don't see it anywhere. Did you see it? If you did, please forward the reference to me.

When David used the word "esteemed" it had to do with himself being "-lightly- esteemed" (1Sa18:23) Whatever man considers to be "highly esteemed" is an "abomination in the sight of God" (Lk16:15) Gamaliel was "highly esteemed" among the pharisees, but they also persecuted the disciples. (Ac5:34) Any "esteeming" the Christian should do is to "esteem others as surpassing himself" (Php2:3)

Any 'elevating' that a person does should be towards -others-. There's a song that used to be sung years ago... I doubt it would fit today's prevailing me-centered theology.

Others, Lord, yes others
Let this my motto be
Help me to live for others
That I might live like Thee

It's not just that everybody is 'equal', but each person should hold others up in their own mind as being 'better' or 'more' than themselves.

B'but... What about meeee??? My needs??? God knows all about it.

"Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares about you" (vs7)

Even though I suspect that most people reading these live with life's necessities adequately covered...the fact that you are reading this from a computer (that you can 'afford' a computer), suggests that you are not on your last shoe strings...compared to many in other parts of the world who are starving to death, and such things. You are being taken care of. In how many cases might the scales be tipping a bit on the heavy side? There's plenty to eat. And yet, in our societies of great plenty, there seems to be this mentality that we need to 'scratch' to survive. This lesson is being prepared in December, and the news recently showed the behavior of many on "Black Friday" as they punched, kicked, pulled, and shoved against others to gain entrance into shopping malls to scramble after 'things'. That same scramble mentality exists regarding jobs, careers, and financial 'survival'. How does a laid-back 'humble' person exist in that kind of world? If we don't scramble, what I might have gotten, somebody else will get. Just like the sparrows that scramble and flutter against each other at the first piece of bread I throw out during the summer nesting time.

Don't worry about it.

"Observe the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by being anxious is able to add one cubit to his stature? So why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Mt6:26-34)

And... are you worried about "proper recognition" for a "job well done"?

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that HE MAY EXALT YOU IN DUE TIME" (vs6)

Adversary: the Devil - (1Peter 5:8-11)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (vs8)

This epistle has mentioned "suffering" on numerous occasions. We've observed several of them, and noticed the parallel between the Believer's sufferings and those that Jesus endured. There were others we did not address, but assuming you (the reader) read them as your Bible/s were opened through the series. (It was not the intent for this series to be totally exhaustive, covering every little last word.)

What is the source of suffering? What is the source of adversity? What sort of entity would deliberately cause distress upon another? A friend? A lover? Like that old song: "You always hurt the ones you love"?

No. Typically, deliberate injury originates from an ENEMY. Someone who stands IN THE WAY of the progress of one's benefit: by definition, an ADVERSARY. In any athletic event the opposing contestants are 'adversaries' to each other. The goal of each is to forward their own agenda, while seeking to thwart their opponent. In some sports, like golf, each player plays at their own personal best, and the one with the lowest score wins. In others like football or hockey, there is not only the effort to win points, but also to deliberately block the opponent's efforts to gain points. The acts of "deliberately blocking" are the acts of an ADVERSARY.

Adversarial deeds might take different forms. In football there will be the full contact tackles. In hockey the body checks. But there is also the subterfuge: look one way, while passing the ball the other; look one direction and suddenly veer the other way. Fake a pass, and throw to somebody else. By definition: "deception". Catch the opponent off-guard, and take advantage while they are less-than-prime.

In sports it is for the gaining of more points than the opponent, and perhaps the worst that happens is some broken bones, or sprains. It is not usually the intent to kill.

However, warfare -is- meant to kill. And we are in a spiritual warfare. In Eph6:10-17 Paul speaks of our defense against the spiritual forces in the heavenlies. About the "weapons" of our "warfare" not being "carnal" (2Co10:4) And the duty of the "watchman" to warn of the enemy's approach. (Ezk3:17, 33:7) Which is what Paul did with all those churches he planted during his missionary days...

"Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Ac20:31)

That is what Peter is doing here. Again, Peter and Paul in agreement. Peter has addressed many things; at least half of them, seemingly, in conjunction with the accompanying trials and sufferings. And now he closes off the epistle describing the -source- of those afflictions that he's been talking about so much. Is it that there are these struggles, and (Ho hum! Sigh!) we must just grin and bear it; such is life...boo hoo? Sail-a-vee? Poor me, poor me? No! There is a source. And it is not a piñata, where the person is blind folded, not knowing where to strike with the stick. In our fight it is "not as one who beats the air" (1Co9:26) There is a definite enemy who we are up against.

Where did he come from? Originally the devil/satan was the "anointed cherub that covers" (Ezk28:14) This is described in the article "Treason" [link] He was as close to God in fellowship that any created being could boast. He is described:

"You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you." (Ezk28:15)

And what was his iniquity?

"How you are fallen from the heavens, O shining one, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of the Mighty God; I will also sit on the mount of the appointed assembly, in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." (Is14:12-14)

When did this take place? I don't know that Scripture says. We are only given to understand -that- it happened. And when God created the universe in perfection, something which the "sons of God" and "morning stars" rejoiced at (Job38:7), satan, also known as the serpent/dragon (Re12:9) was there, ready. Just as there seems to be communication between God and satan regarding mankind now (Job1&2), was there communication between God and the Heavenly Hosts before He created the earth and man? I don't know that Scripture says. God's plans for man and his salvation were established "before the foundation of the world" (Jn17:24, Eph1:4, 1Pt1:20) Does this mean the angels were also privy to the intent of those plans?

At any rate, satan first approaches Eve. (Gen3) Then tries to do away with Jesus through Herod (Mt2), and then at the crucifixion. (Gen3:15) And when he was unsuccessful (1Co15:55) he proceeded to persecute anybody who would follow Christ...

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev12:17)

So... what is our mantra when we sin? "The devil made me do it!" ? Why do we sin?

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed. Then, when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." (Ja1:14-15)

This is how satan approached Eve. We won't go into detail, you can read it in Gen3. Satan did not hog-tie her, put a head-lock on her, stuff her face into the tree and force her: Here, EAT IT!!! No. He appealed to her emotions; put doubt in her mind about God's veracity; and introduced delusions of grandeur: You will be as God!

In other words, if Eve did this thing, she would become a follower of satan. How? Remember, he had the same delusions, "I will be like the Most High". If he could have Eve lusting after the same thing, they would become co-equals in this lust: satan having come up with the idea, and Eve following him; and then through Adam following his wife's wiles, the whole human race.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to every person, because everyone sinned." (Rom5:12)

Most of humanity follows satan; they are his followers at birth. (Ps51:5) Humanity is sinful "by nature". (Eph2:3)

But there are those "few" who 'find' the Door to Life. (Mt7:14, Jn10:9) And these are the ones the dragon is in "great wrath" about. Just like when a referee makes a ruling in favor of the other team that your team doesn't like, they start "Booing!"; to those who submit to God's righteousness God makes a ruling: "declared righteous" (Rom5:19); to which satan and his followers start booing and stomping their feet in anger. And in some cases, like is seen in many European soccer (football) matches, the stands might erupt in fights: people supportive of opposing teams exchanging words and blows.

Animosity from satan is exerted upon the Believer in many ways. As he did with Eve, he approaches spiritually and through the mind. He entices to doubts and lusts. He uses his followers in many ways: words, enticements, criticisms, arguments, politics, and ultimately also physical abuse and even martyrdom.

One reason Paul warns against the "profane and empty babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge;" is because "by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith." (1Tim6:20-21)

But just because it seems to be -merely- the arguments of logic, and "relatively benign", one should never forget that, behind those slithery smooth words is a "roaring lion" with only one purpose: to -DEVOUR-

Satan doesn't care how he gets you, whether by stealth or by full frontal assault. As long as a person has been turned AWAY FROM GOD, that is his purpose.

So, how are we to react to his messengers? Dialogue? Debate? Have a "conversation"?

"Resist him, steadfast in the faith..." (vs9a)

Paul exhorts...

"..and having done all, to stand" (Eph6:13)

There's been a film series on Public TV the past year called, "The War". It is a documentary about WW2. One of the things that amazed (and sometimes dismayed) the American forces in the Pacific was how the Japanese would try to not allow themselves to be captured, even when clearly defeated. Their mentality was to "fight to the death". Never give up. To be captured was a great "dishonor". To not have given their life: "dishonorable". If necessary, better to commit suicide than be captured.

The Christian life is every bit the same; only, for a much higher calling. The Japanese did it for their (false) emperor god. We, for the Most High, Creator of all things and "ruler over the kings of the earth"; to the glory of Jesus Christ who "who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev1:5)

So... the pretenders will call us "judgmental" for standing firm on God's Word. OF COURSE THEY WILL! They do not know God, that's why they object to the verity that God's Word "stands firm in the heavens" (Ps119:89) They follow "the devil as their father" (Jn8:44) They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

We need to watch out..

"...so that Satan should not take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his purposes ('devices' kjv)." (2Co2:11)

Jesus warned...

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Mt7:15)

Now... often it seems, as we find ourselves as 'individuals' scattered here and there, we feel like: "I alone am left; and they seek my life to take it away" but God encourages...

"Yet I have left in Israel seven thousand, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1Ki19:10,14,18)

What Peter says...

"..knowing that the same afflictions are experienced by your brethren in the world" (vs9b)

Remember, a few lessons ago Peter says of the fiery trials to "not be astonished...as though something unheard of was happening to you" (4:12) It is part-n-parcel of the Christian life. Jesus promised...

"In the world you have affliction; but be of good courage, I have overcome the world." (Jn16:33b)

Remember that the Holy Spirit resides. (Rom8:9) As we feed on the "pure milk of the Word" (2:2) we grow into "living stones" (2:5) built on the foundation with Jesus being the "chief cornerstone" (2:6) Such a structure -is- "steadfast". With Jesus Christ it is not our battle, but the "battle is Jehovah's" (1Sa17:47)

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1Co15:57-58)

Whatever trials we may have, they are part of our growth and testing. It may be satan as an adversary, but the Lord, being the 'clever' sort that He is, "alone wise" (Ro16:27, 1Ti1:17, Ju1:25), is actually using satan's work against him, and instead strengthens us through it, because...

"...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom8:28)

And so the result is God's work "after you have suffered a while" to...

"...perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (vs10b)

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph2:10)

"To Him be the glory and might forever and ever. Amen" (vs11)

Like Precious Faith - (2Peter 1:1)

"..to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." (vs1b)

There is no need to review how this epistle is written to Believers from a Gentile perspective along "with us" (Jews), as the first epistle was written. We've already said as much about that as is necessary in the introduction to 1Peter. So let's just 'jump in' here, shall we.

Peter speaks of "like precious faith".

Let us observe two points about this little phrase. When people don't understand the significance of 'words', it then becomes the basis for many false beliefs. In the time period during which this study is being written there is a view about Jerusalem, that it is "home" to three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Judaism is considered to be the religion of the Jews. Predominantly world-wide "christianity" is viewed (by unbelievers) to be the religion of Rome, as indicated by the various "churches" celebrating crucifixes and statues to the Queen of Heaven. And Islam, even though they turn their backs to the Dome of the Rock, facing Mecca to bow, they claim a lineage back to Abraham through Ishmael. Islam, that worships the moon god, of course did not even exist prior to the 7th century. Babylon, while originating around the 25th century BC with Nimrod, it's Roman mutation with the false "christian" label did not come about until the 3-4th century AD. Babylon, of course, worships all sorts of things: primarily the sun and the Queen of Heaven. That leaves Judaism. What Judaism is today may contain some of the trappings of the Scriptures; but the most devout Judaists are also Kabbalists who, instead of worshipping God, do as "christianity's" -charismania- does, delving into mystical teachings and special spiritualistic powers and manifestations.

