
The Life of Spiritual Sacrifice

Practical Commentary on the Epistle of First Peter

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PREFACE

Some modern scholars have attacked the veracity of this letter, claiming Peter was not the author. The opposing critics (few as they may be) largely object that the content is too closely related to Paul's message. But there is a significant difference between the two. Whereas Paul goes in-depth to explain various doctrines, Peter merely makes reference to them and quickly moves the argument along. But even more convincing is that ample evidence shows the Early Church accepted this letter as authentic. Polycarp (a student of the Apostle John), Papias of Hierapolis, and a primer from 100 AD titled, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", as well as other documents of the 1st and 2nd centuries all make use of Peter's letter.

Be that as it may, no doubt many modern preachers conveniently avoid this letter for a different reason; which is Peter's decidedly politically incorrect arguments in which he addresses certain topics that are very sensitive to our modern, "progressive" culture. However, I have never been accused of being politically correct; as such, I felt it my duty to expound upon this precious letter from the beloved and faithful apostle upon whom Jesus proclaimed he would build his church—another controversial topic which shall be discussed shortly.

Desmond Allen, Opelika, AL 2017

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Introduction

Throughout the letter, Peter succinctly addresses several important biblical doctrines. He offers no detailed apologies, but pithy and practical observations of biblical truth. In the introduction alone he speaks to such topics as apostleship, election, sanctification, omniscience, redemption, the triune godhead, the resurrection, salvation, eternal security, grace, mercy, faith, the last times, the new birth, and the victorious spirit-filled life. Each of these many subjects alone is worthy of extensive theological lessons; however, the purpose of this commentary is to investigate the exegetical and homiletical points that have significant application for our time. Although Peter wrote this letter in 60 to 64 AD, still it has direct application to our modern world. Not only does the Word of God never change, but the erroneous ways of man keep repeating themselves.

Peter's keywords (which are often paired together) seem to be suffering—used 16 times, and glory—used 12 times. His point being, that at the end of the believer's often arduous and painful terrestrial journey is an incorruptible and eternal inheritance. Thus his words are meant to encourage and inspire, to lift eyes from current sufferings and keep them fixed upon our objective—i.e. being with our Lord for eternity.

While Peter's comments on suffering and glory are often referenced, something else of great importance is often overlooked. Beyond the believer's sufferings, he also speaks to the necessity of the believer's spiritual sacrifice—a notion that (due to its neglect by many modern preachers and teachers) is virtually a foreign concept to much of Western Christendom.

Verses 1:1-2

^{1:1}Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

This letter is replete with references to important biblical doctrines. In the first two verses alone, Peter alludes to no less than eight critical themes: apostolic position, election, omniscience, holiness, atonement, the Trinity, mercy, and spiritual contentment.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ

Peter boldly claims his position of authority. This apostolic office was ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The term “apostle” (ἀπόστολος, apóstolos) in and of itself, merely speaks of an envoy: one sent forth, a messenger, a missionary. In classical Greek, “apostle” was similar to the term angel (ἄγγελος, ángelos), with one major distinction. While angel referred to a messenger in general, apostle spoke more directly of a personal delegate or personal representative, a proxy as it were, of the one who sent him.

Language is always a fluid construct, partly rooted in the past and partly determined by popular usage; so that the meaning of a word is often subject to change. For example, new generations might apply a specific or even general meaning to a certain term so as to denote, or highlight, a particular nuance or implication that the original usage might have had. Thus, 400 years ago an English speaking person would have been scratching his head over the following statement: “After horsing around for a few minutes, he spooked his way into the study; Xeroxed a copy from the top-secret document and quickly Houdini’d his way out of the room.” Sometimes a term’s modern usage even acquires a meaning directly opposite to its historic usage. Such as the current usage of “bad” in certain pop cultures; in which it means “extremely good”: So that, “Look at your bad self”, would be interpreted as praise to one’s accomplishments. So it is that the historical usage of NT Greek terms must be understood before we can go about translating or making doctrine.

The term apostle, as used in the NT, Christian culture, is such a term. It assumes a specific meaning to Christianity. It first appears

when Jesus gathered his disciples and named twelve of them to be his personal emissaries. While still retaining the primary meaning of the term (i.e. messenger or missionary), he charged them with a specific task to go forth and heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the gospel of the kingdom (Lk 6:13, 9:1).

Although the term apostle continued to reference others doing missionary work, such as Barnabas (1 Co 9:5ff; Ac 14:4), it seems clear that when used of the twelve whom Jesus specifically appointed, it had come to speak of their office as well as their purpose (Rev 21:14). Their cognizance of this office and its importance was clearly demonstrated when, after Judas' betrayal and death, the remaining eleven apostles sought to replace him with Matthias (Ac 1:25). Jesus, however, apparently had other plans. While we hear no more of Matthias, we do learn of Jesus' direct calling of Paul (Ac 22:6ff; 1 Co 1:1), who is subsequently accepted and an apostle and, indeed, becomes the primary theologian of the Church (Ac 15; Gal 2:8; 2 Co 12:12).

Peter was also special among the twelve apostles; he was the one upon whom Jesus said he would build his Church.

You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
(Mt 16:18-19)

Now then, having introduced the idea of Peter being the rock with the keys to the kingdom, I am compelled to explore its meaning. From these passages, Roman Catholicism claims that Peter was the first Pope. However, beyond the dearth of historical records to substantiate this claim, the primary difficulty with this idea is that the Holy Roman Catholic Church was not even on the horizon until hundreds of years later, after the reign of Constantine the Great. Until then Christianity had been severely persecuted by ten successive Roman Emperors—each of whom held the title and position of Pontifex Maximus—the supreme leader of paganism.

These successive persecutions ended with Constantine's conversion and the subsequent Edict of Milan, issued in 313 AD. The edict not only ended the persecutions but even decreed favoritism toward Christianity. As subsequent Roman Emperors embraced Christianity, at least in a political sense, Christianity soon

became the declared state religion, into which (politically speaking) all Roman citizens were expected to be baptized. Hence the Holy Roman Catholic Church was born; “catholic” simply being a common term for universal.

As such, the Apostle Peter, who had been dead for well over 200 years, had absolutely nothing to do with the papacy or the politically formed and state-controlled Holy Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, for reasons of political expedience, this state Church was quickly populated by nominal converts. Some of these nominal political converts even advanced to the papacy. Satan had changed his primary tactic from persecution to infiltration. Thus, enter the Dark Ages and the subsequent “Holy Crusades”—a time of great evil and wickedness perpetrated by those who had hijacked the Church for political purposes. Sadly, due to selective memory, and the world’s desire to change history, Christianity (rather than the corrupt political hijackers), is still blamed for these evils. But, as clearly shown by the historical record, it was the ungodly “political converts”, who created and ruled this state Church encouraging wickedness in the misappropriated name of Christianity. Indeed, this state Church continued to persecute those Christians who dared to speak out against its evil practices and refused to cooperate with its manufactured doctrines.

Consequently, there is much confusion concerning this statement of Peter being the stone upon which the Church is built. The name, Peter, literally means pebble or small stone; and certainly Jesus was referencing this, but his statement was something more than a mere play on words. Peter himself affirms, that Jesus is the foundation or cornerstone upon which the Church is built: “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, chosen, and precious: He who believes in him will not be disappointed” (1 Pe 2:6). What then is Jesus is speaking of when he calls Peter the rock upon which the Church is built, and the one to whom the keys of the kingdom are given?

The answer is found in Peter’s evangelical efforts. Peter was the first to preach the gospel to the Jews (Acts 4); the first to preach to the Samaritans (Acts 8:25); and finally, the first to preach to the Gentiles (Acts10:1). Jesus is the foundation or cornerstone of the Church and as “the way and the truth and the life” he is the door to heaven. Peter was the stone with which the building of the Church began. He was the apostle to whom it was given to unlock the door

to the masses. In this sense, each of the apostles is a stone upon which the Church is built and each held the key to unlock the door, but Peter was the first to do so.

To the strangers

Although his message is ultimately designed for universal consumption, the majority at the beginning of the Church were still Jewish. As such Peter is primarily addressing those Jewish believers often referred to as being of the dispersion (διασπορά, diasporá), here translated as *scattered*. He is specifically speaking to the exiles living in the five provinces of Asia Minor; churches that had been founded by Paul, who, like John, had also written letters to some of these churches.

Jews of the dispersion were decedents of the many thousands of Jews who had been taken captive by various invaders. The Babylonian and Assyrian captivities (as documented in 2 Kings), are well known; but there were other invaders as well. Ptolemy I, of Egypt (322–285 BC) invaded Palestine and captured Jerusalem. Antiochus the Great of Syria (223–187 BC) ousted about 2,000 families from Mesopotamia and Babylon, Phrygia, and Lydia. Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC and took hundreds of Jewish slaves to Rome. And of course, a few years after Peter wrote this letter, the final assault occurred in 70 AD, when the Roman general, Titus, invaded Palestine and displaced virtually all the remaining Jews. Exiled from their home and scattered about the world, reviled and despised by one culture after another until the evil anti-Semitism peaked in the terrible persecutions of Hitler and Stalin.

After WWII, world powers approved the establishment of Israel, thereby allowing Jews to return to their homeland from which they had been driven nearly 1900 years earlier. The Jewish dispersion, as well as their eventual return, was foretold by OT prophets. While the dispersion (in its several stages) was the result of disobedience and, ultimately, their rejection of Messiah, their return to Palestine is in preparation for the return of Messiah. Although rejected by his own, Messiah has not forgotten or forsaken his holy people. These descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (with whom he made a covenant), are God's chosen people; they are the centerpiece around which world history revolves. Here are a few verses foretelling the dispersion and their return in the last days.

Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Whereas I have removed them far off among the nations, and whereas I have scattered them

among the countries, yet will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come. Therefore say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. (Eze 11:16-17 WEB)

I will gather them out of all the countries, where I have driven them in my anger, and in my wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. (Jer 32:37 WEB)

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, [and] with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who travails with child together: a great company shall they return here. (Jer 31:8 WEB)

He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isa 11:12 WEB)

In 1917, nearly two thousand years after Titus ran the Jews from Palestine, British Field Marshall Edmund Allenby won Palestine and Syria from the Turks. The subsequent Balfour Declaration identified Palestine as the national home of the Jews. A few decades later a widespread, albeit fleeting, support began for a Jewish State. In 1944, a small group of underground Zionist lead by Menachem Begin attempted to force the British troops from Palestine. Then, in 1948, the United Nations proposed, and the Jews accepted, the division of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews named their state Israel. The Arabs, however, refused to accept the division and continue to fight against it to this day; which coincides with prophecy.

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the surrounding peoples, and on Judah also will it be in the siege against Jerusalem. It will happen in that day, that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples. All who burden themselves with it will be severely wounded, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against it. (Zech 12:2-3 WEB)

Today, Jews from all around the world are moving to Israel; and, as predicted, the Jewish state continues to be a source of tension for the surrounding nations. For the last several decades, world

leaders have tried to orchestrate peace in the Middle East; specifically between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It has been a major agenda for one American president after another. But this peace will not happen until the antichrist—the charismatic leader of the final world empire—arrives. It is he who “*shall make a firm covenant with many for one week*” (*Dan 9:27*). Here, *one week* is a reference to the Jewish week of years as specified in the OT (*Lev 25*); thus a seven-year peace treaty. But the current efforts and the global obsession for peace in the Middle East are not without meaning; for they set the stage for this coming treaty. The orchestration of this treaty will likely be the antichrist’s trump card—his ultimate claim to fame that will catapult his popularity and allow him to attempt world dominance.