Thus, -NONE- of these three belong to the "GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND ISRAEL" (1Ki18:36) as Elijah addressed God in prayer as he faced off with the 400 prophets of Baal in preparation to offer the sacrifice without physically lighting the fire...where God responded by not only lighting the fire, but also consuming the entire offering, the stones and water. (vs38)

The word "like" indicates things that are the 'same'. This is something Babylon of Rome is pretending to do as they seek to bring all religions under their collective umbrella. Even those claiming to be "evangelical" and/or "fundamental" have been joining in this unity; as John Paul II promulgated in 1995, "Ut Unum Sint" (That they may be one), outlining how unity of all religions would be achieved when all had returned "home" to "mother church" (at Rome); and evangelicals have joined in with their ECT "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (1992-1997). And more has happened since those pivotal events.

But notice how Peter says "like PRECIOUS FAITH". Faith, another term for "beliefs"; and when we understand Scripture (and words) properly, ultimately it refers to "doctrine". What the world is doing to achieve unity is to 'abandon' doctrine. Different doctrines/teachings, by definition, put up 'walls' of distinction between those who hold those different beliefs. Today's unity is "tearing down walls". If there are many religions, all holding to unique distinctives; if there is to be unity amongst them, the only way that can happen is to compromise beliefs and/or make changes and 'adjustments'. As many are saying: to agree on the main points, and agree to disagree on the "non-essentials".

The -agreement- Peter is talking about is the Doctrine/Faith, comparing Jewish Believers and Gentile Believers. He says that the two Beliefs are the -SAME-. They are a-LIKE.

It's like the episode of "Kid Nation", mentioned earlier in this series. (I have not watched it. The few little snips I saw indicated a bunch of pre-programmed snivelly whiny little snots; and I was not interested.) But the one episode, at some competition they had a chance to win either a miniature golf course, or a library of "holy books". The kids chose the books; and started reading the Torah and Bible side-by-side. They were amazed to find that the two were the same. Thus, in their minds "Judaism" and "Christianity" were the same.

And... if Judaism and Christianity are taken back to their original roots: EXACTLY RIGHT! They -are- the same.

When Judaism is not corrupted with demonic mysticism, and they stick with the Scriptures, not the writings of their historically famous rabbis and their man-made traditions (Mk7:9), Judaism is based on the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. When Christianity is taken back to its roots, the "disciples" of Jesus (Ac11:26), not corrupted by Babylon, it too is based on Jesus Christ, the Seed of David (Jn7:42), the Seed of Abraham (Gen21:12,22:17-18); the Son of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.

Today's Judaism came about because when Jesus came "to His own...His own did not receive Him" (Jn1:11) They rejected and crucified Him. When all the Law, Psalms and Prophets spoke of Jesus (Lk24:44), and they rejected Him when He came; what was left for them to base their religion on? When they were lacking the reality of Faith in Christ, the fulfillment (Mt5:17) of all those centuries of animal sacrifices, what was left? Nothing but emptiness. If a person doesn't have the Real Thing, how do they come up with meaning? About all that is left is the feelings and emotions of spirituality and mysticism. (Same reason charismania came out of the dead pretend [c]hristianity)

And of course the church became infiltrated from Babylon. Most of the symbols on the platform (altar) of most churches are pagan in origin and

symbolism...thus, some True Believers are deceived into thinking that everything called "christian" is of Jesus Christ; but most within that system are not even True Believers! But there are those here and there who are finally wising up and "coming out of [Babylon]" (Rev18:4)

Thus, when so "few" truly know the Lord (Mt7:14) in the midst of so much deception, is not our Faith most precious. Something can be "precious" for various reasons: Due to the 'rarity' of where it is found, and the 'price' that was required to obtain it.

Gems (precious stones) are considered "precious" due to their rarity, compared to the mass of regular rocks, gravel and sand. Gravel can be scooped with mechanical shovels and piled into trucks. But gems are handled individually as unique pieces. When one considers the proliferation of world religions, and then understands just exactly how few a "few" is (Mt7:14), the few on earth who truly know the Lord is a "precious" commodity. Jesus said it would be like the "days of Noah". In Noah's day there were only eight (8), out of all the world's millions, who were kept safe through the flood.

But also, our Faith is precious because the cost to obtain it was the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Pt1:19) What is more precious than that which is obtained when somebody gives their own life on behalf of another. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (Jn15:13) What more is there to give? One's own life, in death, is the ultimate payment.

It is -this- Faith that both Jew and Gentile share a-LIKE; those who have received Jesus Christ unto Salvation. Through Jesus Christ both Jew - and- Gentile have access to the Father in reconciliation. (Eph2:16)

"..that He might RECONCILE them both TO GOD in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." (Eph2:16)

Let's back-track a moment with that word. Those world religions, mentioned earlier, who are busy uniting: they also use the word "reconciliation"; but not the same way Christians do. When they tear down doctrine (faith), they call that a "reconciliation" of all their godless factions - to- EACH OTHER.

But notice that the reconciliation of Salvation which Jesus Christ provides is a reconciliation of the sinner -to- GOD the FATHER. Sins and iniquities separate the sinner from God (Is59:2) Thus, the Salvation 'equation' includes "repentance toward God" (Ac20:21) This reconciliation does not include people repenting for "generational" sins, nor of ethnic diversities, toward each other. This reconciliation is the sinner coming to God in repentance. And then the "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (ac20:21) is that which God gives us to reconcile the sinner -to- God.

When the Jew repents toward God and receives Jesus; and when the Gentile repents toward God and receives Jesus; the result is that they -both- have done so, side-by-side, coming 'to' the -same- God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel; -both- 'reconciled' -to- God. They have -both- been saved by Jesus Christ, they -both- claim the same (like) precious faith.

Thus it is possible to do as Paul says,

"Now I exhort you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all SPEAK THE SAME THING, and that there be NO DIVISIONS among you, but that you be completely fitted together in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT." (1Co1:10)

It is not today's vernacular "Judaism". It is not today's vernacular "Christian". It is the "RIGHTEOUSNESS of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (vs1)

"...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Tit3:5-7)

You see: again, Paul and Peter agree. Remember how Peter spoke of the "living hope" (1Pt1:3)

This, again, in contradistinction to what the world is preaching today with self-actualization, self-esteem, etc. I saw a little snippet of a guest on Oprah summarizing what she had been saying during that particular show (which I hadn't seen) about needing to "step into your own esteem". Man's power and virtue comes from -self-. And today's religions are promoting the same thing: meditate, mantracize, become INTRO-spective, and ultimately let the god-like power forge FROM WITHIN.

But the Faith that both Believing Jew and Believing Gentile share, coming from the -same- God, is GOD's righteousness. Just as the Faith we possess is the "faith -OF- Christ" (Ga2:16), it is "not of ourselves, it is the GIFT OF GOD" (Eph2:8b)

Life and Godliness - (2Peter 1:2-4)

"..as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the full true knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue," (vs3)

Again: something about which Paul and Peter are in agreement. If you start up your Bible software and do a search on the words "grace" & "peace" (vs2), you will find that every single epistle written by Paul begins with greetings including these words. In some cases he also includes "mercy". There's one subscriber who, when he writes to me, typically signs off with "grace and peace".

In this setting, what do these words mean? Remember, in 1Peter we observed how that back in those days people began their letters the way we typically end ours. If we write a business letter we might sign off with "Sincerely". If it is business, but less formal perhaps "Best Regards" or just "Regards". If people know each other they might sign off with "Love", or "Love and Kisses", or other such things. When Christians communicate with each other they often sign off with special words or phrases indicating either their own Faith in Christ, and/or some pithy exhortation to the other to "Keep Looking Up!", or something like that.

What is the gist behind "grace and peace"? In this case "grace" is not necessarily speaking of God's "saving grace" by which He extends mercy regarding our sin. Grace also means (even before those things) elegance, charm, pleasantness, beauty. When we live Godly lives, and worship, it is in the "beauty of holiness" (1Ch16:29, Ps29:2, 96:9) Peace adds to that the aspect of tranquility; absence of hostilities and quarrels; a sense of security and contentment.

Peter is wishing upon his readers the best of well-wishes to be "multiplied"; overflowing. What is the basis for these things for the Christian? We'll come back to this in a moment.

It also involves "life and Godliness" (vs3) In Fiddler on the Roof they joyously sing, "To life, to life lachayim!" For the world this is as far as it goes. For the Christian this joy is also tempered by Godliness.

In other words: All the good things that come in life, I wish them upon you, along with all holiness..."as obedient children" who are also "holy in all conduct" (1Pt1:15) When the world celebrates they knock the beer mugs together, or chink the wine glasses, as the alcohol then takes them away into unbridled debauchery and "coarse jesting" (Eph5:4)

But the Christian's joy includes Godliness, as we also "escape the corruption that is in the world through lust" (vs4b)

How do we combine these two elements? How do we have holy joy?

It is in what we know... or should we say -WHO- we know.

When Elisha's servant awoke that one morning and saw all the Syrian armies surrounding Dothan, he was fearful, exclaiming, "Alas my master! What shall we do?" (2Ki6:15) He was not experiencing "grace and peace". He was not sure regarding his life, as to how long it was going to last that day. All he knew about was what he saw: the vast armies. He did not know that God's armies were surrounding Syria's armies and vastly outnumbered them. (vs17)

Elisha's servant was not familiar with God's "divine power". He knew -of- God from being an Israelite and Elisha's servant. But he did not have a "full true knowledge of God".

Now, if you are using any other translation besides the VW-edition or LITV, you will see only the word "knowledge". (LITV says "full knowledge") In many places the Greek word "gnosis" is used, which means "a general knowledge". That's what Elisha's servant had regarding God.

But in this passage Peter uses a different word "epignosis" meaning "precise and correct knowledge" coming from the word "epiginosko" meaning "to become thoroughly acquainted". This is the way in which Elisha knew God. He was not worried; he was at peace and not worried about life. He knew that God was not only "up there" (someplace); but also knew that God's power was in effect and available against the Syrian armies.

Many people know -about- God. There are also many Believers who know about God, but if they are not growing in God's Truth, they stagnate. What is our means of spiritual growth? Going back to the previous epistle, remember?

"..desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may GROW thereby" (2Pt2:2)

Where does FULL TRUE (precise and thorough) KNOWLEDGE of God come from? From the Scriptures. Again, an argument for -faithful- translations of God's Word. If the translation is not accurate to WHAT GOD SAID, how can it be considered "precise"? You see, again, why we periodically say that the modern perversions, the ones that don't convey what God -SAID-, are works of God's enemies! If a person immerses himself in one of them, their knowledge of God is -not- "precise" nor thorough. If wrong words are used, it is not "true" knowledge. It is false. It does not conform to God's nature: Jesus said of Himself, "..I am the Truth.." (Jn14:6)

And also: if all a person realizes from this passage is the matter of "gnosis" knowledge of God; well... certainly... a perversion will give that to a

person... a "general" knowledge of God. But if a person understands that Peter is actually talking about "epignosis" full true knowledge, then the need for -faithful- translations becomes more clearly defined... and certainly NOT a 'paraphrase'!

Many people of the world have a 'general' knowledge of God: that He is 'somebody' (they know not who), in their minds 'way out there' (someplace). If that is the extent of one's knowledge, then is it not clear to understand why many people do not have "grace and peace", as discussed earlier. But when there is the full true knowledge of God, through regular 'feeding' of God's "precise" Word, there is no need to fear, even in the midst of one's enemies, because God "prepares a table" for us "in the presence of [our] enemies" (Ps23:5)

We come to understand God's "divine nature". We know our 'calling'. We remember the "precious promises".

God promised, "By no means will I ever leave you nor ever forsake you" (Heb13:5, 1Ch18:20)

Jesus promised, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction; but be of good courage, I have overcome the world." (Jn16:33)

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Php4:6-7)

And so, as we find ourselves in this place of security in Christ, as we come to know God, what is the result? God's "divine power" gives us all things related to "life and godliness".

"..the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, who believe according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph1:18-19)

"Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Ga2:20)

Living the Godly life is not something that -we- 'struggle' with. It is God: He has -given- us "all things" that we need. We (True Believers) become "partakers" with God. How? Of His "divine nature".

Does this mean that we, thus, "become little gods"? That is something today's apostasy and the world (i.e. religion of Oprah, etc) teaches. No. See the words for what they -say-. We "partake" of the divine "nature".

We often speak of the 'nature' of things like: Dogs bark, ducks quack, sinners sin, and Believers do deeds of righteousness. It is the dog's 'nature' to bark. Take a puppy away from its mother before it has ever heard the mother bark, and when it grows up it 'barks'. It is 'built-in' to the dog. In like manner sinners, at conception (Ps51:5), have the propensity to sin...and when they are born, begin sinning. It is the sinner's 'nature'. Sinners are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph2:3)

And so how does a Child of God have a life of godliness? God's "divine nature". When we are "born from above" (Jn3:3) of the Holy Spirit (Jn3:8) who takes up residence (Rom8:9); it -becomes- our nature to live righteously. Remember how Peter spoke of "BECOME holy in all conduct" (1Pt1:15) We, in these bodies of "corrupt--flesh and blood" (1Co15:50) were sinning. We are still -in- these corrupt bodies; but we now possess the "precious promises" (vs4) of the "inheritance...reserved in Heaven" (1Pt1:4) Thus, to go along with the promise, we are presently given to "partake" in God's nature which is characterized by "glory and virtue" (vs3b) We are not yet "like" Jesus, because He hasn't yet been "revealed" (1Jn3:2)

But in expectation of that "hope" we "purify [ourselves], just as He is pure" (1Jn3:3)

Peter says: "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (vs4b)

How does a Christian live a holy life, apart from worldliness? "Partake" of the Divine nature. How do we have a "full true knowledge" of that Divine nature? How do people usually "partake" of something, a term usually associated with eating meals? One sits to the table and starts eating. And what is our spiritual eating? The "pure milk of the Word". The Holy Scriptures, God's Word, the Bible. For anybody not fluent in Hebrew or Greek, which is most of us, a -faithful- translation of the Scriptures.

The Divine Nature is not characterized by lying, cheating, stealing, drunkenness, debauchery, adultery, murder, etc. As Christians we "escape" those things. When a person is "escaping" something, how do they do so? Typically by RUNNING AWAY.

"Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not go in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn from it and pass on." (Pr4:14-15)

Divine Nature - (2Peter 1:5-11)

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, supply with your faith virtue...." (vs5)

"For this very reason"... for -what- reason? Context. What came just before? Partaking of the divine nature, and escaping the world's corruption. When we turn away from the world, what do we replace it with? What -is- the nature of the Divine? In another place it's called the "fruit of the Spirit"? (Ga5:22)

The list is not very long, but Peter assures,

"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the full true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs8)

The list starts with FAITH: That is the foundation.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him..." (Heb11:6)

VIRTUE: Moral excellence and righteousness; goodness. When the Bible and people speak of "good vs evil", virtue is the 'good' side of that comparison. The opposites "good and bad"; virtue is 'good'. When parents leave for a few minutes telling their children to "be good" while they are gone, most children know what it means to "be good". This is that basic commodity, the knowledge of which is resident within all humanity, even the ones who know nothing of the "Bible" and such things: the God-given 'conscience'. (Rom2:15)

KNOWLEDGE: One of those things defined by itself. That which a person knows. How is Godly knowledge attained? How many times have we said it: God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible.

"..and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2Ti3:15)

SELF-CONTROL: Control of one's emotions, desires, or actions by one's own will. Would this not be one prime argument against Calvinism's doctrine of "irresistible grace". When God commands to "do good" and to "shun evil", and the temptation comes along to sin, how do we resist? Self-control. There is no such defense, for having done wrong, as: "I couldn't help it" If God commands, He does not command the impossible. He knows the devil is going to come along; but also exhorts to "resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1Pt5:9) In a very real sense, is not self-control a direct opposite of today's self-esteem. Self-esteem says that "I am great"; and thus the argument is that a person can do their own musings and desires. But any concept of self-esteem is nowhere to be found in the

Bible. But submission and obedience to Christ is. And the way we keep from the "corruption that is in the world through lust", when we have "partaken" the divine nature, is via self-control.

PERSEVERANCE: To persist in, or remain constant to a purpose. How long do we need to maintain self-control? As long as it takes. "having done all, to stand" (Eph6:13) As long as necessary. In other places also called "endurance".

"For you have need of endurance (perseverance), so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:" (Heb10:36) "And you will be hated by everyone on account of My name. But he who endures to the end will be kept safe." (Mt10:22)

"You therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ... If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." (2Ti2:3,12)

GODLINESS: The dictionary says, "Having great reverence for God; pious" But I must disagree with that. The world, that puts together something like a dictionary, does not always understand Biblical concepts. When something is defined by an "ly" ending, the "ly" ending suggests that the matter in question is "like" or "similar" to some other thing; the part of the word immediately preceding "ly". When the California governor spoke of "girlie men", that describes effeminate behavior and (perhaps) dress. Such people might often chatter excitedly in high squeaky voices (like "Ross the intern") and have body and hand gestures like emotional women have. On the other hand a manly man is one who is presumed to be tough, strong, decisive, and a bunch of other such descriptions.

Godliness is to be God-like. No, we don't have God's power, omniscience and all those characteristics. But if God hates lying, because He -is- Truth, a Godly person is going to be truthful. Since God hates perversity, a Godly person is going to be just. And if a person were to wonder about any topic that might not specifically be enumerated in the Bible, I would submit that: If Jesus was to appear in the room next to you, all questions about that topic would likely suddenly disappear. Has not God given us conscience? (Rom2:15) Are we not indwelt by the Holy Spirit? (Rom8:9) who "guides" us into all truth. (Jn16:13) So, as we "partake" through Scripture, we gain the "full true knowledge". In other words: WE KNOW. You see why these things are all "supplied" (vs5) kjv says "add". They are like stepping stones: Go to one, advance to the next, and the next; and bit by bit they all build upon each other the complete whole.

BROTHERLY AFFECTION: Tender feeling toward another, fondness, partiality toward. The concept, and perhaps 'engine' behind Jesus' words:

"And as you would have men do to you, you also do likewise to them."
(Lk6:31)

When Jesus asks Peter, "Do you LOVE Me?", this is the word Peter responds with, "You know that I am deeply FOND OF You" (Jn21) This is the start. But then we step onto the next stepping stone....

LOVE: This is the ultimate. "And we have known and believed the love that God has in us. GOD IS LOVE, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1Jn4:16) The Divine Nature, as we build upon the stepping stones, this is where we end up. The ultimate test to the world of our faith: "By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love mutually with one another." (Jn13:35) This "love mutually" shares from the concept of "brotherly affection". God's love gave the ultimate sacrifice of His own Son. (Jn3:16) And Jesus 'gave' Himself (Jn10:17-18) as the ultimate gift: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (Jn15:13) As we demonstrate our love for other Believers, this is how it is possible to "esteem others as surpassing himself" as we "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," (Php2:3,5)

All these things indicate growth toward "full true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs8)

But if we lack these qualities we are "shortsighted, even to blindness" (vs9)

What happens when there is the "promise" of a future inheritance, but year by year goes by, and we haven't yet received it? A lot of people forget. Don't we tend to think, after 30-40 years: It's been soooo long. But if all we can see is the end of our nose, how can we conceive of Eternity? That 'promise' we are waiting for is Eternal Life. How 'long' is that? It is certainly waaaaay more than a mere 30-40 years. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (Ja4:14) If the 'end-of-our-nose' is as far as we can see, essentially we are "blind". We are not seeing the promise. We are not seeing the goal and prize "of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus". (Php3:14) And what did Jesus say of those who were blind? "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into the ditch." (Mt15:14) Is that not language that describes an unbeliever!

In other words: you say you are a Christian? Then these (vs5-7) will characterize you. If not, then "faith apart from works is dead" (Ja2:26) If your life is not characterized by these few simple things, as far as anybody else seeing you is concerned: You are NOT A (true) CHRISTIAN. If a person is still wallowing around in the slop of this world, their 'end' is fearful. We'll look at this more next chapter; the one who made a start and then reverted.

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make sure of your calling and election, for if you do these things you will not ever stumble; for so an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you." (vs10-11)

Here is a place where the kjv promotes a sort-of "works-based" salvation (or security). kjv says to "make your calling and election sure". As if we could, by our efforts and self-control, -effect- the surety of our salvation. If we cannot save ourselves, it being a gift of God (Eph2:8), how could we hope to secure our salvation? The security of our Salvation is not based on our deeds, but the "love of Christ" (Rom8:35): God justifies (vs33), Christ died (vs34), and the "love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" keeps us from being separated from God (and Salvation).(vs39)

But these things (vs5-7) are a gauge as to whether or not our claim to Salvation is real. What is our nature, now that we claim to have been Saved? Are we barking or quacking?

It is not that the dog is muttering within itself: I wanna be a dog, bark bark! Let me make sure I 'remain' a dog, bark bark! If I bark long and hard enough, I'll be sure to -be- a dog! No! That's the sort of thought that emerges from the kjv wording there. But it is more like: I'm a dog, bark bark! Hear me bark? Bark bark? I'm a dog. (wiggling, jumping and wagging its tail) See the difference?

Another example here: A trailer gets connected to a vehicle, is loaded, covered with a tarp, which is strapped down. The connection includes the coupler, safety chains and lights. So, it is all connected and loaded. So now it's time to take off. The responsible driver does a walk around to "make sure" all the tie-downs are secure, the hitch secure, turns on the lights and pumps the brake to make sure the lights all work. This "making sure" is not the work of connecting and loading; it is a safety check. When pilots go flying, they walk around the plane to inspect flaps, cables, engine, and various things...he doesn't want to be in the air when something malfunctions, that -could- have been fixed (by a certified mechanic) on the ground -if- the inspection had been done. A bus driver, depending on the state, has a specific way to do a walk-around the bus to check tires, lights, fluids, etc. to make sure the bus is road-worthy. It wouldn't surprise me if truckers didn't also have similar pre-trip check lists.