In light of the current Middle East situation, it seems plausible that a key factor to this covenant could be the rebuilding of the Jewish temple on the coveted site of the Dome of the Rock, which is presently under Palestinian authority. Perhaps this charismatic and persuasive figure will orchestrate a deal in which the Palestinians exchange this site for land to establish their own sovereign state. Whatever the details may be, one way or another, the antichrist will arrange a seven-year treaty between Israel and the surrounding nations. During the first half of the covenant, he will have a near hypnotic effect upon the masses (*Dan 11:21-45*). No doubt, many will hail him as the world’s savior.

Halfway through the treaty this leader will portray himself as the world’s savior and present himself as if he were a god and demand worship as such (*Dan 9*). Jews, at large, however [having recently come to the realization that Jesus is Messiah when he saves them from the invasion of several nations (*Eze.38*)], will reject this false messiah. The next 3½ years will culminate in a Jewish persecution that will dwarf that of the holocaust. It is the time of Jacob’s trouble, the time of great tribulation (*Mt 24:21; Rev 13:5*). Many, indeed most, of God’s chosen and the subsequent Gentile converts will be martyred; but a remnant of believers, both Jewish and Gentile, will survive to enter the kingdom with their Messiah, Jesus Christ. “*Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it*” (*Jer 30:7*).

Elect

The term elect (*εκλεκτος*, *eklektos*), is from (*εκλεγομαι*,

eklegomai), to select, to make choice; here, it is the chosen. The election of the believer (in which God selects certain persons to partake in salvation and enjoy a personal, esoteric, relationship with himself) is discussed six times in the NT (Rom 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1Th 1:4; 1Pet 1:2; 2Pet 1:10). In the book of Romans, Paul explains the process in depth. Although the impetus for anyone's election remains a mystery, one thing is certain: the believer's election has nothing to do with the good or evil he/she has done. Rather, it is something that God the Father, for reasons unknown to us, has declared even before creation. As such, the awareness of this reality is nothing less than humbling. How can the elect respond with anything other than thankfulness and praise when, like Moses and David, we stand in awe and wonder, "Why me"?

The foreknowledge of God the Father

The term foreknowledge (προγνωσιν, prognosin) is to know beforehand, to foresee. Yet here it is more than mere fortune-telling: God knows all things, not just certain details about coming events (*Acts 15:18; Mt 6:8, 32, 10:30; Job 34:21*). Foreknowledge speaks directly to his omniscience, which speaks directly to His eternal nature and thus his omnipresence and omnipotence (*ps139; Jer 23:23ff*). God's nature is that of the eternal self-existent essence with absolute command of consciousness of his own being. Thus, he told Moses, "*I AM THAT I AM*" (*Ex 3:14*).

As the eternal self-existent being and, the Creator of all things, God is outside of his creation, including time and space. While we are bound to the physical dimensions of time and space, God is not. As we are told, to him a day is as a thousand years. We might say that the whole of creation and every event that has happened or will ever happen within it is a punctiliar singularity in the mind of our creator. So that while we are bound to the linear reality of time and space, and therefore must experience life one day at a time, he has no such constraints. As the characters in a novel, we continue paragraph by paragraph and page by page, but as the author of the book, God has no constraints. He can spend as much time with each character and event in any location as he desires; and do so without neglecting any other character or event at any time. For time (which measures change) and space (which denotes location) are perceptions particular to our perspective, not his. God created this matrix for us to interact with each other. He is above it,

beyond it, outside of it, and thereby not limited to it. He is the Eternal, changeless and omnipresent Creator (*Ps 33:15; 97:9; 139:13; Isa 29:15; 41:22-27; 43:8-12; Am 3:7*).

Such thoughts cause one to consider reality. What is reality? In that, as Peter said, our current physical universe is merely a temporal unit:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10).

What then is the eternal reality?

As for our current reality, i.e. this physical universe; studies in quantum physics have determined that at its subatomic core there is no solid matter; everything is emptiness, energy, and information. Electromagnetic energy flows throughout various systems, from subatomic particles and atoms to molecules and cells, creating forces that internally hold these various systems together, while simultaneously, externally, bonding and yet separating one system from another; thereby resulting in what we perceive as solid matter.

Quantum mechanics has also demonstrated beyond question that a certain phenomenon occurs in which particles within a given system can be influenced by something outside of their system. They call this process nonlocality. Furthermore, once two or more particles collide, they are immediately linked, which the quantum physicists have called entanglement. The information each particle contains is smeared over the other; so that, no matter how far apart they subsequently travel from each other, by measuring the previously uncertain momentum of one, the second will instantaneously gain a clearly defined momentum.¹ Because the phenomenon of nonlocality and entanglement make it impossible to treat systems that are spatially separated from one another as independent, Einstein ridiculed the notion (which at that time was yet to be proven) as “spooky action from a distance.”² Yet, because these actions, as demonstrated by nonlocality and entanglement, take place without physical contact, they are, by definition, metaphysical. This is a huge problem for many modern scientists because for them metaphysics does not exist.

Scientific knowledge is forever changing. There is still much to learn of quantum physics, subsequently, science has yet to unify the forces of quantum mechanics with those of classical physics. To

date, however, nothing in science has answered the question of reality. But as we look ever deeper into the subatomic world of energy, information, and emptiness, it prompts us to explore the issue of reality even further. The quizzical issue is that: Because at the quantum level (where metaphysical events of nonlocality and entanglement occur), there is no actual solid matter; yet when bonded together, these same systems construct something of a solid, material hologram (i.e. the observable universe). What then is reality?

I submit that the biblical answer is not only very clear on this subject but very evident as well. Ultimate reality is something other than the mere physical universe; for *“things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3)*. At the quantum level, there is a mysterious unknown power that sustains all things. Scripture clearly explains that it is the Creator who is the source of all things, and it is he who holds the universe together;

For by him were all things created, in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things are held together (Col 1:16-17).

As evidenced by the complex nature of creation, the Creator is intelligent. As evidenced by many historical accounts of man's interaction with the Creator, the Creator is personable. We call this Creator, God. God is our ultimate reality. God has revealed that he is not part of our physical world, he is spirit. Therefore, ultimate reality is spirit. Being spirit, God is metaphysical; that is, other than physical. The concept of metaphysical reality is not without precedent in our world. Gravity and electromagnetism are great examples; even human consciousness is metaphysical.

Furthermore, as discussed, even the physical things we observe and touch, ultimately, at the quantum level, consist of electromagnetism, information, and emptiness, and are thereby virtually metaphysical as well, in that the physical at its core is metaphysical. Thus, true reality is metaphysical. Given enough time, science, in that it is the methodical quest for knowledge, will have to arrive at this conclusion. Scripture is clear that physical matter, our universe, is but a temporal matrix (a hologram if you will), constructed and maintained, in the mind of the Creator, who himself is spirit.

On a personal level, the individual reality for each of us goes beyond the physical plane to reach the depths of our soul and spirit. While someday the body will die and the universe will pass away, the soul and spirit live on. The soul and spirit transcend this entire temporal matrix. God is the energizer of this matrix and thus outside of it; as such, in respect to it he is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, thereby possessing complete foreknowledge.

Sanctification of the Spirit

It is theologically absurd that the Roman Catholic Church takes it upon itself to determine who is and who is not a saint. According to Scripture, all believers are saints. The term sanctification (αγιασμο, hagio), is from the root form, meaning holy (αγιαζω, hagio), hallow, holiness, consecrate, saint, and sanctify. Sanctification is totally of God's doing; there are no works or deeds, accomplishments or miracles performed that one can provide to attain sainthood. All believers are saints—that is, they are sinners who by the grace of God have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which was made possible by the work of Christ. Sanctification is achieved not by our works, but by the work of Christ.

Paul speaks to the juxtaposition of divine election and sanctification,

God chose you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth; . . . for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:13-14).

He makes it clear that sanctification is not of works,

not by works of righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy, he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5).

Sanctification, however, does have three stages: positional sanctification, which occurs at conversion; future sanctification, when we shall put off this sinful flesh and don our heavenly bodies and be truly holy at last; and practical sanctification, in which we currently allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, giving us strength to deny the sinful desires of the flesh and to pursue the heart of God. Thus, we are told to “*put on the new man, who in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth*” (Eph 4:24); “*For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his*

good pleasure.” (Phil 2:13). It is this to which Peter speaks when he says, “*that you may obey Jesus Christ*”.

The aforementioned election and sanctification are only made possible due to the ***sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ***. It is the sacrificial blood of Christ that allows justification to be imputed to each believer. The modern “politically correct” idea that all religions are equal or that all religions lead to God is a lie of Satan. Jesus boldly proclaimed, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you know him, and have seen him*” (Jn 14:6-7). If even one soul throughout history has ever or could ever get to the Father without the sacrifice and subsequent resurrection of His Son, then the blood Jesus spilled was in vain.

The fact is, no one, regardless of how pious, religious or spiritual they might seem, can ever access the Father, and thus heaven, without placing themselves under the blood of Jesus, whom *God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice, through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness through the passing over of prior sins, in God's forbearance*” (Rom 3:25 WEB).

That being said, I would like to make a couple distinctions between Judeo-Christian theology and the theologies of every one of the world’s religions. Judeo-Christian theology understands that the totality of humanity is born into sin; thus, we are all sinners by nature. We call it the doctrine of total depravity:

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Ps 14:2-3).

Although we do possess goodness (in that we are created in the image of God), at the same time (due to the sinful nature, our race acquired upon father Adam’s disobedience) we are inherently evil. Not one of the world’s religions accepts this biblical statute. It is for this reason that the next distinction exists. Judeo-Christian theology understands that salvation and thus sanctification comes only by the grace of God; yet every world religion, without exception, believes that in one way or another, man can achieve his spiritual goal (holiness, godliness, heaven, nirvana, etc., whatever the ambition may be) on his own accord, by his own pious behavior.

Therefore, they see no need for a savior, no need for the Messiah in their lives. It is for this reason that the gospel is so offensive to the world; it cuts against their pride.

Father . . . Spirit . . . Jesus

Although Scripture does not use the term Trinity, Peter defiantly makes reference to the triune nature of God: ***the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*** He speaks freely of the union between the foreknowledge of the Father, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the atonement provided by the Son. We must not allow our limited perception (confined to and conformed by space and time), to restrict our understanding of the Creator. Scripture makes it clear that our Creator is one God and there is no other (*Duet 4:39*). Yet several passages also make it clear that this singularity of Deity, the Godhead, is shared by three distinct persons (*Mt 28:19*). (*Jn 1:1, 8:24, 58; Rom 8: 11; Rev 1:8, 11, 21:6*). Divinity, godhood, is clearly attributed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus commanded the apostles to “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*”.

These three persons constitute the Godhead, thus sharing the same nature, the nature of Deity; they are the one God. As such Paul said, “*Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God*” (*Phil 2:5-6*). There is an illustration from science that I like to employ to help us better understand this mystery of the Godhead. When we place water in a vacuum and drop the temperature to zero degrees an amazing thing occurs. The water is simultaneously present in its three forms: liquid, solid, and vapor. All three personalities (as it were) are present simultaneously, yet each continues to retain the same nature—H₂O. Of course all illustrations breakdown at some point and this one breaks down in the fact that special conditions are required to achieve the phenomenon. But it does help me to better understand how it is that the one God can say, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (*Gen 1:26*), wherein the plural noun for God (אֱלֹהִים 'elohiym) is used by the same speaker who later insists that he is singular in nature—the one and only God (*Duet 4:39*). So it is that Paul observed,

without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Tim 3:16).