Paul says,

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know, yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you; unless indeed you are ones failing the test?" (2Co13:5)

What is the test? Does the person share in the Divine nature? Have they "partaken" of it? What are the criteria to know if the person's claims are real? Do they bark, or quack? The Divine nature consists of Faith, Virtue,

Knowledge, Self-control, Perseverance, Godliness, Brotherly affection and Love. Do these qualities -characterize- the person? Or is the mouth continually letting loose with gutter talk? Does the person continually fly off the handle? Is there nothing good about them? Do they not evince any love toward Believers? etc?

If a creature comes waddling up, quacking; you know it is not a dog. If it gnashes its fangs and barks, you know it is not a duck. If it continually spews profanities, hates, is characterized by immorality... you know it's not a Christian. Or (if you've seen the "12 Kinds of People") they might be a terribly 'carnal' Christian, possibly due God's discipline in death or illness, or other things; God has His ways to bring the prodigal back. (1Co11:30) But at any rate is the sort whom Paul exhorts Believers to "deliver to satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1Co5:5)

But if a Believer perseveres, using lists like this one as a gauge, coupled with the self-control and perseverance to see it through, they can keep a pure life. This is part of the process to "become holy in all conduct" (1Pt1:15); and as the person thus grows in the full true knowledge of God, the "stumble" factor will also be reduced.

After years of being out of music I periodically sit down to the piano and try to plunk out something, and my fingers stumble all over the place. I know the notes on the page, but the fingers no longer follow the notes as written, as they used to be able to do. Since the Lord gave me other things to do, I have not been "diligent" with the music. Back when I was in my musical prime, a soloist might hand me the music on their way up to the platform to sing or play an instrument, and I could play just about anything at sight...because I was a "diligent" musician, continually adding to my skill with regular practice and performance. But with years of disuse, I can no longer do as I once did; even though I still have a musical ear.

As the Believer becomes weaned away from the "pure milk of the Word" (1Pt2:2) they start eating solid food. Remember? That process of growing in "full true knowledge" of God. And as I have just talked about 'practice' with music...

"But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by REASON OF USE have their understanding EXERCISED to DISCERN both GOOD and EVIL." (Heb5:14)

So...we are ready for the trip. We have checked the oil, tires, lights. What is the goal? In this case, we have tested ourselves to be sure we are, truly, Believers; and our lives are proving it with holy conduct, derived from the Divine Nature of which we have been regularly partaking as we feed on God's Word....

"..for so an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you" (vs11)

Do we arrive at Heaven's gates wondering if we are in the "right place", since all the surroundings look strange? Or do we arrive finding everything as we expected, because we have come to a Full True Knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ, and this is the place He "prepared" for us? (Jn14:3)

As we are also (richly) welcomed...

"Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt25)

Always Reminding - (2Peter 1:12-21)

"For this reason I will not be negligent to always remind you of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up with reminders," (vs12-13)

In the previous epistle Peter writes to "newborn babes" who are on the "milk of the Word" (1Pt2:2) Here he is writing to those who are "established" in the Truth. They "know" the Truth.

There are many who, when they attain to a certain level of knowledge and understanding about 'whatever' their interest is, begin to think they KNOW IT ALL. If somebody older or wiser comes along and tries to add a bit to their understanding, they turn a deaf ear. In matters of Biblical Godly Faith there are some who do a similar thing. Back when this ministry began as a monthly snail mail newsletter, I was mailing to various friends, relatives, churches that I knew. And from there, some of them would recommend it to their friends. But also, many almost immediately "unsubscribed". Most of those who did, I was not at all surprised. In some cases they also would add nasty comments on the envelope, along with "return to sender". They knew what I stood for, and it was not their cup-o-tea. But one surprised me. An aunt by marriage to an uncle who had been in the ministry; and even after he divorced her, she remained a pillar of "christian" solidarity, going to church, supporting missionaries, read her Bible and daily devotionals regularly. One whom most would look at and call a "saint". (even by worldly standards) She wrote a short note something to the effect: 'Please take me off your list; I ALREADY KNOW ALL THAT.' Which... she likely did.

But this is what Peter is saying... I know you already know these things, but I'm going to keep reminding you anyway. Why? It doesn't matter how much a person knows, there is always something more we can learn. My background was music, and I've gotta say... I really would get tired of the prima donnas who would behave as if they were "God's gift" to the music world, but when they opened their mouths to sing, one wanted to cover the ears because it was soooo awful! For any of you who have seen bits of TV's "American Idol", think of some of Simon Cowle's comments to the REALLY BAD performers...many times they thought they were "pretty good", and when put down, would leave angry. But the ones who were actually 'good' at what they do, often would be of the attitude, "I was not at my best" or some other hesitancy. When watching some documentaries one thing I have noticed about the "experts" who actually -know- what they are talking about: They are also typically of the attitude that... "The more they know, the more they realize that they DON'T KNOW" This is true especially in the fields of medicine, astronomy, and such things. Things directly related to the discovery of God's -vast- creation.

When considering things of God, secular education reads the musings of all the various famous thinkers of past eons, and perhaps might even read through the Bible...once?... and now they KNOW IT ALL. They are now "experts" in Christianity... because they have read all the musings of other non-christians -about- Christianity.

But Peter truly KNEW the Lord. He knew Him in ways that none of us will. He saw the Lord crucified, in such a context denied knowing Him, saw the empty tomb, saw the risen Lord, and had Jesus pointedly ask, "Peter, do you love Me?" to which he could only muster, "Yes, I'm very fond of You". You see, he -understood- (experientially), from the Lord directly, the difference between "fondness" and "love" (previous lesson).

The lessons Peter learned were so profound, he wants to make sure his own hearers will -remember- what he is passing along. He remembers his own brash boast: I will never deny You. If need be, I will die with You! (Mk14:31) He knew he could not reply, "Yes, I love You" because his actions had not even measured up to "fondness".

But -WHY- should his hearers 'remember' what he is saying? Because he, Peter, the (alleged) "first pope", is saying them? The only focus he places on himself is the fact that he will shortly be giving his life for the Lord. (vs14) But he wants the reminder to -remain- after he is gone. (vs15) Thus, the -writings-. He is not even so bold as to suggest that 'this' epistle is part of Scripture; but gives us to understand the purpose of the Scriptures. It is God's continual 'reminder' to us of His laws and will.

You who know the Lord, and have perhaps read the Bible through numerous times throughout life... do you not find "new things" each time you read? Even an "old familiar" passage... you come to it -again- and suddenly a 'light' goes off, "Wow! Look at that!" People who have only read the Bible 'once', and think they now KNOW IT ALL, are blind even to the fact that they KNOW NOTHING AT ALL.

First of all, Biblical Christian Faith is not based on fables. Scoffers today like to taunt that the Bible is nothing more than "fairy tales", and also full of contradictions and inaccuracies. But Peter gives the credentials of his fellow apostles.

"we...were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (vs16)

What the Bible is, is a documentary of "eyewitness" accounts. There are scoffers today who wish somebody would take Jesus, put Him in a test tube and "prove" His existence. To -test- the resurrection today, they would wish Jesus would appear before them, be crucified (again), and then rise from the dead, within -their- view...to prove that such a thing is possible. Well, Jesus -did- it, "once for all" (Rom6:10, Heb7:27), and these Scriptures are the documentation of the witnesses who saw it happen.

There were "over five hundred" witnesses, ranging from Peter first, and ending with Paul. (1Co15:5-8)

And Jesus said to Thomas:

"Thomas, because you have seen Me (in resurrected form), you have believed. Blessed are those not seeing and yet believing." (Jn20:29)

How did they know that Jesus was not just a -mere- 'man'?

"For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And we heard this voice which came from Heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." (vs17-18, Mt17:5)

The general populace, along with John, also witnessed God's voice...

"And behold a voice out of heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt3:17)

Jesus' Deity was not a concoction of man's imaginations, but was a direct proclamation from God Himself; the "more sure word of prophecy (proclamation)" (vs19)

This, also, is how all of Scripture came about. The Bible is not a collection of fairy tales. It did not originate from man, as Paul says,

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but by a revelation of Jesus Christ." (Ga1:11-12)

Peter says...

"..knowing this first, that not any of the prophecies of Scripture came into being from personal exposition, for prophecy was not formerly brought forth by man's choice, but holy men of God spoke as they were propelled along by the Holy Spirit." (vs20-21)

I will never be anything like Peter or Paul, but I can assure you that this is a true description. There are times when working on things, either for these studies or when the VW-edition was being compiled, you get into this (for lack of a better term) 'zone'; and if you've never experienced it, you will never know what it is from mere description of words. One is in a DIFFERENT WORLD. While working on the VW-edition some years ago, spending hour-after-hour immersed in the computer programs by which the work was being done, and then it was time to "come up for air", it was as if I was suddenly in a different place...and I DID NOT LIKE having 'returned' to the "real world" in which we live. On some occasions I would find myself somewhat 'bewildered', looking around at my surroundings,

("where am I?"), as though reminding myself that I was 'in the world'; because in a very real sense, I had just spent many hours in the Lord's presence, and all my surroundings were somehow blocked out. In another kind of scenario, there are times when writing studies that there are all sorts of things tugging at my mind: the horns honking in traffic outside, or other things. Within my spirit I might be very restless, not able to focus on the lesson, but knowing I must, I force myself to sit at the computer. Maybe a little bit gets written, and then get up to pace around. By the time this happens over and over, by the end of the lesson my mind is thinking: Well, that is not a very good study! And then later come back to re-read what has been written, to be amazed at how 'well' it all fit together. It was obviously NOT 'me' doing the writing. Even though in my flesh I was in turmoil, the Holy Spirit within worked through me, IN SPITE of the physical distractions going on. Not everything around here gets written in "monk" style, as though from an isolated monastery in some remote location where all is tranquil and at peace. I VERY MUCH experience, often, the "table" the Lord sets for me "in the presence of my enemies" (Ps23:5) And that is also what gets offered for your consumption. If the Lord gives it to me that way, I then assume it is also 'good enough' for you-all on the same basis.

You see...the scholars and philosophers of the world do not understand this. To them everything is based on the world's organization and thinking processes.

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

But as Believers, we are not limited by the world's wisdom

"But he who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST." (1Co2:14-16)

This "Mind of Christ" is part of that aforementioned "Divine Nature". This is why Peter wrote: to remind his readers. Peter was not only ministering to those within ear-shot, but also to those "who will believe into [Jesus] through their word" (Jn17:20)

This is why the Scriptures were written. The Bible is God's continual reminder to us regarding "life and godliness" (vs3)

"But you continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood (to Timothy) you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed by God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2Tim3:14-17)

As Peter says in this chapter: the Full True Knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (vs2,3,8)

False Prophets- (2Peter 2:1-19)

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, through whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." (vs1-2)

Here we see the major break in the book. Chapter 1 is a synopsis of the Christian life, what Salvation is, how the Christian is to live according to the Divine Nature, and that the basis for Faith in Christ is the God-given Scriptures. The first chapter is about -us- (the Church), and what we are to consist of. Now, chapters 2-3 are about the environment in which we find ourselves, and how we are to comport ourselves within it.

First, a great deal of space is devoted to the present lesson: False Prophets. Then, those who had believed but reverted. A picture of the Righteous within the apostasy. Chapter 2 is about that which -claims- to be Christian, but is not. Then Chapter 3 is about the world at large who make no such claims, but rather scoff at God. Peter wrote this nearly 2000 years ago, and yet as we go through it, one would think it was TODAY's headlines!