Verses 1:3-5

^{1:3}Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

As the greeting continues, so too do the allusions to various important biblical doctrines: the deity of Christ, God's mercy, the believer's new birth, our heavenly hope, the death and resurrection of Christ, the believer's eternal inheritance, the necessity of faith, and the believer's security.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

When Scripture speaks of Jesus' son-ship as in ***God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*** it speaks of something far greater than the virgin birth, which, of course, is extremely significant in and of itself; for in our current terrestrial reality Jesus was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary, the seed having been planted by God himself. But Scripture makes it clear that Jesus relationship as the Son of God existed long before the virgin birth, long before the creation of our physical universe; indeed, it has existed from eternity.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men . . . The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . No one has seen God at any time. The one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. . . . Now, Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world existed. (Jn 1:1-3, 14, 18, 17:5)

Jesus is begotten of the Father; not created by the Father. He is the only begotten (*μονογενής*, *monogenes*), meaning there is none other in existence (*Jn 1:14, 18, 3:16, 3:18*). Begotten necessitates sameness, a singularity in nature, and thus an essential equality in nature. In John's Gospel, Jesus makes this distinction very clear and, at the same time, clearly lays claim to being the "I AM" who spoke with Moses at the burning bush (*Ex 3:14*). It was this perceived blasphemy for which, ultimately, he was crucified. Thus, it seems appropriate that we should read this lengthy conversation between Jesus and the rebellious Jewish leaders.

He said to them, "You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I said therefore to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM he, you will die in your sins."

They said therefore to him, "Who are you?"

Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you. However he who sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these I say to the world."

They didn't understand that he spoke to them about the Father.

Jesus therefore said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM he, and I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me, I say these things. He who sent me is with me. The Father hasn't left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

As he spoke these things, many believed in him.

Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed him, "If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

They answered him, "We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How do you say, 'You will be made free?'"

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is the bondservant of sin. A bondservant doesn't live in the house forever. A son remains forever. If therefore the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed, yet you seek to

kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I say the things which I have seen with my Father; and you also do the things which you have seen with your father."

They answered him, "Our father is Abraham."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham didn't do this. You do the works of your father."

They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father, God."

Therefore Jesus said to them, "If God were your father, you would love me, for I came out and have come from God. For I haven't come of myself, but he sent me. Why don't you understand my speech? Because you can't hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you don't believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God. For this cause you don't hear, because you are not of God."

Then the Jews answered him, "Don't we say well that you are a Samaritan, and have a demon?"

Jesus answered, "I don't have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. But I don't seek my own glory. There is one who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I tell you, if a person keeps my word, he will never see death."

Then the Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and you say, 'If a man keeps my word, he will never taste of death.' Are you greater than our father, Abraham, who died? The prophets died. Who do you make yourself out to be?"

Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is our God. You have not known him, but I know him."

If I said, 'I don't know him,' I would be like you, a liar. But I know him, and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad."

The Jews therefore said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I tell you, before Abraham came into existence, I AM."

Therefore they took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus was hidden, and went out of the temple, having gone through the midst of them, and so passed by. (WEB Jn 8:23-59).

Abundant mercy

We owe everything to God's ***abundant mercy***. We all know the history: God warned our father Adam not to disobey his command; if he did dire circumstances would follow. Yet Adam did disobey, and just as God warned, trouble soon followed: sickness, pain, sorrow, and death—both physical and spiritual.

At that moment God could have exercised justice and brought an immediate end to the entire enterprise. However, in accordance to his abundant mercy, God chose to deliver Adam from his dismal condition. Although Adam would experience physical consequences of pain and death, he would be spared the ultimate punishment of spiritual death and eternal separation from God (*Gen 3:15*). As foreordained, even before creation, via the second person of the Godhead (the only begotten Son of God), the Creator would take upon himself the requisite punishment which his attribute of justice demanded. Although his creation—this race of persons created in his own image—deserved death for its disobedience; he would enter their world, he would become like them, flesh, born of a woman and become, as it were, the second Adam. But unlike the first Adam, he would be without sin, and would offer himself as a propitiation for the first Adam's sin, indeed, for the sins of all humanity. He would pay the price for our redemption. "*So also it is written, The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit*" (*1 Cor 15:45*). This then is the gospel; it is our hope and glory.

Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking

the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5-11)

Jesus paid the price for our redemption, our eternal salvation; but we, like Adam, must still suffer the temporal and immediate consequences of our sin. That is, we must still experience pain, grief, sorrow, and physical death. And as such, it is man, not God, which is the responsible agent for every unjust and heartbreaking event in history. There is no blaming God for the evils that befall us. God will comfort us, strengthen us so as to endure, but still, we must suffer the consequences. Rather than seeking to blame God for our pain we should be praising him for his mercy and crying out for salvation.

This leads me to comment on one of the most meaningless and mindless thoughts being kicked around in our modern Western culture. It's applied to countless situations; it is the phrase, you deserve, or he/she deserves. Thus: "Get the education you deserve. . . . Have the job that I deserve. . . . Eat the meal you deserve . . . ;" ad nauseam. Once we pass the age of innocence, and the more wrong choices we make, what we deserve is pain and punishment at all levels. It is only God's mercy that permits good things to enter our lives and to make our lives not only bearable but enjoyable. It is nothing less than narcissism to think that "I deserve"

A lively hope

Having paid the price for our sin, Jesus rose from the grave, victorious over death, thereby offering each believer a living and eternal hope, an inheritance as sons of God; ***begotten again*** via the Spirit, our spirits are now alive unto God. It should be noted that the term used here for begotten (*αναγεννησας*, *anagennēsas*) is slightly different from the term "*the only begotten*" used for Jesus and discussed earlier. Here, the term is to beget or (by extension) to bear

(again). So it is that when Adam sinned, his spirit (as well as the spirits of all his descendants) became dead unto God; and so it is that in Jesus, the believer's spirit is reborn, born again, alive unto God and able to commune with him.

Hope by the resurrection

In these few words, Peter has covered the crux of the gospel, the death and victorious resurrection of the Son of God and his merciful gift of eternal life to all who believe: God ***has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*** It is not without reason that every world religion and "Christian" cult (such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses) reject the deity of Christ and his victorious resurrection. For Satan knows that man can be as spiritual and pious as he wishes but without Christ's redemptive work, there is no salvation. Therefore, Satan takes as much pleasure in man's religions, piety, and feigned morality, as he takes in man's unspeakable deeds and denial of God. Thus, the rejection of Jesus' deity by the religions of the world is nothing new; Paul warned the Colossians of this type of false teaching:

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power (Col 2:8-10).

Salvation is not a matter of works. It is not contingent upon anything we have done or have not done. It is a gift of God, mercifully and freely bestowed upon all who simply trust in the name and the work Jesus our Lord (*Rom 5:15, 6:23; Jn 3:16*). Being a moral person, a good husband, father, employee, or citizen, or giving donations, going to church, perusing a spiritual and peaceful life, etc., gets us nowhere with God. The issue is that of being dead to God until we accept his mercy which is only bestowed through faith in Jesus vicarious death and resurrection.

Not that righteousness, morality, and goodness are unimportant; for they are expected of the believer, but such actions are simply not the avenue to securing a relationship with God. Upon placing one's trust in Jesus, a spiritual rebirth is experienced; the Holy Spirit then begins to work within the believer, leading him/her into righteousness, goodness, morality, etc. The Holy Spirit

provides the ability for such behavior by giving the strength necessary to deny the sinful nature which we still harbor within, and which shall be possessed and struggled with until death.

An inheritance incorruptible

Just as our salvation is procured by Christ, so too, our eternal inheritance is procured and secured by him; it is ***an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.*** There is nothing we could possibly do to gain salvation; nor is there anything we could possibly do to lose it. Our position is secure in Christ, kept and protected by his power.

Once saved, if we then stray from righteousness, it is not our salvation we lose but the rewards that we might have gained. Thus, Paul explained, *“If any man's work remains which he built on it, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, but as through fire (1 Cor 3:14-15).* The believer's disobedience can also lead to increased troubles, even to an early death. Not that all troubles and early deaths are the result of disobedience (a fact that is made clear by Jesus (*John 9:1-3*), but that disobedience can, at times, be the issue. Peter himself alludes to his later in this letter (*3:10*). The Psalmist observed:

My son, don't forget my teaching; But let your heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they add to you. Don't let kindness and truth forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor, and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight (Prov 3:1-6 WEB).

Verses 1:6-9

^{1:6}Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Greatly rejoice

It might sound strange to the unbeliever that one should rejoice in the midst of trouble, but this is exactly what Peter commends them for doing: ***Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: . . . you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*** And it is exactly what is expected of all believers. James had similar words for his readers, “*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations*” (Jas 1:2).

We know exactly what trials these early believers in Asia Minor were experiencing. Although the letter was written before the Roman Empire’s all-out assault on Christianity, the assault was already in its infant stages. Occasional trouble was already brewing in parts of the empire; especially around Rome, where Emperor Nero’s actions were contagious to some. It was about this time that Nero was burning Christians as torches in his garden; and when the great fire in Rome broke out, he blamed the Christians. For the last 30 odd years, since their humble beginning in Jerusalem, Christians had been tolerated as a benign sect of Judaism. But unlike Judaism, they were evangelical in nature and making many converts who turned from the pagan gods of Rome. Because these Christian converts would not pay homage to the Roman gods (which directly affected certain aspects of commerce), distrust, hatred, and sporadic outbreaks against them was on the rise. The historian, Suetonius, called Christians a malefic and superstition class.

Being in spiritual darkness, the world hates the light of the truth shining upon it, exposing its evil deeds and convicting its conscience. For many centuries now the Western world has been fortunate to have freedom to worship. But this is not the case in many nations where believers still face persecution from their governments. Even now in the West, once again Christianity is swiftly becoming a great offense to the multitude of unbelievers. As the last days grow closer we must expect the intensity of this offense to strengthen as disgust toward Christianity spreads exponentially, even among the once so-called Christian nations.

Some of our Christian brothers attempt to deal with the world’s disgust toward Christianity via legislation, but they are misguided. Has not Jesus made it clear that just as the world hated him it would hate us as well?

A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me,

they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do to you for my name's sake, because they don't know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me, hates my Father also. If I hadn't done among them the works which no one else did, they wouldn't have had sin. But now have they seen and also hated both me and my Father. But this happened so that the word may be fulfilled which was written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause (Jn 15:20-25 WEB).

The world hates Jesus and his followers; and it will continue to do so regardless of any legislation. Because the gospel shines light on their darkened hearts, no amount of legislation can ever make it to passively accept and live peacefully with the purveyors of righteousness. “*And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not*” (John 1:5). The term shines, (φαίνει, pháinei), is in the present tense meaning that it is still shining and the darkness continues not to understand (κατέλαβεν, katélaben), grasp it with the mind, comprehend.

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:3-6).

To the world the gospel of Christ is foolishness. The Greek term (μωρία, mōría) is moron. To them the gospel is a moronic notion. The world hates Christianity and will always hate Christianity. Our faith, our morals, our values cannot be enforced by legislation and it is foolish to try. If this was our goal, or if it had any validity, both Jesus and the apostles would have demonstrated and taught it. But they did not. Jesus reprimanded the Jews and the apostles reprimanded the Church, but neither addressed the civil government on such issues. Rather than seeking to reform the ills of society, it is our task to love the brethren.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. (1Jn 3:11-14)

I would like to take a short detour to address a statement Jesus made in the John 15 passage; it speaks to the awesome responsibility we bear when presenting the gospel. Jesus said, *“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin” (Jn 15:22)*. He apparently speaks of the Jew’s specific sin of rejecting the Messiah. The terrible consequences ultimately suffered by all who reject Jesus once they have learned of him is something that we impose upon everyone with whom we share the gospel. God may wink upon innocence, but the knowledgeable are no longer innocent (Acts 17:30-31). As such, every time we share the gospel, we are exacting very serious consequences.

For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? (2 Cor 2:15-16).

Throughout history, there have been many who never heard the gospel of Christ, but they are still held accountable for and will be judged according to, the truths revealed to them; even if it is no more than their innate moral compass and the wonder and glory of creation itself. Mercy is not contingent upon how much one knows, but upon how one responds to the knowledge he has. *“For in it is revealed God's righteousness from faith to faith. As it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17)*.

Abraham and Job are excellent examples of faith and responding to God with the little knowledge they possessed. Job likely had a rather limited knowledge of God, possibly no more than the testimony of creation and the ancient stories that had passed down from generation to generation after the flood. Yet when Satan tested Job to the extreme, Job remained faithful and righteous and was blessed for it.

Before God chose Abraham, he too would have shared a similar, limited knowledge base as that of Job. Yet Abraham's faith resulted in God's covenant: That Abraham's offspring would be given a homeland. They would become a great nation. And through his seed would come forth redemption and blessing to the families of the earth. Scripture makes it clear that the glory of creation itself is sufficient knowledge for one to place faith in the Creator; indeed this knowledge is so sufficient that God expects all to place faith in his existence; so that for those who reject the Creator and have no faith in him, the recompense is punishment.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known of God is revealed in them, for God revealed it to them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse. (Rom 1:18-20)

Speaking of the antediluvians, whose circumstance we are told will be replicated in the last days (*Lk 17:26*), Paul continued:

Because, knowing God, they didn't glorify him as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and traded the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For their women changed the natural function into that which is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural function of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another, men doing what is inappropriate with men, and receiving in themselves the due penalty of their error. Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness,

maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil habits, secret slanderers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them. (Rom 1:21-32)

How much more severe will the judgment be for those in these last days, who not only know of the punishment for unrighteousness, but also know the gospel, the story of Christ—his death and glorious resurrection, which he personally suffered for them? For those who accept the gospel of Jesus it is life unto life; but for those who reject it, it is death unto death (*2 Cor 2:15-16*). It would have been better for them had they never heard the gospel; for once they hear it they are responsible for it; i.e. believing and submitting to it. Woe unto those who reject it.

If need be

The phrase ***if need be*** or if necessary seems to be Peter's mild way of saying, suffering must occur in one form or another, so as to try our faith. James agreed, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love him*" (*Jas 1:12*).

When our Lord appears we long to hear him say, "*Well done, my good and faithful servant.*" Peter encourages the readers to be of good cheer, for although they suffer he encourages them to remain steadfast in the faith that ***it might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ***. It is natural for children to love and honor their parents. Is there anything children want more than the praise and respect of their parents? It is a sad and terrible deed perpetrated when frustrated, self-centered parents (likely seeking to live vicariously through their child) constantly demean and disrespect the child. The child is often wounded for life, growing into a tormented soul, grieving over the tender parental love he or she never experienced.

But our heavenly Father is not like that. Although we continue to disappoint, he overlooks our faults and sees us through the blood of his only begotten son. He sees us as those for whom his

son sacrificed himself; and he accepts us as we are. That is not to say he does not work within us to improve our character, our motives, our actions, but he does it with love, not condescension. He stands beside us and his spirit dwells within to strengthen us throughout each of life's trials.

Having not seen

Faith in Jesus is the soul means by which we access both joy and salvation, ***Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*** The passage seems to remind believers that our entire life should revolve around the reality of our eternal salvation. This should be a primary motivation in all we do. The affections of this world are nothing more than Sirens alluring us to danger as we navigate our voyage.

Later, in the comments concerning 3:13-15, we shall discuss the true meaning of faith and how our modern culture now uses it to imply something quite different than intended in Scripture. In short, modern culture sees faith as something that is blind trust, without any evidence, something merely based upon wishful thinking; however, Scripture clearly states that faith is based upon solid, irrefutable evidence.

Verses 1:10-12

^{1:10}Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: ¹¹Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. ¹²Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Prophets have enquired and searched diligently

Even the OT prophets did not fully understand all the details of their Messianic prophecies; as such, they ***enquired and searched diligently*** attempting to comprehend the complete picture. In some ways we are similar today—those of us who are ever looking for the

Lord's return, seeking to understand the signs of the times; although now that so much history has passed, we have a more complete picture. Some OT prophecies spoke of the Messiah's glory and power, yet others spoke of him as a lowly servant, wounded, and sacrificed. It was not until Jesus' death and resurrection that this mystery came into focus.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Tim 3:16)

Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, . . . (Rom 16:23)

Even Satan was not privy to the mystery; lest he seek to spoil the plan by refusing to fulfill his role.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Cor 2:7-8)

Although the princes of the world, of whom Paul speaks would be the Jewish and Roman leaders at the time of Christ, their actions were inspired by Satan. Yet such ignorance still has application for today in fulfilling God's plan. The ignorance of current world leaders in these last times, and the evils they perpetrate work to bring about the world condition into which our blessed Lord shall return to set up his kingdom. Thus, it seems quite untoward for Christians to be overly exercised by world events and the evil designs set forth by various nations, including our own. Although Satan has been granted a certain degree of control over world events, ultimately God is in control and nothing happens that is outside of his glorious plan (Rom 13:1ff; 2 Cor 4:4).

Angels desire to look into

But the mystery speaks to more than the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Jesus. It also speaks to the mysterious union between Christ and his Church, the assembly of believers (created in God's own image) whom he has called to be his own. Paul likens it to a marriage in which the husband and wife become as

one flesh.

For this cause a man will leave his father and mother, and will be joined to his wife. The two will become one flesh." This mystery is great, but I speak concerning Christ and of the assembly. Nevertheless each of you must also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:31-33)

. . . the mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations. But now it has been revealed to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:26-27)

In the 19th chapter of the Revelation, John sees a vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb in which all heaven celebrates the union between Christ and his Church. I believe in some respects certain aspects of this mystery will forever remain a curiosity to the holy angels. The phrase *which things the angels desire to look into* paints the image of the angels bending forward, down low to get a closer look. It is a topic that has spiked their interest and which they are desperately seeking to understand.

It seems to me that what the angels are puzzled by and hoping to comprehend is familial love—the strength and driving force it possesses, so that it should lead Jesus to sacrifice himself for those who have disobeyed and rebelled against the Creator. Being individual creations, angels can have not experience of the esoteric connection between family members. Thus, that the divine would become lower than angles and take upon himself the form of his creation, and then sacrifice himself to redeem it, will forever be somewhat of a mystery to them (*Phil 2:5-8*). No doubt they understand it intellectually, but they can never know the personal, experiential union of the familial bond; just as those who have never had children are unable to truly understand the esoteric reality of parenthood.

Verses 1:13-16

^{1:13}Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of

conversation; ¹⁶ *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Gird up the loins

The idea behind the phrase *gird up the loins of your mind, be sober* is that of being on guard, to be prepared at all times. In their ancient culture, they wore loose-fitting, flowing robes, which, when engaged in some activity such as fighting or running, were tightened and drawn in close to the body so as to enhance the freedom of movement.

It is important to realize exactly what the *Wherefore* is connected to; for it tells us why it is that we should be watchful and prepared. Thus, it echoes back to a phrase in verse 9, *receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls*; therefore, be watchful and prepare yourselves.

The grace that is to be brought unto you

This is an interesting phrase, *the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. At first, the idea of the grace being brought to us might seem strange; but then we realize that the terms of grace and gift stem from the same root word (*χαριτος*, *charities*). Paul used this term when he said, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23)*. The gift of eternal life is exactly what Jesus brings to us when he appears. This is exactly what Paul described to the Corinthians.

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then what is written will happen: "Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15:51-55).

This is the grace, the gift that Jesus brings with him: the manifestation of eternal life and our transformation into celestial beings. This promise is the hope that is set before us time and again to remind us of our destiny and to encourage us to be steadfast in our faith. Paul gave a similar exhortation to the Thessalonians.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess 4:14-18)

Be sober

While the sober (νηφω, nepho) certainly speaks to the avoidance of drunkenness, its use here has something of a deeper meaning; by extension in this context, in its figurative form, it speaks of being discreet, alert, on watch. It is very similar to Paul's illustrious image of a soldier for battle:

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having the utility belt of truth buckled around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having fitted your feet with the preparation of the Good News of peace; above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the spoken word of God; with all prayer and requests, praying at all times in the Spirit, and being watchful to this end in all perseverance and requests for all the saints: on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Good News,....(Eph 6:10-19 WEB)

Former lusts

Created in the image of God, we are agents of free will;

although morality and goodness are fundamental aspects of our nature, so too (due to Adam's disobedience) is deceit and thievery. Thus, these dueling natures struggle within us: one good and one not good. But the Spirit of Christ sets us free from the bondage of the old man. So that once having been born again of the spirit, and receiving the new nature, *as children of obedience*, we are expected to not conform ourselves *according to your former lusts as in our ignorance*; but to fashion ourselves after Christ. Paul spoke of this daily struggle between these two natures as such:

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the law, that, to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present. For I delight in God's law after the inward man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom 7:18-23)

Everyone faces the same issue; we would do good but we do not have the capacity to overcome the evil within. Try as we might, we fail time and again. We can put on a happy face, hide our sins from others, even treat others with respect and kindness; but our darkened hearts have evil thoughts and in secret, we even often act upon them. It starts when we are yet children; indeed, every two year old is proof of this reality. No one has to teach the child to disobey, to be selfish, it comes quite naturally. Thus we read, "*The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" (Ps 14:2-3)

For this reason, left to our own devices, there is no hope for us; there is no hope for any of us. There is no amount of piety, religion or good works that make us purely good, nor please our Creator so as to persuade him to overlook our filthiness. It is this reality that causes the apostle to continue his exhortation and to cry out, "*What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death?*" (Rom 7:24).

So it is that every world religion offers nothing short of false promises; for all deny this truth. Sprinkled with a few nuggets of

truth here and there to make them attractive, every one of the world's religions is a tool of Satan, designed to deceive, to mislead, and to create false hope.

Returning to Paul's explanation for a moment; after crying out in despair over his wretched condition the apostle gives us the answer to our dilemma. The answer is Jesus Christ; he alone is our savior. He alone frees us of the guilt of sin. He alone frees us of the power sin has over us.