So, for anybody who wonders about the true explanation of what is going on today, and what is just ahead after these things: That's what the rest of this series is about.

First off, as we look at these first two verses, if you happen to have different translations sitting around, or installed on your Bible software; do a little comparing. Jack Van Impi loves to quote from the KJV about the "Dammmmnable heresies", as he scrunches his face around to look as 'fierce' as he can. Others turn the other words of "destruct*" into things about pernicious, immorality, sensuality, shameful. But in all three cases it is the -same- Greek root, having to do with "destruction".

What the false prophets bring is destructive, resulting in destruction; and anybody who follows them travels a destructive path.

What is "destruction"? What does it mean to "destroy"? To ruin completely, spoil, tear down, break up, demolish, put an end to, defeat completely, crush, render useless. With words like these is not the meaning clear. When something has been destroyed, is anything left that is salvageable? Not likely. And in the spiritual realm, if a person has followed these ways and suffers destruction, what is it? Is that not the definition of ending up in the Lake of Fire? That which many call "Hell"...even though "hell" is not a Scriptural word; nevertheless it has become a catch-all word to indicate everlasting banishment and punishment from God with utter abhorrence. (Dan12:2, Is66:24)

And yet, when the various translations do what they do, that is the beginning of the way of the false prophet. The serpent directly contradicted God, "You shall not die the death" (Gen3:4); just as the various translations do when they change "destruction" into other (non-'destructive') words. One of the key tools of the false prophets is their perversions of Scripture. And so if the results of the activity can be lessened, then the utter corruption of the false prophets can also be overlooked. And if you happen to look this up in The Message, and see the twisting (3:16) around it has done to these two verse, it should be clear that it (The Message) is one of the prime targets of this passage; it is one of today's prophets' primary tools...unto destruction.

And as we progress through this chapter, please keep in mind that -that- is the end result. Destruction. Death. Destruction of the Faith, Destruction of Doctrine, Destruction of the Followers of Jesus, Destruction of the Church; as Jesus said...

"For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders TO LEAD ASTRAY, IF POSSIBLE, EVEN THE ELECT. Behold, I have told you beforehand." (Mt24:24-25)

Now, we know that "elect" specifically refers to Israel. (We've covered that ground on numerous other occasions; we won't again right now) But recall that 1Peter was to the "elect...sojourners of the Dispersion" (1Pt1:1-2) And this epistle is to those sharing in "like precious faith" with those addressed in 1Peter. (1:1) Thus, we can take warning regarding the same things Jesus warned the Jews. If we share in like precious faith, then we know that the enemy's onslaughts will be the same against both groups of Believers, both Jew and Gentile.

Paul says similar things...

"For I know this, that after my departure vicious wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Ac20:29-30)

Jesus warned...

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Mt7:15)

Peter describes...

"By covetousness they will exploit you with well-turned words; whose judgment of old is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (vs3)

We see several things here: Just as Peter warned about satan being "like a roaring lion" (1Pt5:8), we see the example of wolves on the hunt. When these animals are on the prowl they don't have any sympathy for the prey. It matters not if the prey is squalling in terror and pain; that only urges them on to further brutality as they begin ripping the flesh before the prey is even fully dead. Their only endeavor is to satisfy themselves; and when they are full, whatever might be left of the carcass is abandoned. They don't care.

They come in disguise. While having the heart of a lion or wolf, they come appearing as a sheep. In other words, even though they are messengers of satan, they come appearing as "angels of light" and "ministers of righteousness" (2Co11:13-15) They come claiming to be "christians", and know the proper rituals and language. They even arise out of what used to be Biblical congregations and organizations.

Their methodology is the same old tactic the serpent took with Eve. Exploitation with "well-turned words". (vs3) What is today's apostasy known for? -DIALOG- The latest term: "conversation". Dialectic: Thesis + antithesis = Synthesis. There is (God's) Truth (thesis). There is (satan's) Lie (antithesis--opposite of truth). Start mashing clever words and reasonings around, do some compromising, agreeing on the "essentials", and agreeing to disagree on the "non-essentials", and Voila! Synthesis. Synthesis, according to the dictionary: Combining of separate elements to form a coherent whole. Combining Light with Darkness and coming up with what they like to call "gray areas". Thing is, when a clear liquid in a clean beaker is introduced with even the slightest bit of a 'separate' substance, such as food coloring; it is no longer clear. It becomes murky. If that slight bit of 'substance' happens to be a poison, the person who drinks the (assuming it's) water, they will be 'destroyed'. When a person is "dead", is that not an apt object lesson of the term "destruction"?

In January's article is mentioned the jokes amongst Hispanics about their own fellow-Hispanics about "-little- felonies". By definition, a "felony" is not 'little', otherwise it is not called a felony. With similar logic, taking these first verses for what they say (destruction), not what some translators have diverted the attention to with other words, there is no such thing as a "little" or "slight" APOSTASY. Apostasy (abandonment of one's religious faith) is not done "A LITTLE BIT". When a wolf has finished with its prey, the prey is not "slightly" or "sorta" dead. It is demolished.

There are some (and my own missionary/preacher father was one of them) who view false prophets, go to their crusades and participate along with other local area pastors and churches, thinking it is an "evangelistic" event to get some people "saved".

But they will also observe (as my father used to): That they (the evangelists) have these -little- "problem areas". But it is then assumed

that: OTHERWISE (other than the little problems) they are OK, and worthy of being supported.

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for a tree is known by its fruit. Offspring of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." (Mt12:33-36)

Something we have observed over the years: Most false prophets proclaim 90-95% Truth. Remember, even satan knows the Scripture. But the "every idle word", that 5%, is the deadly part. How much poison in the water does it take to kill?

When something complex like a computer stops working, what does it take to make it malfunction and corrupt the data? All it takes is one little thing: perhaps a single component on the circuit boards, or perhaps one short or open somewhere in the circuits. ALL THE REST OF THE COMPUTER might be GOOD...but for the lack of that tiny component, the whole malfunctions.

You know that old tale: for the lack of a nail the shoe was lost, for the lack of the shoe the horse was lost, for the lack of the horse the general was lost, for lack of the general the battle was lost, for lack of the battle the war was lost, and for lack of the war the entire nation and its people were lost. An entire nation destroyed for lack of a (little) nail.

Peter enumerates various past judgments: He confirms for us that those "sons of God" of Genesis ch6 were "angels" (vs4); and they were condemned to Tartarus "reserved for judgment". What is Tartarus? It was a common vernacular term of the day (from mythology) referring to a place of judgment for god-like beings, the "Titans" (of "colossal size and strength"); is that not what Genesis tells us: "giants". (Gen6:4) There is Sodom and Gomorrah that were totally obliterated in a single day. (vs6) There was Balaam who lusted after the promised wealth if he would curse Israel; he was killed by the sword of Israel as they battled various nations as they were taking possession of the land of promise. (Nu31:8, Jos13:22)

It's one thing to speak of wolves. But what are these false prophets like in actual human terms, that we observe?

"and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of defilement and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries. Whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord." (vs10-11)

I've shared this before, but... before I had fully "come out" of Babylon (Rev18:4), while in the last church where I fellowshipped, the pastor invited me to join the Thursday morning pastor prayer meetings. Oh let me tell you!! There was some vehement praying: Satan, we've got you wrapped around our little fingers! You had better start trembling before us! We're gonna getcha!

"Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, despise rulership, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a blasphemous condemnation, but said, The Lord rebuke you. But these speak evil of things they do not know; and whatever they understand naturally, like animals without reason, in these things they corrupt themselves." (Ju1:8-10)

Recommended, along with this study, to read the entire epistle of Judas. A lot of parallel comments.

The false prophets claim to have special God-like powers, and claim to do exorcisms, and take it upon themselves to proclaim doctrines about angels and demons not found in the Scriptures. They do this under what they presume to boast is "special revelations" or a "word", etc. They even boast a whole new set of apostolic authority, even though Judas tells us that the Faith was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Ju1:3) and Paul warns about any purported -new- "gospel" that somebody (even an angel from Heaven) might come along with; he says any such thing is "accursed" (Ga1:8-9) They blab new things, but since it is extra-Biblical, they do not understand; even though they pretend to.

They have "eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin" (vs14)

We won't name names, but anybody with half-an-eyelid open to the news knows all the scandals that have rocked this church, that organization, or the other ministry. So-called preachers caught in affairs with women other than their own wives; affairs with other men; financial corruptions; and the list goes on and on.

Not to mention the latest craze: any of you who subscribe to the FBIS newsletters from WayOfLife.org will recall the mailings telling of churches instituting new programs... "Sexy Sunday" where everybody is encouraged to "wear their shorts"; or Beatles Sunday where they start things off with Beatles tunes, or Michael Jackson dance. Bringing lust and lasciviousness into the church. On a couple of occasions I have mentioned the Chuck Missler meeting to which he had brought along a bluegrass band, and during one of their numbers the female went into what might best be described as a "pole dance" (without the pole). Or the Bible school choir that prominently featured one of the girls doing hula dance to the music. These things, that used to be restricted to "certain parts" of town; to which missionaries used to be sent to "save" them; now those parts of town have

been brought directly into the church service!!! Up on the platform...sometimes called the "altar". Thus, they presume to "offer" (?) the worst of the world's filth - TO- GOD???

To repeat...

They have "eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin" (vs14)

This is not talking about the world that makes no claim to Godliness. That's next chapter. This is talking about what is called "church", and the false prophets who lead them!

"They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (vs15)

Jesus said that the servant would not be better than the master. (Jn13:16, 15:20) The Son of Man had "nowhere to lay His head" (Mt8:20) And yet these false prophets rob from the poor through their "plant a seed" programs, promising a resultant "harvest" to the giver, many of whom cannot afford it... they do not "have" to give. (2Co8:12) And the false prophets live in laps of luxury: multiple mansions, chauffeur driven (expensive) cars, gold-plated bathroom fixtures, private jets. The shepherd is supposed to "give his life" for the sheep, but the false prophets are "fleecing" and killing the sheep.

They promise their flocks "liberty" but "they themselves are slaves of corruption" (vs19) Please read the passage; it speaks for itself.

I suppose we could go on for awhile longer, ranting and raving over them. We don't need to do that; nor is it our duty. They stand or fall before God, individually. But it is necessary for those who are True Believers to realize that, just because it might have the word "Trinity" in its name, or they stand behind a pulpit, or this or that... it does not mean that what you see going on is of God! Let's make this clear. Just because you see somebody preaching on TV, with a phone number at the base of the TV screen "To start a relationship with Jesus, call this number"; the "Jesus" they are talking about is not the Son of God who "loved us and gave Himself for us" (Eph5:2) Just because you park in the big parking lot, walk into the huge auditorium, sit down and see the big cross, dove or flame attached to the wall behind the platform, and they sing songs and talk about the Bible, and recite "thank you Jesus" and "praise the Lord"... the "lord" they are praising isn't the Lord of Hosts and Creator of the universe.

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and through Your will they exist and were created." (Re4:11)

Please take the time to read through this chapter, carefully, without the interruption of my comments. Perhaps read it through a few times, so the

listed characteristics are firmly etched in your memory. Now, turn your attention to the various preachers, pastors and prophets you have spent time listening to. Do any (or all) of these characteristic fit them? Are they preaching from God's Word, or are they using a translation that "twists" (3:16) WHAT GOD SAID? When they preach, do they expound on what the passage SAYS, or do they speculate their own revelatory wisdom and ideas? If they 'support' what they say with the Scripture reference, do you look up the reference to see if it says what they are claiming it supports? You know, a lot of preachers spout of Scripture references, knowing that most people don't bother to look it up; but the fact that they threw out the reference makes them LOOK LIKE a "Bible teacher". You see... there's a WHOLE BUNCH of TRICKS they use to con people into being led astray.