I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So then with the mind, I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, the sin's law. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. (Rom 7:25-8:2)

Judeo-Christian theology is the only belief system in the world that accepts the fact that man is evil and cannot, on his own merit, please or access God. It is only by God's mercy and through the vicarious death and resurrection of Christ Jesus that man can find favor with and have access to God. Of course, Judaism currently rejects Jesus as the Messiah; but this was predicted and they will be converted in the last days ((Isa 53:2-5; Eze 37). They are God's chosen and he has not forgotten his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Be ye holy

The term for holy (ἅγιος, hagios), is to be a saint. The idea is that of being sacred, pure, morally blameless, consecrated, chaste, innocent. Israel was also admonished to be holy. Of course, we cannot be completely holy until we exchange this terrestrial body—to which our sinful nature is securely fastened—for the celestial and thus be united with our Lord. However, there are three aspects to being holy. Positional holiness, in which God has chosen us and set us aside for himself; future holiness, when we shall put on the celestial body and be like him for we shall see him as he is; and practical holiness, in which we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us in our current condition to bring us into perfection. Day by day, dying to the old man and living unto the new by the power of the Spirit. It is this to which Peter is speaking.

As believers, born again of the spirit, our spirits are alive

unto God with the Holy Spirit dwelling within, thereby giving us the means to be victorious over our sinful nature. Now we have the ability to live unto God, to live day by day without succumbing to, or even entertaining, evil thoughts. But we are not automatons; we still have freewill and must decide to allow the Spirit to work within us and to give us the victory over sin and the power to die daily to the old nature. Thus, Peter said, *As obedient children, . . . as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* This is the struggle. Yet, as we grow in the Spirit of the Lord the struggle becomes less intense as we learn to trust in the power of God and cease our futile attempts to achieve holiness by our own strength. This is what the oft miss quoted verse is referring to: *“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me (Phil 4:13).* It is not speaking of winning a football game, or doing 20 pull-ups, or getting to work on time when you left 15 minutes late; it speaks to overcoming any temptation, bearing any burden, performing any task laid before us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 1:17-21

^{1:17}And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of you sojourning here in fear: ¹⁸Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ²⁰Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, ²¹Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Judges according to every man's work

There are seven different judgments mentioned in Scripture:

- The judgment of the believer's sins at the cross of Christ (Jn 12:31).
- The believer's self-judgment (1 Cor 11:31).
- The judgment of the nations at the return of Christ (Mt 25:32).
- The judgment of Israel at the return of Christ (Eze 20:37).
- The judgment of angels after Christ's one thousand years reign (Jude 1:6).
- The judgment of the great white throne wherein all none

believers will stand defenses to hear their final penalty (Rev 20:11ff).

- The judgment of the believers' works (2 Cor 5:10).

It is this last judgment to which Peter is speaking. It is often called the bema seat of Christ, wherein all believers will be rewarded for their works.

Peter reasons that we should consider this awesome event with fear. Although we will lose and receive rewards at this judgment (2 Cor 5:9-11), there is something more somber than rewards in mind. The appeal is not based so much on the potential lost reward that might be suffered, but upon the great cost of redemption; for *you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* This was the price which God, in love, foreordained even before creation. Thus, it is not so much what we might lose but what Christ has already given up for us that should be on our minds during our daily struggle to yield and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the victory over those sins that we hold so dearly within our fallen nature.

Without respect of persons

It would be amiss to say God has no favorites. Moses, David, and the nation of Israel are clear examples of favorites. When Miriam and Aaron complained that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman and placed themselves on the same level and authority because the Lord had also spoken with them, the Lord heard them and his reaction was swift.

And the LORD spoke suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out you three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my

servant Moses? And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. (Num 12:4-9)

Miriam was stricken leprous; however when Moses pleaded with the Lord, he had mercy upon her and cured her after seven days. Moses was clearly one of God's favorites. However, our text is speaking of judgment. Herein, God has no favorites; he is **without respect of persons**. As such, even Moses, God's favored servant gets no respect when it comes to judgment. After leading the nation for 40 years through the desert, performing numerous miracles, speaking face to face with the Lord, recording the law of God, Moses was not allowed to cross into the Promised Land because of his disobedience which was sparked by his anger.

God told Moses to gather the people and to speak to the rock that water would come forth. But once he assembled the crowd, in anger toward their rebellion, Moses struck the rock a couple time with his staff and the water flowed. At first it might seem trifle to us, but his actions made the miraculous (i.e. water flowing from a rock merely by speaking to it) seem to have a natural answer (i.e. beating on the rock that the water might be free to flow).

God does not hold favorites when it comes to passing judgment. Thus, the godly grandmother, the rich tycoon, the apostle, the Sunday school teacher, the murderer, the deacon, Moses and David, everyone must stand for judgment. Christians will stand at the bema seat of Christ losing or receiving rewards. However, unbelievers will stand in condemnation at the Great White Throne, wherein no one shall escape their doom. Some will be surprised to find themselves at the Great White Throne; for they were religious, church goers, some even working for the Lord—at least that is what they told themselves. *“Many will tell me in that day, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works? Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity'” (Mt 7:22-23).*

Not only is God no respecter of persons, he does not appreciate those who are. It is the self-centered coward who gives deference to the rich and mighty, lavishing them with gifts and praise so as to somehow gain favor and benefit from their champion's station (*Jude 16*). This is the same person who looks down upon the poor and lowly, harboring the belief that his superior social status makes him a better person than others. Thus, the Lord commanded the Judges of Israel,

You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; (Deut 1:17)

The poor person is shunned even by his own neighbor, But the rich person has many friends. He who despises his neighbor sins, But blessed is he who has pity on the poor. . . .

Whoever oppresses the poor for his own increase and whoever gives to the rich, Both come to poverty. (Prov14:20-21, 22:16)

Peter will build on this moral concept a little later when he speaks of loving the brethren with a pure heart, to be void of motives of self gain, void of deference to those with high social status.

Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear

Because judgment is coming ***according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*** In the midst of his exhortation concerning spiritual sacrifice, Peter tells us to proceed in the fear of God. Four times in this letter, Peter urges us to have such fear (1: 17, 2:17, 3:2, 15). King Solomon realized the significance of this: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov 9:10)*. Here too, we have the answer to the most asked question among the human race: What is the meaning of life? *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc 12:13)*.

Some foolish individuals prefer to think of God as someone or something that is like a fuzzy teddy bear to be cuddled so as to inspire feelings of pleasure and contentment; they do not think anything so kind and loving should be feared. But such an image of God is nowhere to be found in Scripture. Scripture makes it clear that God is an awesome, fearsome being, the Supreme Being and the Creator of all things. This does not negate that God is love' but it does negate the warped concept that some individuals have about God and love.

Love, as depicted in Scripture, is selflessness (*1 Cor 13*). As such selfishness or narcissism is the antithesis of love, and the epitome of evil. Many think hate is the opposite of love, but this is not so. Hate, in fact, can abide alongside love; we might even say that hate is a byproduct of love. In his love and righteousness, there are certain things that God himself hates, for they are contrary to his

holiness and selflessness. They are, we might argue, all resultant byproducts of narcissism.

There are six things which Yahweh hates; Yes, seven which are an abomination to him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood; A heart that devises wicked schemes, Feet that are swift in running to mischief, A false witness who utters lies, And he who sows discord among brothers. (Prov 6:16-19)

Not only does God hate that which is contrary to his love and holiness, his attribute of justice demands its punishment; thus, we fear God.

There is yet another very significant issue to discuss when we consider the command to fear God. That is, only the righteous truly fear God; unbelievers have no fear of Him. *"Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes"* (Rom 3:16-18). Because this passage depicts the totality of mankind, it brings us back to the topic of election; a concept with which Peter began the letter. Paul is not complaining that unbelievers do not conform to our ethics and morality, he is not preaching against sin per se, but rather, merely observing human behavior, and arguing that apart from the grace of God and the propitiation for our sins by faith in the blood of Jesus, we are no different, for we are them. So it is that he begins that passage with, *"What then? Are we better than they? No, in no way. For we previously charged both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin"* (Rom 3:9). And then we realize that even our faith, our station is due to divine election:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, . . . (Eph 1:3-6)

So then, back to the idea that the fear of the Lord as something employed only by the righteous: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endures forever"* (Ps 111:10). Setting aside love as an emotion (for true love is something more than emotion, it is devotion and sacrifice from which emotion often

flows), fear is the strongest emotion man has. In the presence of fear all other emotions flee into the recesses of our hearts; there is no room for other emotions as their importance pales in the face of fear. Consumed with fear, one does not think straight and is prone to rash decisions because the protection from, or the ability to fight against, the cause of one's fears is the primary concern.

Yet the believer's fear of God is not so; for God is also our comfort and our protection. So that, while the fear of God is the greatest of all fears, at the same time (due to God's mercy), it yields us our greatest calm, comfort, and safety.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. (2 Cor 1:3)

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. (Ps 23:4)

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps 27:1)

In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. (Ps 56:4)

And what then do we have to fear that is greater than the fear of God?

The precious blood of Christ

God' justice demands the punishment of sin. The punishment of Adam's rebellion was death, both physical and spiritual. But God is love, and love is displayed by self-sacrifice—even to the point of giving one's life for another, which is the greatest exhibition of love. So it is that our redemption was purchased ***with the precious blood of Christ***. In love God took upon himself the form of flesh and became a sacrificed in our stead.

Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross. (Phil 2:5-8).

Foreordained

Jesus self-sacrifice was more than mere physical death; more than the intense and cruel pain he suffered. It was determined before creation that he would selflessly pay the penalty for our sin; that he

would become the propitiation for the sins of the world (*1 Jn 2:2*). To achieve this, Jesus took upon himself the very thing that is the antithesis of his very being—he became sin for us. “*For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (*2 Cor 5:21*). This is a mystery that confuses even the angels; even we, the redeemed, scarcely understand or appreciate the significance of it: the second person of the triune godhead taking upon himself the sins of the world as the Father and the Holy Spirit turn from him. Thus, Jesus cried out on the cross as he was dying, “*Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani? That is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (*Mt 27:46*)?

As such, love does not preclude judgment; rather, it is because God is love that the judgment of evil must ensue. Evil, in all forms, from simple disobedience to lethal and twisted malevolent behavior, is the antithesis of God, and it cannot be allowed to stand. Nor can it be merely overlooked; the cost of redemption is too great. It must be judged and ultimately brought to an end. Justice must be satisfied and holiness must prevail.

As a side note concerning love versus narcissism; let this be a warning of all seeking love and marriage. Steer clear of anyone who displays evidence of being narcissistic. For this person will never love you in the way you desire. This person loves himself/herself more than anything. In this relationship, you will be nothing more than a means of self-gratification for him/her. And do not be so naive as to think you can change this person. Change of this nature can only come via a true conversion—being born again by the Spirit of God.

Verses 1:22-25

^{1:22}Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: ²³Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. ²⁴For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: ²⁵But the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Purified your souls

The term purified carries the same connotation as holy; it is

from the same root word. What we must notice here is that purifying our souls is accomplished by *obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren*. As mentioned earlier, there are three aspects of holiness (ἡγνικότες, hegnikotes): positional holiness—wherein God sets us aside for himself; practical holiness—wherein we are active agents working in concert with the Holy Spirit; and future holiness—when we shall be without sin and in possession of our new celestial bodies. Here Peter seems to reference both the moment of positional holiness and the ongoing aspect of practical holiness. The perfect active participle, speaks of an action that happened at a particular time in the past. Concerning which, he tells his readers they were active agents (i.e. their choice to place their trust in the Lord). He reminds them of their conscious decision to obey the Spirit and encourages them to act upon their obedience by the demonstration of sincere love for the brethren.

Unfeigned love

We use the term love to translate a different Greek term; however, in the Greek, each word highlights a particular important nuance of this mysterious relationship harbored between us. Here, Peter uses two different words in conjunction speaking to one so as to encourage the other: φιλαδελφίαν, philadelphian, which speaks to a strong fraternal affection, brotherly love, kindness; and ἀγαπησατε, agapeesate, denoting a social or moral sense, a sacrificial love. Yet even these strong terms he sees fit to modify. Their love (philadelphian), he modifies as being unfeigned (ἀνυπόκριτος anypókritos); that is, sincere, without hypocrisy. And the love (agapeesate) which he is encouraging is modified with **a pure heart fervently** (καθαρός καρδία ἐκτενῶς, katharós kardía ektenōs). Pure (katharós) meaning clean, clear; heart (kardía), in the figurative sense speaking to thoughts and feelings; and fervently (ektenōs), meaning constantly, without ceasing.

If I were to paraphrase and expand upon his thought, it would be as follows: “Now that you are sincerely kind and fraternal to each other, make concessions and personal sacrifices for each other; and do it willingly with pure motives, not to gain an advantage or to look important, and not as respecters of persons, but be motivated by the eternal word of God and not by temporal gain.”

Peter’s use of the two terms (φιλεω, *phileo* and αγαπαω, *agapao*, their root forms) is very interesting. He is passing on a

lesson he learned from Jesus, when Jesus asked Peter three times “Do you love me”. The first time Jesus said, “*Do you love me more than these?*”, using *agapao*. Peter answered, “*Yes Lord, you know I love you.*”, using *phileo*. Then Jesus asked him a second time, again using *agapao*; and Peter answered, again using *phileo*. When Jesus asked Peter the third time, “*Do you love me?*”, he used *phileo*. Of course Peter was grieved because it seemed that Jesus was questioning his affectionate devotion, questioning his *phileo*. Then Jesus foretold of Peter’s eventual martyrdom, essentially telling him: Yes, you will demonstrate your affection (*phileo*), with your sacrifice (*agapao*) (*John 21:15-17*). As you may recall, earlier Jesus had told his disciples, “*Greater love (agapao) has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (philos). You are my friends (philos), if you do whatever I command you*” (*John 15:13-14*).

Born again

The unbelieving world scoffs at the Christian’s use of the term, born again. Yet, if we temporarily, intellectually remove ourselves from the equation so as to imagine it from their darkened perspective, it is very easy to understand their skepticism. For this thing we call being born again is the essence of esoteric. It can be discussed and debated for an entire lifetime, but until it is experienced it is not a reality. Yet for those who have experienced it, it is the only reality of note; for, as the apostle explains, this physical reality will soon fade away, but the spirit which is alive to the Lord, like the Word of the Lord, lives on forever.

All flesh is as grass

Imploring us to get our priorities straight, he states the obvious. Life is a fleeting vapor ***for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away.*** Young women cherish their beauty, even as young men place great store in their strength; yet both last only a few decades before they begin their rapid decay—the glowing complexion of youthful beauty grows wrinkled and flaccid, and the once sinuous physique withers; then, all too soon, we die.

There is something very sad about an old woman lying about her age, having plastic surgery, and painting her face as if to recapture her fleeting youth. It is just as sad to see an old man

driving a little sports car (into which he can hardly even fit) dating a young woman (who likely is with him merely for his money), as he too attempts to regain his glorious youth. It seems better for one's own peace of mind simply to accept the inevitable, to accept what life has in store; for all the makeup and surgery and sports cars and younger dates in the world cannot change it. It seems better to be as Fanny Crosby advised and learned to accept that which cannot be cured. Life is short and then we die. So that the Psalmist cried out, "*LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am*" (Ps 39:4).

In contrast to our fleeting life in this world, **the word of the Lord endures forever**. This then should be our focus. While we must interact with the world, making enterprise and industry to provide a living for ourselves and our families, we must not be carried away with ourselves, with our goals, our accomplishments, our aspirations, and dreams. For whatever they might be, they all pale before our obedience to the eternal word of the Lord. Our worldly accomplishments can yield handsome rewards, money, pleasures, and comforts, but these rewards are temporal and they die with us. However, when we build upon the foundation we have rooted in Christ that which we build will be with us for eternity.

If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or stubble; each man's work will be revealed. For the Day will declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself will test what sort of work each man's work is. If any man's work remains which he built on it, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, but as through fire. (1 Cor 3:12-15)

Verses 2:1-3

^{2:1}Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, ²As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby: ³If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

That you may grow

Anytime we have a conjunction, such as this *Wherefore*, it behooves us to understand to what, exactly, the wherefore is referring. Here it harkens back to the statement, *born again, not of*

corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. Thus, because we are born again by the eternal, incorruptible word of God, we are now expected to grow and mature. This is accomplished by forsaking all that is the antithesis of the eternal, incorruptible word of God, i.e. that which is corruption, such as ***malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.*** We are to feast on the incorruptible and eternal word of God as a baby feast on his mother's milk.

Of course, it is not expected that every believer should be a biblical scholar; however, every believer is expected to learn and understand the rudiments of the faith. It is upon these truths that we meditate and our faith grows. For this reason, Paul instructed Pastor Timothy to teach these doctrines to his flock:

Be an example to those who believe, . . . pay attention to reading, to exhortation, and to teaching. (1 Tim 4:12-13)

Remind them of these things, . . . properly handling the Word of Truth. . . . (2 Tim 2:14-18 WEB)

Only by knowing the doctrines of truth can we avoid false teaching. This was the problem with the believers to whom the book of Hebrews was written. They had failed to learn biblical doctrines and had fallen into the throws of false teachers.

For when by reason of the time you ought to be teachers, you again need to have someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. You have come to need milk, and not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is not experienced in the word of righteousness, for he is a baby. But solid food is for those who are full grown, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. (Heb 5:12-14)

Failing to learn sound biblical doctrine was an issue in Corinth as well.

I couldn't speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to babies in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for you weren't yet ready. Indeed, not even now are you ready, for you are still fleshly. For insofar as there is jealousy, strife, and factions among you, aren't you fleshly, and don't you walk in the ways of men? (1 Cor 3:1-3).

Although Paul made a distinction between his readers' need for milk (as helpless babies) rather than the meat or food of adults; we need not make that distinction here in Peter's passage, so as to

assume his readers were bickering with each other and falling prey to false teachings as Paul's readers were. The context is clear; Peter has already commended them for their growth in brotherly love and their ability to suffer for the Lord. Rather, in this context, he is commending their continued growth, encouraging their hunger for the eternal truth, and warning them not to be distracted by the temporal trials besetting them. Here the babe's milk is spoken of as a positive thing, "*as newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.*"

Verses 2:4-6

^{2:4}To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ⁵you also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ⁶Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be confounded.

A chief corner stone

This passage is rich with information. It speaks to Christ as the living stone upon which the Church—each believer since the time of Christ, an individual living stone as well—is built. Isaiah had told of this stone: "*thus says the Lord Yahweh, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation. He who believes shall not act hastily*" (Isa 28:16 WEB). Earlier, we discussed how Peter was the stone upon which the Church was built, in that it was given to him to be the first to preach the gospel to the Jews, to the Samaritans, and then to the Gentiles. But, as we see here, Jesus himself is the **chief cornerstone**, the foundation stone upon which the Church is built.

As predicted, this cornerstone, the Messiah, would be rejected. The Psalmist wrote, "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner*" (Ps 118:22). Daniel even foretold the very date that he would be rejected.

Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the Anointed One, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troubled times. After the sixty-two weeks the Anointed One

shall be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end of it shall be with a flood, and even to the end shall be war; desolations are determined. (Dan 9:25-26)

The weeks of which Daniel spoke were week-years; an essential sabbatical time frame in the Jewish calendar. Each week consisted of seven years; thus a week of years. At the end of every 7 weeks came the 50th year, the year of Jubilee (*Lev 25:10-12*). At this time slaves were freed and indebted properties returned to their owners.

Daniel was given this prophecy in the 6th Century BC, during the Babylon captivity. In the 5th Century BC, King Artaxerxes issued the command for Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild Solomon's temple (*Neh 2:1-8*). Nehemiah was careful to record the date of this royal decree as the month of Nisan,³ in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes. Scholars have determined this to have been 445 BC in the Julian calendar.⁴

On Palm Sunday, the 10th of Nissan (April 6th 32 AD in the Julian calendar⁵), as predicted (precisely 69 week-years after the command to rebuild the temple, on the day Passover lambs were presented for examination to see if they were worthy of sacrifice), the Messiah was cut off, rejected at large by Israel. That day, Jesus rode a donkey through the streets of Jerusalem, officially presenting himself as both the Messiah and the Lamb of God. Many hailed him as King of the Jews, but the rulers of Israel were infuriated (*Mt. 21:7-10*). The entire scene occurred just as Zachariah predicated more than 500 years earlier.

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king comes to you! He is righteous, and having salvation; Lowly, and riding on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zac 9:9).

A few days later they killed him. About 100 years before Zachariah's prophecy, Isaiah foretold of this lamb as well.

He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he didn't open his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he didn't open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who [among them] considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the disobedience of

my people to whom the stroke [was due]? They made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased Yahweh to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa 53:7-9 WEB)

Jesus was not merely rejected by the populous in general; he was rejected by his own people, those to whom he had come, those to whom the promise of his coming was given (Mt 15:24; Ps 22). Being truly human, Jesus felt emotion the same as the rest of us; and being rejected by his own people was heartbreaking. Not so much that he was personally offended, but their rejection, but that he knew of the devastation that would befall them for rejecting their King. On one occasion, after being rebuffed by the Pharisees for the praise he received from the multitudes, the emotion of his heartbreak broke forth.

When he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had known today the things which belong to your peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come on you, when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, hem you in on every side, and will dash you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone on another, because you didn't know the time of your visitation." (Lk 19:41-44 WEB)

Then again, a few days before his betrayal, he stood before the crowd and lamented:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me from now on, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! (Mat 23:37-39)

As indefensible and heartbreaking as this rejection was, good nevertheless, came out of it; for all things work for God's glory

(Rom 11:36) and “*all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose*” (Rom 8:28). Jesus indeed was chosen, called to this purpose; even as Peter made clear when he quoted Isaiah concerning Jesus as the chief cornerstone. As such, Isaiah’s aforementioned prophecy continued:

Yet it pleased Yahweh to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa 53:10-11 WEB)

In the end, Israel’s rejection of Jesus opened the door for all men to be blessed. Similar to how the wicked antediluvian world had rejected God, a few hundred years after the flood mankind had again turned to evil. Ancient Jewish records tell us most of the populous was following Nimrod; refusing to leave the Valley of Shinar, to go forth and multiply as God commanded (*Gen 10*). Even as he chose Noah, God chose Abraham, a righteous man. However, this time, rather than destroying the world again, God made a covenant with Abraham. Abraham’s offspring would be given a homeland; they would become a great nation, and through his seed would come forth a redeemer through whom the families of the world would be blessed.

When Abraham’s decedents rejected the Messiah (as foretold, Ps 118:22-24; Isa 53:1-10); God opened the door for a blessing to the Gentiles, the families of the earth, the descendants of those whom had neglected him and had turned to Nimrod. Thus, the gospel was preached to all nations (Isa 42:1-6), so that “*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely*” (Rev 22:17). The Church was born, a new class, a new people—living stones placed stone by stone upon the foundation stone, Jesus Christ. Here I should like to jump ahead a few verses in Peter’s letter to substantiate this thought.