But never forget... the RESULT of all their bluster is DESTRUCTION. First of all, their own. Next, their flocks; anybody who is deceived and follows them. And their followers are destroyed because they destroyed God's Word, the Bible. Since "Faith" comes through the "Word of God" (Rom10:17), if they are destroying God's Word, they are thus, also destroying the path to Salvation, God and Heaven. They destroyed doctrine. They destroyed the Faith. They have destroyed the (pretend) Church. It is no longer Christ's Church. Any association with them does NOT get a person to Heaven, but to the Lake of Fire.

And don't let them deceive you with the matter of "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together". (Heb10:25) That passage is not talking about apostates, but Believers; read that chapter and observe the context. If you assemble with them you are actually disobeying the exhortation to "come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (2Co6:17) It is better to be all alone, and pleasing to God; than to be assembling with filth, and on your way to hell!

As Paul said, "For not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b)

As we say regularly: Not all [c]hristians are [C]hristian, and not all [c]hurches are part of the [C]hurch of Jesus Christ.

And it is the false prophets who will answer to God most...

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says Jehovah. Therefore thus says Jehovah the God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings, says Jehovah." (Jer23:1-2)

Do not be led astray with the rest of them!

Again Entangled - (2Peter 2:20-22)

"For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the full true knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the end is worse for them than the beginning." (vs20)

Question: Where do false prophets come from?

Certainly some are wolves in sheep's clothing. (Mt7:15) They are those who people thought were Christians, but by their actions it is proven what they had been all along...

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have risen up, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that not all of them are of us." (1Jn2:18-19)

They started out as wolves, and once exposed they were seen to be wolves. They never changed. Only... they had a bit of a run of deception pretending to be sheep, for the purpose of subterfuge and deception; to lead astray and devour.

But there's another category. Paul proclaimed...

"Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Ac20:30)

Have you ever looked at certain preacher/teachers, who today are clearly false prophets, but you knew of them years ago and thought they were clearly men-of-God? As a person sees them today, one wonders: How/why did they slip? These are not the 1Jn2:19 'antichrists' who never were of us (like one can see from Billy Graham's 50s vintage TV films; his "gospel" was polluted even back then like it is today); but in one's spirit one 'knew' (back then) that they belonged to Christ. Their messages from the Scriptures were with power. But today they endorse and go along with the apostasy. And the Faithful in bewilderment wonder: Whatever happened to them? Back then they clearly seemed to be Godly; but today they are just as obviously NOT!

Here Peter says that at one point they had "escaped" the flesh and were comprised as those with "full true knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ". Full true knowledge (epignosis): remember? That which we spent a bit of time with in chapter 1. In the context of this epistle, one who has been a "partaker" of the "Divine Nature" (1:4); one possessed of the

"calling and election" (1:10); and expectant of the "entrance into the eternal kingdom" (1:11); ones "established in the present truth" (1:12)

In other words: at one time they were Saved. They were True Believers. They were [C]hristians. Peter says they "knew (epiginosko) the way of righteousness" (vs21) If you still cling to Once Saved-Always Saved, you had better seriously think again. That is a most pernicious doctrine from out of the Reformation, that has been confused with Eternal Security. (Rom8:33-39) The two are not the same thing. Eternal Security is something God assures, as sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph1:13) But recall that one of the aspects of the Divine Nature is "perseverance" (1:6)

If you insist on OSAS, then consider: Where did satan come from? Who was satan originally? He was the "anointed cherub that covers" (Ezk28:14) Just as the furnishings of the OT temple were shadows of things in Heaven, recall that the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant was overshadowed with the cherubim. Those cherubim were figures of the "anointed cherub that covers". How much closer is it possible, to be with God? He was not only "in" Heaven, and one of the many "angels"; he was -the- #1 angel... perhaps we could say, God's "right hand man". But where is he now... if OSAS is a verity?

THAT is how many of today's false prophets became false prophets. How many prophets have you not heard, from their testimonies: I USED TO BELIEVE... this, that, the other thing. I USED TO BELIEVE in the "pre-trib" rapture. I USED TO BELIEVE this and that about the Holy Spirit; but that was so boring and drab, and then received a revelation. I used to believe in the "pre-trib" rapture, but then started to see irrefutable evidence for 'something else'.

The holy life of self-control and virtue was not 'exciting'; but now look at me! [vw: Look at me...indeed!!! :]

As a side note, and somewhat related...True Believers lament the intrusion of Rock-n-Roll into the church; and we see how Peter is explaining the background of many of the false prophets. How many of you have read the backgrounds of some of the most famous rockers? A big percentage of them, including Elvis, came from minister families. They were Preacher's Kids, and went off to become Rock-n-Roll super stars. Even today, the sensuous sex-goddess Jessica Simpson is a preacher's daughter. When I was college age, a preacher's daughter of a man I highly respected as a true man of God, would be seen sometimes in the Sunday School rooms in the basement, letting other church boys be "hands on" with her. Did he not know this was going on??

They were not "diligent to make sure of their calling and election" (1:10) They did not "hold on to the traditions (doctrine) taught" (2Th2;15); they did not "lay hold on eternal life" (1Ti6:12,19)

If the unbeliever is being "snatched out of the fire" (Ju1:23); these are those who had adequate rope by which they were being hoisted out of the "horrible pit and miry clay" (Ps40:2); but LET GO! If they had just hung on, they were SAVED; but they lacked "diligence" (1:5) Are we suddenly proclaiming a "works" salvation? Not at all! For the sake of this illustration, it is God's "rope" (and it's a non-slip and Eternally Secure rope), and Jesus is the one holding the top end and hoisting up, and the Holy Spirit is encouraging "Hold on, Hold on! We've got you safe! Just hold on!"

For such false prophets there is no further hope. For their followers who came the same path, there is no further hope. Peter says,

"..the end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." (vs20b-21)

All who are born are born in sin. (Ps51:5) The "wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom6:23)

But there is only -one- gift. Jesus died -only- "once for all" (Rom6:10, Heb7:27)

"For it is impossible for those who at one time were given understanding, and have tasted the Heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and also turn aside, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and expose Him to public disgrace." (Heb6:4-6)

If a person receives Jesus' Salvation in faith, and then returns the gift; to ask Jesus a second time for salvation would be the same as asking Him to die on the cross again.

A person stands before a court of law, guilty as charged, but for whatever reasons receives a "dismissal" of the case; if they go and commit the same offense again, appear before the judge again, what is their plea? Your honor: you dismissed it the other time, can't you do so again this time? No! That was then; this is now. What did you do with that pardon? You spit on it by re-offending. This is now a 'new' case, and the rules have changed. There is no leniency left.

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the full true knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour those who oppose. Anyone who rejected Moses' Law dies without mercy before two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled on the Son of God, counted the

blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of Grace? For we know Him who has said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb10:26-31)

See why they so tenaciously cling to "Once Saved-Always Saved"?? It is their self-imagined "safety net", in spite of the fact that they have spit in God's face.

This, also, is why the True Believer must "come out of her, My people" (Rev18:4) There are many, and I used to be like them, who think it is their mission to -stay- within the apostate church; their hearts yearn for the lost in those places; and they pray for the false prophets, to be saved. Thing is: they NEVER WILL BE SAVED. It is IMPOSSIBLE, if they were saved once, but then reverted to what they are now. Christ's shed blood no longer extends to them. They are past hope.

They crossed the line, and it is pronounced...

"Do not seal the Words of the Prophecy of this Book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, LET HIM BE UNJUST STILL; he who is filthy, LET HIM BE FILTHY STILL; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to what his work shall be." (Rev22:10-12)

The only thing you can do is to...

"Come out of her, my people, so that you NOT SHARE IN HER SINS, and so that you NOT RECEIVE OF HER PLAGUES. For her sins have reached to Heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." (Rev18:4-5)

You can no longer run into the burning building. It is too late for them. But if you run in, you might get trapped, yourself, and be consumed.

They had started out 'barking' like the nature of a dog; they got saved and "partook" of the Divine Nature; but then pulled away from the meal table and reverted back to barking.

"Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul is not pleased with him. But we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the preserving of the soul." (Heb10:38-39)

Thus also, it behooves us to...

"Therefore brethren, be even more diligent to make sure of your calling and election" (1:10a)

Judgment and Deliverance - (2Peter 2:5-9)

"..then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust for the day of judgment, to be punished," (vs9)

This is being written the week before the annual winter solstice fertility celebrations, and I just finished reading an e-mail from a subscriber, totally frustrated with the season; working with people claiming to be "christian" who are also singing to the children "Here Comes Santa Claus" and such things. Living with unsaved family. Stuck in the middle of perversity; but wanting to stand on a soap box and yell out, "It's all wrong!"

And indeed, these days the True Believer is always on the lookout for others of "like precious faith" (1:1); but if others find what I do, what I find too often is a person will show up who has the label ("Christian"), so then with a shred of hope you begin to talk with them about the Faith, and discover they speak a different language. And if you mention certain Biblical concepts, they stare back with a blank look, and do a bit of sputtering. They have no clue as to what you are talking about. They have the label, but inside you discover it is "false advertising"; there is no "truth in labeling".

In some cases such sputtering conversations are benign. In other cases the True Believer is attacked by the wolves: condemned for having "come out from among them" (2Co6:17), or condemned "to hell" for contradicting their false doctrines. Hmmm... that's what Babylon of Rome has done over the centuries... I guess the protestants -have- joined back with its "mother ('church')".

The truth they don't yet realize is that God will not spare them in the day of judgment. The "angels who sinned" are "reserved for judgment". (vs4)(Rev20) The world of Noah's day were drowned. Sodom and Gomorrah were burned out within a day.

But notice that Noah was "saved" (vs5), Lot was "delivered" (vs7); and the promise to us is that...

"..then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust for the day of judgment to be punished" (vs9)

Does deliverance require totally 100% "saintly" behavior? After all, currently as "flesh and blood" we are NOT ABLE to get into Heaven. (1Co15:50) We walk in this filthy world and get our feet dirty, and they occasionally need washing. (Jn13:10) Even though we are exhorted to "be perfect" (Mt5:48, Ja1:4), in our flesh and blood state we, nevertheless, do sin. If we claim otherwise, we deceive ourselves and call God a liar. (1Jn1:8-10) Thus, we periodically wash our feet; i.e. we "confess our sins" (1Jn1:9)

Does God's "deliverance" of us apply -before- or -after- we have washed our feet? It doesn't matter, because, other than our feet, we are otherwise "bathed" and have "no other need". (Jn13:10) Peter gives two examples:

Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (vs5) After 1500 years, from Adam to the time of the flood, how many people were populating earth? How many hundreds of millions? Were there over a billion? Scripture doesn't say. But what is eight (8) among so many? Noah's family was saved because his family was not genetically corrupted. (Gen6:9) Noah himself might have been a Believer with "full true knowledge". But what about the rest of his family? His wife, sons or their wives? If Noah's -entire- family was filled with the knowledge of God, then why did the Tower of Babel happen so quickly after the flood? If Noah's sons were raising their children in the fear of God, they would not have gone into idolatry so quickly...it would have been a Godly post-diluvian society. So...Noah, himself, was Godly. Is it possible that out of earth's population only Noah, himself, was the only righteous one? Peter says of Noah that he was "one of eight people".