The stone which the builders rejected, Has become the chief cornerstone, . . . you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no

people, but now are God's people, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Pet 2:7-10)

In effect, Israel's rejection of the Messiah allowed the nations of the world to have a second chance at having a relationship with the Creator; so that now, from Pentecost till his return in the clouds for his own (1 Thess 4:13-18), all who believe, both Jew and Gentile, are members of the Church of Christ.

Verses 2:7-8

2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Stone of stumbling

To one Jesus is *precious*, to another he is *a rock of offense*. The world generally accepts all religions, all belief systems, even those religions that degrade women, or execute anyone who disobeys its tenets. The world generally accepts all belief systems, but one—Judeo-Christian theology. Although the Jews, by and large, are currently not followers of Jesus, in time they will be. Soon Israel will come to the realization that Jesus is the Messiah. They looked for a conquering king to deliver them from Roman rule, but God sent them the sacrificial lamb to cover their sin; thus, they rejected him. But God has not forgotten them; Israel's conversion is on the near horizon and the next time Jesus sets foot on the earth, it will be as the conquering king they so desire.

The world, hates even the idea of the biblical Messiah because his reality exposes their evil deeds (*Jn 7:7*). It harkens back to the doctrine of total depravity:

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.

Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one, (Ps 63:2-3)

Neither the world nor the world's religions can tolerate this thought, for it implies helplessness; something that cuts against the pride of man. Something that every atheist and every follower of any of the world's religions have in common is their belief in mankind: that man is able to reach his full potential; be it spiritual, intellectual,

physical, etc. The idea of having to humble oneself before the almighty Creator, to admit helplessness, to ask for mercy, is simply offensive to the prideful heart.

So it is that the world hates the followers of Judeo-Christian theology, because their message is that of man's need for the Messiah. The Messiah and his teachings expose their wickedness. As such, by extension, the following passage has application to both Israel and to the Church. Two separate bodies, yet both are God's chosen. Although he is speaking to his disciples, technically, at this point in his ministry, we are still in Jewish territory; for Jesus is still preaching to the Jews, he has not yet been rejected and the Church has not yet been established.

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. (Jn 15:18)

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (Jn 15:19)

He who hates me, hates my Father also. (Jn 15:23)

Therefore, it should come as no surprise when, in our current political environment, Jews and Christians and biblical values are spurned and rejected in favor of religiosity and even immorality. For our gospel is a rock of offense to them. It is a stone that causes them to stumble as they travel happily down the path to destruction, eating and drinking, and having a gay old time.

Verses 2:9-10

***^{2:9}But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:
¹⁰Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.***

An holy nation

God has various holy nations, dispensational cohorts whom he has mercifully chosen for a particular purpose in history: antediluvian believers, postdiluvian believers up till Abraham, millennial believers during Christ's reign, etc. In our present time in history, we have Israel and the Church; each chosen by God and each fulfilling a different purpose.

Adam's disobedience thrust himself and all his descendants

into sin; thus, “*the whole world lies in wickedness*” (1 Jn 5:19). This is the doctrine of total depravity. After Adam’s fall, God allowed the rebel, Lucifer, a certain degree of control over the world, which had fallen into wickedness; so that Lucifer is even referred to as the god of this world. The peoples of the world live in the darkness of Satan’s domain:

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them (2 Cor 4:3-4).

As such, all unbelievers walk

according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience; . . . doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, . . . (Eph 2:1-3).

Peter’s explanation that ***in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*** echoes back to God’s covenant with Abraham. As discussed earlier, about 500 years after the flood man had once again turned from God; they were following Nimrod’s rebellion, building the tower of Babel and refusing to leave in the Valley of Shinar to populate the earth as directed. Rather than destroy the earth again, God merely stopped seeking after man, thereby leaving him to his own devices.

But Abraham was a righteous man with a heart toward God so that God had mercy on him and made a covenant with him, to wit, his descendants would become a particular people, the chosen people of God. He would give them a homeland and through Abraham’s line would come the Messiah who would make atonement for man’s sin.

The rest of the population, those not born to Abraham, were labeled Gentiles and had no standing before the Lord. However, when the Messiah appeared as the lowly sacrificial lamb of atonement, he was rejected by his own; who, due to sin had been living under the authority of Rome and desired a physical conqueror, not a spiritual redeemer.

Although Messiah was subsequently put to death by his own people, still the Lord has not forsaken them. Though man is unfaithful, God remains faithful and the covenant with Abraham remains intact. We know that in the last days Israel will come to realize that Jesus was indeed their Messiah. Nevertheless, after his

resurrection, Jesus (who had originally come only to the house of Israel) invited gentiles as well, so that all were invited to come to him for mercy. The response has been nill, but the Lord saw fit to show mercy and to call certain individuals out from among the nations. Now, many, even among those who had been outside the Abrahamic covenant and thus outside of God's mercy, were called to make another people—the Church of Jesus Christ. Consisting of both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, it is another redeemed body other than Israel, recipients of God mercy, with a new covenant and a new standing before God. Without discarding Israel, God elected another nation, another people to spread his message of mercy and salvation.

Sadly, just as Israel failed their master, so too has the Church, in that much of what calls itself Christianity today does not even hold to the biblical doctrines that makes Christianity Christianity. So it is that Jesus asked rhetorically: When I return will I find any faith on the earth (*Lu 18:8*). And in the Book of the Revelation, we see that the final period of the Church history, represented by the church of the Laodiceans, is completely apostate; rich, and increased with goods, having need of nothing, including Christ. (*Rev 3:17*).

Obtained mercy

Although Lucifer has power over the world, his finite power is limited in scope. God has ultimate control and in time he will vanquish the enemy and resume total control. In the meantime, God makes use of this rebellion; employing it to reveal those hidden attributes that could never have been known to us had the rebellion never occurred. The rebellion of the heavenly beings reveals God's holiness, goodness, righteousness, and justice as opposed to their antitheses as demonstrated by Satan and his minions. Whereas the rebellion of man (those whom God created in his own image) goes even further, so as to reveal God's mercy and sacrificial love. Thus, God is glorified even by evil, for it is the presence of evil that releases the demonstration of God's love and mercy. So it is that all things, even the evils we experience (which by the way are the product of man's sin) work toward God's purpose (*Col 1:16; Rom 8:28*). Soon evil will come to an end and God will create all things anew. In the meantime, we fight a spiritual warfare (*Eph 6:12*).

A royal priesthood

The Church is *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*. In times past, the High Priest entered the Holy Temple once a year to offer sacrifice to the Lord. The entire scenario served as a type, foreshadowing that which was to come. The application of this metaphor takes on several meanings. Jesus is both the High Priest and the sacrifice without blemish. The community of believers is both the temple and the priesthood. Unlike the High Priest of old, who approached God in the temple, but once a year and was restricted as to what he could do and touch and say, our High Priest is not so; our High Priest has complete and continual access to the throne. Our High Priest cares for us and counts us as his own, so that via him, we too have continual access to the throne.

Having then a great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold tightly to our confession. For we don't have a High Priest who can't be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need. (Heb 4:14-16)

While the priest of Israel sacrificed the blood of lambs and doves and bullocks (again as a type of the spiritual) we, as living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, are appointed to offer up “*spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet 2:5). What then are these spiritual sacrifices?

Spiritual sacrifice comes in many forms that seem to separate into three classifications: God-ward, self-ward, and man-ward. For example: God-ward—thanksgiving, prayer, worship, praise; Self-ward—holy speech, dying daily to the old man; Man-ward—service, doing good, and love for others (*Ps 50:14, 141:2; Hos 14:2; Jn 4:23-24; Heb 13:15-16; Rom 12:1; Eph 5:2ff*).

Peter is about to discuss the practical application of spiritual sacrifice in a rather detailed fashion. And we will soon discover that his understanding is absolutely contrary to our basic survival instinct. His words will not sit well with us. Our natural man will rebel against it. We will construct all sorts of scenarios and logical arguments to justify our failure to accept Peter’s argument and to

comply with his exhortation. Yet, in the end, our spiritual growth depends upon it; for this is how we *show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*.

He has already addressed some of these sacrifices without actually defining them as such: *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory . . . be sober . . . be you holy in all manner of conversation . . . laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings*. These are the type of spiritual sacrifices with which we have no problem, at least intellectually; although actually making application of them is another issue. But Peter is now about to speak directly to the man-ward sacrifices; these are the spiritual sacrifices that intellectually go against our fleshly nature; they are difficult for our old man to fathom.

The God-ward spiritual sacrifices such as praising God, being thankful, and humbling our ego before the Creator seem to come naturally once we realize salvation. Although the self-ward spiritual sacrifices are intellectually pleasing (for our conscience and the Spirit of God work to convict) they may seem a little more difficult; but only because we make it so by clinging to the old man. Once we release the old man and cling to the Spirit of God, he provides all the strength we need to overcome. Herein is victory. Herein is the meaning of Paul's famed passage: "*I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me*" (Phil 4:13). In the context he is speaking of being content in whatever condition or circumstance he finds himself; he is speaking of a spiritual sacrifice not a physical accomplishment. But the man-ward spiritual sacrifices (as we shall see) are a different breed; especially particular ones wherein we must forsake something that is most precious to us—i.e. our survival instinct.

Verses 2:11-12

^{2:11}Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹²Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

This world is not my home,
I'm just a passing through,

My treasures are laid up,
Somewhere beyond the blue.

As strangers and pilgrims

This beloved hymn is exactly what Peter has in mind. The believer's eternal home is in another world; a world void of physical and emotional pain, void of deceit, selfish ambition, disease and death. And it is void of ***fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.***

As such, in that fleshy lusts are foreign to our homeland and foreign to our new nature, to entertain them at any level is treason; forthwith waging battle against our homeland and our new nature. Yet the ever-present old man tugs at us, seeking to draw us into this conflict; and the fact is that abstinence from these lusts is a hard thing, indeed an impossible thing to achieve when attempted by our own volition. As Paul explained, the law of sin, to which we are inextricably bound until death, wars against our will, and it always wins (Ro 7:23-24). The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the manifestation of our fallen nature (Jn 2:15-17).

Of course, this does not prevent us from attempting to achieve holiness on our own. The history of Judaism and Christianity is replete with movements and entire societies and denominations focused upon this pursuit of manufactured holiness; we call it legalism. It was the way of:

- The Pharisees and Sadducees.
- The early Christian hermits, which culminated in numerous monasteries, a practice that exists to this day.
- Simeon Stylites (390-459) who spent 37 years on a small platform atop a small pillar; and sadly, he had followers.
- The Amish, who seem to overlook certain activities and behaviors as long as an outward appearance is kept.
- The (now defunct) Moral Majority that essentially attempted to legislate holy behavior.
- Numerous professing Christian denominations that once championed the faith but now reject Scripture as God's
- Word, but still they support ethics, charity, doing good and treating others with kindness, etc.
- Countless professing Christians, even within Bible-believing churches, who keep up respectable public lives while their private lives are riddled with selfishness.

We can fool our neighbor with our legalistic behavior; we might even fool ourselves, but try as we might we cannot fool our Lord. What must be understood is that one's abstinence from these fleshly behaviors is only achieved by dying daily to the old man and allowing the power of God's Spirit, living within, to give us victory. This is our strength; it is this by which we can do all things. So it is that Jesus said, "*my yoke is easy and my burden is light*" (Mt 11:30); and we read, "*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*" (Gal 5:16). Herein, is the victory.