When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, there were not even "ten righteous" in it. (Gen18:32) Lot's wife was not a believer; she looked back and was consumed. Lot's daughters behaved incestuously with their father to raise up seed to the family name. (Gen19:36) and the Moabites and Ammonites were not known for being Godly. Lot, himself, was not all that "saintly". When given a choice of places to settle, he chose the life of relative ease, in the well-watered valley...and also next to "sin city". (Gen13:10) And yet Peter calls him "righteous". (vs7) And his life, living amongst the sin that was, likely, not all that different to what our world has become; was "tormented from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds" (vs8) And if we can trust the accounts in the historical book of Jasher (to which Scripture refers a couple of times Jos10:13,2Sa1:18), it would seem that Lot's daughters were persecuted for showing kindness to strangers.

Noah was saved through the flood. Lot was whisked out of Sodom and Gomorrah before judgment was rained down.

These two epistles: One written to Jewish Believers, the other to Gentiles. Noah saved -through- the flood, as Israel will be -through- the 70th week of "Jacob's Trouble" (Jer30:7) The other example: Lot saved -out of- sin city -before- judgment.

As Israel experiences 2/3 being killed, who decides 'who' will make up the 1/3 that remain? (Zec13:8) The Lord "knows those who are His" (2Ti2:19); and he knows "how to deliver the godly". (vs9)

Just as equally, the judgment of the wicked is sure. And just as surely as He brought Lot out of sin city, so too, He will bring His Believers out of this

sinful world before it is judged. The angels COULD NOT bring the judgment down, until Lot was in a safe place. (Gen19:22)

"Because you have kept the Word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Rev3:10)

Previous lesson we observed those who at one time were Believers, but then they saw "new things" and -now- believe other things. A couple days before these lessons were prepared there was another e-mail from a source claiming to proclaim the "real truth", exhorting me to mend my ways about the "pre-trib" Rapture, otherwise I can expect judgment.

They just DON'T GET IT!

The soon-coming time of judgment is God's wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness. (Rom1:18) Certainly much of that wrath will be poured out on the world, at large; but a good deal of it is also prepared - specifically- for the false prophets and pretend [c]hurch. (2Th2:8-12) But we are the "righteousness of God in [Christ]" (2Co5:21) Judgment is NOT due the righteous!

Thus: "..God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," (1Th5:9)

Last Days: Scoffers - (2Peter 3:1-6)

"..knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were since the beginning of creation." (vs3-4)

First of all, if there was any question about the fact that Believing Jews and Gentiles are together, notice Peter's words,

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle" (vs1)

You see now why this series (of both epistles) has been addressed as one series. He first writes to the Diaspora, and then to those of "like precious faith". But in writing to the Gentiles, says this is the "second" epistle. Believing Jews? Believing Gentiles? As we already observed... we are both 'one' in Christ. Thus, the message to one also applies to the other.

Also, he reminds us that he is reminding us. (vs1, 1:12) Reminding us of what? The "words". What words? The words of them (Peter and his fellow-apostles), as well as the prophets. In other words, the words of Scripture. Why do we need to be reminded, to be reminded, to remember the Scriptures? Paul says...

"For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you IT IS SAFE. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision!" (Php3:1-2)

Peter has just come off an important chapter regarding what Paul warns: the dogs, evil workers, Judaism. Paul also warns...

"..not giving heed to Jewish myths and commandments of men that turn away from the truth." (Tit1:14)

How do we keep our minds and hearts clear of false teachings; whether the evangelical (and charismatic) apostasy, Judaism (and Kabbala) or Hebrew roots?

Remember this... Remember this... Remember this...!!

The HOLY SCRIPTURES, the WORD OF GOD: what we in our vernacular call the "BIBLE"

And that being said, the same sentence continues, thus the thought is not yet complete; thus, also, the Holy Scriptures is the basis for his next comments.

In the last days there will be scoffers. What are the topics of their scoffing? The 1) Return of Christ, and 2) Uniformitarianism.

Many of those false prophets we spoke of in the previous chapter also have a problem with these two topics; thus, as we now talk about the unregenerate world, in a very real sense the unregenerate condition of the false prophets is proven and verified. The false prophets, contrary to Scripture, believe the same things the world does.

One of the primary doctrines that false prophets who "used to believe" and then "changed", used to believe: what is typically called the "pre-trib" rapture of the Church. When they changed, they now no longer believe the Lord will come prior to Jacob's Trouble. In some cases, even, they deny - any- kind of Rapture. They are the ones Jesus warned against...

"But if that wicked servant says in his heart, My master DELAYS HIS COMING, and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not expecting him and in an hour he does not know, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt24:48-51)

Peter addresses the two topics in reverse order.

Uniformitarianism. What is that? The dictionary says: "The theory that all geologic phenomena may be explained as the result of existing forces having operated uniformly from the origin of the earth to the present time."

Isn't that what Peter just said in vs4. Today the main belief is "evolution"; but the main premise behind evolution is Uniformitarianism. Didn't Evolution as a principle belief system begin in the mid 1800s? Around the same time the primary belief system of the apostasy, pentecostalism and charismania, began. Could it be assumed that the "Last Days" had its beginnings in the 1800s. The Industrial Revolution was also beginning in those days with Fulton's steam engines and boats, and today we see the exponential explosion of technology; as Daniel prophesied, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan12:4). They might call it "Evolution", but nearly 2000 years ago Peter, at the direction of the Holy Spirit, called it what it is at its root: Uniformitarianism.

Why Uniformitarianism? Because, to acknowledge that things have not always been the same; that on occasion events occurred totally beyond the norm; would be to acknowledge the existence of God who caused those abnormal activities. Because it is the easiest way to refute the truth of God's Word, and the evidence for what God's Word records: the Flood; God's judgment upon sin and perversity.

"For of this they are willfully ignorant: that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water." (vs5-6)

First of all notice that they are "willfully ignorant".

"Professing to be wise, they become foolish," (Rom1:22)

Those who are in the science fields understand a certain "scientific method" by which they "observe" things, run tests to confirm the "repeatability" of those events, and then finally form conclusions. (Defined in its most simple form: With evolution we don't even need to get complex, because they fail even the most elementary methodology)

With evolution, certain random phenomenon were noted regarding sedimentation and fossils. A theory was developed. But since the "evidence" was so random and sporadic, and there was also so much evidence that goes contrary to the theory, it only remains a "theory". Imagination. They soooo go contrary to God's Word that says, "In the beginning God CREATED" (Gen1:1), they desperately -WANT- evolution to be true. However... considering how they have 'some' fossils, they have never (NEVER) produced fossil evidence for any 'transitional' species. They speculate that some forms started to 'grow' arms and legs, or shed wings, or this or that. But they have NEVER found any of those cross-mutated forms in fossil form, to support their theories.

They count the age of the universe in B/Millions of years, to account for the formation of huge river valleys, mountains, gorges, continental shift. But Peter explains it plainly.

Noah's -FLOOD-.

Everything I have ever read from reputable sources, explaining geological formations, sedimentation and fossils... there is NOTHING (that I've read) that cannot be explained by a massive worldwide flood, such as was the case during Noah's day.

Man will produce documentary programs, showing vast footage of massive drainage basins, explaining how a massive deluge of water would have created it (I live right in the midst of one of them, extending from southern British Columbia, that extends through Montana and Washington, out to the Pacific ocean); and as they speculate, 'wondering' WHAT(?) might have caused it...over and over they express their 'ignorance' at what and when...as I am sitting in front of the TV yelling at them (as though they could hear me!).. THE FLOOD!!! NOAH'S FLOOD!!! THE FLOOD!!!

Peter says they are "willfully" ignorant. They pretend to be wise. They are educated. They have flown around in their airplanes, and walked around the cliffs examining the soil and rocks. They are Oh so wise! And in their

wisdom, they pridefully proclaim how their vast knowledge DOESN'T KNOW the reason for the evidence they meticulously examine. Peter told them nearly 2000 years ago. He gave them their answer; and also predicted that they would be proclaiming their willful ignorance, and calling it "uniformitarianism". Peter didn't call it that, but instead provided the dictionary definition, ahead of their term.

Apparently, in their minds, it is better to be scholarly IGNORANT, than to acknowledge the Most High,

"God, who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them," (Ac14:15b)

They would rather be -STUPID- than submit to God! And so, out of their stupidity, they have the nerve to scoff at God.

Thing is: Many of the false prophets also go along with the lie. Rather than taking God's Word for what it says; in trying to make accommodations for evolution, they devised a 'theory' by which the Bible could be made to support evolution. They call it the "gap theory". In order to do this, however, they needed to change the Bible. Where the Bible says, "And the earth was without form", they changed the word "was" into "became"... "the earth -became- without form" (Gen1:2) Now, the Hebrew certainly can mean "become"; but if a person is going to use that form, they also need to take into consideration that it is "perfect tense". In other words, God created; and in creating, the earth initially "had come into existence" without form. Yes, all of that is wrapped up in the simple word we typically read as "was". But if they can create a "gap" back there, then they can speculate that satan when he fell got 'mad' and smashed up the earth and its 'prior' creation with the dinosaurs, and whatnot...and this happened B/Zillions of years ago...so that they can be found in agreement with the world's intelligentsia. The false prophets would rather appear "wise" to the world's scholars, than to remain true to God and His Word.

Also, rather than believe the creation account as given in the first two chapters of Genesis, they make allowance for man's "wisdom" and speculate that God "could have" made everything according to the evolutionary model, thus, "Theistic Evolution". Trouble is, Scripture says that God created every species "according to its kind", and to reproduce "according to its kind". (Gen1:21,24,25); and that He did so in six (6) days. That's (more or less) 24-hour days, from the "evening" to the "morning". There is no way to account for B/Zillions of years from the Biblical account.

As man looks out over the universe, in spite of Star Trek, StarGate, and other sci-fi movies, in reality they have not found life out there. Everything they find is "void". But God's intent for earth:

"..who has not created it void, but has formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah, and there is no other." (Isa45:18b)

Thus, the Genesis account is the record ("generations" Gen2:4) of God taking the "without form and void" earth, and out of it creating a unique place (unique compared to anything else found in the rest of the universe) for man to live. There are no other "M class" planets out there.

But if man acknowledged the creation, and earth's uniqueness in it, then he would need to acknowledge the Creator, and he does like a person did to me the other day when I confronted their duplicity, the one mentioned earlier in this series, who didn't "want to do the right thing" regarding the money her customer had dropped. She came up with a scheme, telling me her customer was coming, so wanted me to give 'her' the money; but I had a plan whereby I could verify that it truly belonged to 'him' (not any of Tom, Dick or Harry), so I declined to give it to her (he could come and ask for it, after all, we are next door to each other and he would walk right past my front door on his way to her place). Her response was to physically stop her ears, after she whined at me ('I just knew you would do this!'), putting her hands up to her ears, so she could not hear my response about "honesty", muttering gibberish out of her mouth to drown out any words I was saying; like a child going "blah, blah, blah" whilst plugging their ears, when they don't wish to hear what's being said. And when I then went around to her front door, she had locked it, and when I appeared, put the book she was reading in front of her face. (Some really strange behavior! And this is an 'adult' behaving this way!) (According to the other neighbor, that 'customer' did not come. It had all been a lie; a ruse; to get the money from me, into her own pocket. Not doing "the right thing"!)

This is what the world does. God's creation is there, for the observation...

"because what may be known of God is clearly recognized by them, for God has revealed it to them. For ever since the creation of the world the unseen things of Him are clearly perceived, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they know God, they do not glorify Him as God, nor are thankful, but become vain in their reasonings, and their stupid hearts are darkened. Professing to be wise, they become foolish," (Rom1:19-22)

But if the evidence within creation can be obscured, and the Creator denied; then His return can be denied. Jesus is coming back? What Jesus? How can Jesus come back, if He doesn't exist. And if Jesus, who is presumed to not exist, nor is the Son of God, isn't coming; then all that mumbo jumbo about "judgment" will never happen, either. See? We've got our heads in the sand (like ostriches). We are our own gods. We are still looking out there, to Mars and beyond, to try to figure out where we came from. (SHHH!!! My fingers are in my ears! BLAH, BLAH, BLAH! Don't tell me about God! BLAH! BLAH!) But 'if' there was -a- "God", he certainly wouldn't be anything like what the Bible says, to condemn us. Thus, we are free to continue our own lives in whatever way we wish. We are

looking at the evidence of creation, and it matches what the Bible says...
but...

Fingers in ears. Blah! Blah! Blah!

But that's the other thing. Man's wisdom will find some obscure tablet fragment with ancient writing; perhaps a fragment of a single sentence; and will assume it to be 'truth' for the day it was inscribed, and based on that one tablet, concoct an entire civilization and lifestyle of the ones who wrote it. But the Bible, that exists in hundreds (thousands?) of fragments, and many fragments cross-reference and agree with each other....Oh, that's just "fairy tales"! The clay tablet fragment is authenticated by them; but for Scripture? The sources are "questionable" at best, and not "reliable". Again... were they to accept the veracity of the Scriptures, then they would need to also accept the Bible's God, Most High, CREATOR of all things. Thus...

Fingers still in ears. Blah! Blah! Blah!

An interesting website: s8int.com "OOPARTS" (out of place artifacts) & Ancient High Technology (evidence of Noah's flood, and pre-flood technology?) Text and photos of pre-flood ancient art, fossils, under water cities, people interacting with dinosaurs, technology of flying machines, batteries, electrolysis, and possibly evidence of ancient nuclear technology and explosions, etc. Beware: they teach the need for baptism for salvation.

Reserved for Fire - (2Peter 3:7-13)

"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same Word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (vs7)

But God -does- exist. And judgment -is- coming. What happened to the dinosaurs? Oh... billions of years ago a huge meteor or comet smashed into earth, sending it into nuclear winter, and killed all the dinosaurs. Well, no. The evidence points to a massive global flood, just like the Bible says, that destroyed all living animals "in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life" (Gen7:22) All, except for what entered Noah's ark and were preserved. And scripture speaks of dinosaurs living after the flood, during Job's time. (That's another topic we won't address right now)

Total judgment is coming again. But God promised to never again wipe out all living with a flood. That's the significance of the rainbow. (Gen9:13) Which (another topic) also suggests that the prediluvian and postdiluvian atmospheres were different. Another matter that would be contrary to uniformitarianism, and if we could know all the specifics, might answer the dilemma of how terribly inaccurate carbon dating is; but might also be the key to why people lived for hundreds of years before the flood. (Again: that's another topic)

When will this judgment be? We are given a hint, for those who see Scripture for what it says. The history ("generations") of the "heavens and earth" as God made them (Gen2:4); God created everything in six (6) days, and then "rested the seventh day" (Gen2:2) Using Peter's 'formula' that "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (vs8); right now we find ourselves at roughly the end of 6000 years of earth history. Prophecy tells us that a thousand years of peace is coming, corresponding to the 7th day God rested. In other words, this earth has about a thousand more years to go, and then destruction.

Looking at this another way from an Israeli viewpoint. Israel was in exile for about 2000 years; and then the aforementioned thousand years of peace is also designed around Israel with Christ reigning from David's throne. In Israel's state of apostasy they are exhorted,

"Come, and let us return to Jehovah. For He has torn, and He will heal us. He has stricken, and He will bind us up. After two days He will restore us to life. In the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His presence." (Hos6:1-2)

Using Peter's 1:1000 formula, this prophecy speaks of two and three days; that's 2000 and 3000 years. In the previous lesson we observed that the "Last Days" was beginning in the 1800s; and then in the 1900s Israel was reconstituted as a nation.

As Believers see world events unfolding towards the prophesied end-time conflicts and judgments, there is sometimes an impatience: Why doesn't God just get things going, and get it "over with"? How long must evil be allowed to reign?

Well, first of all, we should remember that all things are right "on time". The "Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness" (vs9a) We don't know, but He does. The disciples asked Jesus about Israel's restored kingdom, and He responds,

"It is not yours to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." (Ac1:7)

Really what the scoffers are saying is: If God exists, let Him show Himself, and 'prove' Himself to us. The same thing the Jewish rulers did to Jesus: He was performing miracles right and left, healing people; fulfilling the OT prophecies about Himself (Is35:5-6); and even though they saw all this, taunted Him with "What sign do You show then, that we may see and believe You?" (Jn6:30)

"But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe into Him," (Jn12:37)

God is "longsuffering". (vs9b) It was never His intent for anybody to perish. He created all in perfection. (Gen1:31) But since man sinned, He waits for people to "repent". One reason He hasn't yet given Israel their new heart as He deals with them uniquely as a nation again is because He is waiting for the "fullness of the Gentiles" to come in. (Rom11:25) There's a certain -number- of Gentiles that God's foreknowledge is waiting for. When that number is complete, and He knows 'when' that is, then the next prophetic stage commences.

Paul tells us...

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall by no means escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief." (1Th5:1-4)

Now, there is another false prophetic teaching out there that directly contradicts these Scriptures. Jack Van Impi proclaims that -this- heaven and earth will never be destroyed, but that they will last "forever and ever and ever and ever". He pretends to proclaim "God", but when he teaches such a thing, is that not actually a continuation of Uniformitarianism? If this

earth has existed for B/Zillions of years, thus it will continue into the future the same way....

But this passage clearly states that the "heavens and earth" are "reserved for fire" at judgment. (vs7) This present universe will "pass away" and the earth and all its works "will be burned up" (vs10)

When will this be? Will this be the same occasion as the Great White Throne judgment? (Rev20) On that occasion satan and his demons, and all unbelievers will be thrown into the Lake of Fire; anyone whose name is "not found written in the Book of Life" (Re20:15) And here is something that is "forever and ever", the smoke of "their torment" (Re14:11) It is after this that Revelation then says...

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Rev21:1-4)

Peter says...

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (vs13)

So what is all this to Believers? We'll look at that next lesson.

But what about the scoffers?

God is "longsuffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (vs9)

"..consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (vs15a)

"Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? What if God, determining to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath rendered fit unto destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand unto glory," (Rom2:4, 9:22-23)

Does God -like- the way man behaves? This term should make it obvious that He does NOT. Longsuffering...while man is rebelling God is "suffering", but He waits "long" in the hopes the sinner will repent.

Peter gives a final synopsis of the sinner and false prophets.

"In Paul's epistles are "some things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable TWIST, as they do also the rest of Scripture, to their own destruction" (vs16)

First of all Peter acknowledges that Paul is a Believer; in calling him "brother". Remember when Saul was persecuting the church, and then got saved on the way to Damascus, and when he returned to Jerusalem and tried to join with the church, they were wary of him, until Barnabas made the introduction. (Ac9:27)

Peter denounces those who discredit Paul's message. In this chapter Peter is talking about the "last days", and as such his mention of Paul is most appropriate. There is a segment of today's false prophets who also discredit Paul's writings. Primarily, likely, because Paul does not pull any punches in telling it like it is: he exhorts to Godly living, and specifies in clear terms what sin consists of; and if the guilty ones don't like the message, they try to excuse their own conduct by discrediting the messenger. 'That doesn't mean what it says -because- Paul was not really an apostle'... or whatever other excuses they come up with.

Remember how Peter at the very beginning exhorts the feeding on the "pure milk of the Word" (1Pt2:2), and throughout the series we have observed how God's Word, the Scriptures, is the foundation for Godly living.

Well, here he explains -how- the false prophets function. They "twist" the Scriptures. Remember the "well turned words" (2:3) How is 'twisting' accomplished? By 'turning' motions. They turn words inside out, twist them up, and mush them all together in meaninglessness and falsehood.

And what is the result? The "destruction" of the false prophets who do thusly. (vs16) Again: Remember? What sort of message do false prophets bring? -DESTRUCTIVE- heresies. (2:1)

False prophets lead others astray, true! But in the end, it is also their own destruction.

They, also, are "reserved for fire".

Looking Forward to These Things - (2Peter 3:14-18)

"..looking for and earnestly hastening unto the coming of the Day of God...looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and without blemish" (vs12,14)

There are two things we are looking forward to: the Day of God (vs12), and the "new heavens and new earth" (vs13)

In looking towards the Day of God, the context includes the destruction of this present creation. (vs12) Why should we eagerly anticipate destruction? Isn't that terribly unloving and vengeful on the unrighteous? See? The unbelievers were right after all...God -loves- to condemn the unrighteous. We eagerly anticipate the destruction because what follows is the new creation with "righteousness"

Who wants all this hatred, murder, warfare, rape, injury and all the corruption that is in the world right now! The sooner we can be 'rid' of this evil, the sooner we can be in a place where no evil exists. (Re21:27)

Certainly, the process of destruction will be horrendous. But we know that it -will- come. Thus, as I express to friends sometimes: The sooner we get on with it, the sooner it is over. To those who say this creation will last forever and ever and ever: good riddance to you. Who wants a continual reminder of this filthy old place? God promised that the old will be forgotten and never again be remembered.

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. And the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind." (Is65:17)

Regarding the plight of the wicked in their judgment? Well, they brought it on themselves by 'refusing' to repent, and being 'willfully' ignorant. Or, the ones who 'reverted' after they had been partaking the Divine Nature? They were there. They knew better. They had a taste of righteousness, and chose to go back into sin. As Peter says, their "end is worse for them than the beginning" (2:20); but they brought it on themselves with full knowledge. As John says of this scenario, as "all the tribes of the earth will wail because of Him"...

"Even so. Amen." (Rev1:7)

"...for they are deserving" (Rev16:6)

So, as we are in eager anticipation of this "Day", what is our attitude and conduct? A review of what the two epistles have already said earlier. But remember? Peter is reminding (3:1) that he reminded. (1:12) So let's not forget...

"holy behavior and godliness" (vs11)

"diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and without blemish" (vs14)

"beware also that you not be led away with the error of the wicked, and fall from your own steadfastness" (vs17)

In other words, the easy part. This is not complex doctrine that requires detailed word studies. This is not complex eschatology. This is HOW WE LIVE...

Live a holy, righteous Godly life; and don't be carried away with the error of the wicked. How much simpler could it be!

1Peter ended with warnings to look out for, and resist satan's attacks. And now that we have learned the nature of the false prophets, and the world's scoffings; that which we are to stay away from, and what is coming to judge them; what do we do?

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (vs18)

Amen!