Your conversation honest

It is via the Spirit-filled life that our behavior (ἀναστροφή *anastrophḗ*), here translated conversation, remains honest among the non-believers so that God is glorified. We may rest assured, that not only does the world see through the pseudo holiness manufacture by legalism, but it uses it as an excuse to reject the message we hope to bring. Furthermore, not only does this manufactured legalism not bring glory to the Father, it is something that must be answered for at the bema seat of Christ; for, as Peter mentioned earlier, our God is without respect of persons.

Verses 2:13-17

2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. 17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Many delay coming to Christ because they do not want to give up their lifestyle—their favorite sins and guilty pleasures. They calculate that in due time, after they have sown their oats, they will follow Jesus as their mothers implored and they learned in Sunday school. Similarly, this thing of being a living sacrifice, which Peter is beginning to explain in detail, is something I believe many Christians would prefer to put off as well, or rather avoid altogether. I believe it is the reason most preachers will avoid preaching through this epistle. These things are hard for us to swallow; hard to wrap our minds around; hard to put our hearts into; they are contrary to

our inbred survival instinct, our sense of fairness. Yet, is that not why it is called sacrifice?

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man

Now Peter is getting into something that really hurts; something especially painful to those of us born and bred in the rebellious western culture, in which we prize our individualism and freedom. He tells us to submit ourselves to the government's authority. This man-ward spiritual sacrifice is quite different from the God-ward spiritual sacrifices. For example, setting aside personal time to be with our Lord is often an issue for many, but once it is done, it is a comfort—always something pleasurable and fulfilling. Even the self-ward sacrifice of self-denial affords some pleasure once embraced. But it is hard for us to see the pleasure in such man-ward spiritual sacrifices in which we give up our freedom even to the point, if need be, of forsaking our basic survival instinct. Now Peter's words are getting tough.

In America, we have a somewhat unique situation that makes complying with this command at times a bit confusing; but it need not be so. Because we are a free nation in which each citizen is endowed the power of free speech, we have the civic right to speak up, to criticize our government, and even to defy it and bring lawsuits against it when we believe it has wronged us. But as Christians, we have a mandate to obey and submit to the government. What then shall we do?

We can rationalize nearly any action, but we must ask: What would the Lord do in the various situations of conflict between himself as a citizen and the government under which he is living? A simple look at his sacrificial life provides the answer. Although we are grateful for his humble sacrifice, we really do not want to apply this principle to ourselves. Yet, here it is, Peter is presenting and arguing for these principles by which we should govern our response to governmental conflict. His words will be offensive to many. ***Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake . . . as unto them that are sent by him . . . so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish me.***

Submit (ὑποτάσσω, hypotássō), speaks to subordination, to willingly yield to authority, such as the submission of a soldier to his officers. The term ***ordinance*** (νέμω, nēmō), is not the same as the term for regulation or principle, as used by Paul for the “*law of sin*”

(Rom 7:23). Nor is it the same as the term for decree, dogma, or law (δόγμα, dogma), as used when Caesar Augustus sent “out a decree” to tax everyone in the kingdom (Lk 2:1). **Ordinance** (κτισει, ktisei), denotes something fabricated or designed by the proprietor or manager, or in this case the government. The idea is to abide by every institution or governance of man. By definition, this would include local civic governing bodies such as school boards, zoning commissions, city, county, and state governments, all the way up to the king or other governing bodies. Thus, **whether it be to the king, as supreme or unto governors.**

What we must keep in mind is that God is ultimately in control; and he has set up these governments that he might achieve a specific purpose. From our perspective, his purpose is often a mystery and seemingly diametrically opposed to our personal interests. Yet, is it not our charge to trust him? To place our perceived interests aside in favor of his? I say perceived because when these conflicts occur that is exactly what it is, our perception. And an incorrect perception at that; for God’s interests are our interests. Like a toddler scolded or deprived of some desired object for its own protection, so it is with our Lord; he always has our back whether we understand it or not. So it is that Paul had the same message.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will you then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and you shall have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil. Wherefore you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (Rom 13:1-6)

Before we begin to rationalize and discount these commands as being out of touch with our particular situation, there are a few practical things to consider. First, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecc 1:9). So that, whatever we might experience, others have

experienced before us. Second, the kingdoms of the world have always been pagan. Their society and laws are designed to promote their paganism. This was so even when Peter and Paul issued these commands. As Jews of the dispersion, Peter's audience had long been under the oppression of the Roman State; and already some Christians were being persecuted. Indeed, the Roman Empire was a brutal society with some very harsh laws. For example, a male Roman citizen had complete control over property, be it his family or his slaves, they were his to do with as he pleased, even taking their lives if he so wished. But rather than being told to correct these injustices we are told to abide by the laws of society. Not that the Roman Christian would be free to partake in such ungodly laws, for he serves a higher power, but at the same time it is not his station to defy and rebel against the government.

This being said, there are proper occasions to resist the laws of the state; specifically, when they are superseded by the commandments of God. Such was the case when Daniel, Shadrach and Abedego refused to serve Nebuchadnezzar's gods and refused to bow down to the golden idol he had erected. But this is a narrow window and we would do well not to be overly generous in our application of such justification for civil disobedience. We could argue that a Christian soldier was justified, who under the rule of Hitler during WWII, refused to take part in the ethnic cleansing program. And we could argue that a physician employed by the state, who refuses to provide state sanctioned abortions, is justified. But it would be erroneous to defy the government and to hold Bible study in government buildings if it has been prohibited by the state or even by the local government. It would be erroneous to defy the government's degree to pay taxes, register for the draft, drive with a proper driver's license, etc. Short of disobeying the law of God, it is our duty to obey the ordinance of those placed in power over us; for they are there by God's appointment for our protection and (although we might not realize how or why at the time) to fulfill his purpose.

Anarchy is always a tool of the Devil. It cannot be justified. Even when the government is the perpetrator of grave evils, it is not for us to take matters into our own hands, to rebel and to show disrespect for those whom God has appointed over us. That they are wrong, that they are evil, that they hurt us, is not the issue; the issue is obedience to our Lord. The only power they have is granted to them by him; we must trust him to correct or punish them as he will.

In a democratic society we have the ability to elect new leaders, but this is to be done within the system and it is a far cry from rebellion and anarchy.

Punishment . . . and . . . praise

The governments of the world have purpose; one such purpose is ***for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.*** Due to the depravity of man, governments are not perfect; indeed, many are outright evil, but God uses them nonetheless. Without them the world would be nothing short of bedlam. No one would be safe. Governments keep order. Even governments ruled by evil dictators keep a degree of order. This does not justify their evil deeds but it does, at least in part, explain their function.

Of course a government's idea of who is to be punished and who is to be praised might differ greatly from God's perspective; but governments do keep bedlam at bay. Take the recent disruption of the leadership in Iraq for example. Several years ago Saddam Hussein was in power. He reigned for nearly 24 years. He was a brutal, evil man, who opposed Israel and committed genocide in untold numbers upon his own people who happened to adhere to a different Islamic denomination. But under his rule there was a degree of order and stability, which has turned to pure chaos and bedlam since his disposal, as various factions now terrorize the country. This does not justify his atrocities, but it does shed light on the fact that a bigger picture is in view than the immediate concerns of some individuals.

Rome allowed the Jewish leaders to crucify Christ, yet in so doing Jesus becomes the savior of the world. For centuries, Rome then waged one persecution after another against the Church, yet the more the Church was persecuted the greater it grew; as it is said, "the blood of martyrs is seed". In like fashion, God uses these evil governments to his good. Yes, there is collateral damage along the way, if we choose to look at it like that. However, this is really not an accurate portrayal; for what we call collateral damage had its origin in Adam's fall. As such, man, not God, is the responsible agent for all pain and sorrow that transpires throughout all of history. God is not doing the evil; on the contrary, he is turning it to good, using it to complete his plan. It may not be immediately recognized on the micro level, but in the macro sense someday we shall

understand, and then even the micro events will be understood.

Silence the ignorance of foolish men

Peter provides a couple reasons for our willing submission to the government; and these apply whether the government is primarily good or primarily evil. First: ***For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*** It is our testimony, our witness for the Lord. Secondly (as we will see in a few verses), this is what Jesus did. Having done no wrong, he submitted himself to suffer the scorn of the authorities. In so doing, we silence the ignorance of these fools who have said in their hearts, “*there is no God*” (Ps 14:1).

Not using your liberty for a cloak

Historically, the Jews (very much like modern Americans) prided themselves on being a free people. Even after centuries of subjugation to the Roman Empire the Jews continued to proclaim their freedom. Josephus tells us they sought to justify their rebellion under the argument that they were a free people, subject to God alone. Now that Peter’s Jewish audience were Christian converts, free from condemnation and the bondage of sin, we might assume their claim to civic freedom was further inspired, so as to harbor the desire to throw off the rule of Rome. But Peter makes it clear that civic liberty is a different issue than that of spiritual liberty.

Our spirits are free from the bondage of sin, but we are still subject to the authority of earthly government. Not as slaves, but as foreigners passing through a strange land. We are liberated in the highest sense and it is a spiritual sacrifice of this liberated station to submit ourselves to civic authority; even as Jesus did. Though he did no wrong, he submitted himself even unto death.

Peter seems to ratchet it up even tighter, applying more pressure as it were to his argument, ***not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.*** That is, don’t use your liberty as a pretext to justify defiance toward the government, which he calls ***maliciousness.*** A transliteration of the Greek term is something that might sound familiar to us; it is from whence we derive the colloquialism, *kaka* (κακία, kakía). But the term implies something more sinister than our *kaka*; it speaks of evil, wickedness, ill-will, a certain enmity of heart with an intention to injure. It is a pretty serious charge by the apostle; equating the refusal to comply with

government to a premeditated malice designed to cause injury. And who might we think is the injured party? No doubt the rebel has injury to the government in mind, however, it is the gospel of Christ that suffers; for the believer's civic disobedience provides the unrighteous with fodder to malign the messenger and thus, in their minds, the message itself. So it is that he concludes *but as the servants of God*. It harkens back to 2:12, wherein our behavior (translated as conversion), will bring glory to God.

Honor all men

Of course, the command to *Honor all men* speaks to all humanity, both men and women. It is not the same as being a respecter of men, which was addressed earlier. Whereas being a respecter of persons springs from selfish motives in its attempt to gain some advantage, to honor (τιμάω, timáō) is to value or revere. Honor, as far as I can tell, is for a twofold reason: (1) all men are created in the image of God and therefore worthy of the respect this garners; and (2) Jesus loves all men and gave himself for them, which also garners respect. Indeed, Scriptures closes with this final plea to those for whom he died, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17).

Love the brotherhood

Love for the brotherhood was discussed earlier in verse 1:22; so just a few words here. Because we translate different Greek words for love, it is helpful to identify which term is used. It is ἀγαπάω, agaráō; the same term used earlier to reference a sacrificial type of love, one that puts others before himself. This is the second time Peter has told his readers to love the brethren. This first time he exhorted them to be certain their love flowed from a pure heart.

Honor the king

All that was said above about respect for all men holds true for the command to honor the king or the president as is the case in many modern countries. But honor for the king has yet another factor to consider. The king is the authority to which we are to submit; thus an additional degree of honor is required.

This special honor is warranted due to the grave responsibilities demanded of the king, the president, authorities in general. They have the task of protecting their subjects, protecting

their society. Pastors and church elders fall into this same category.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb 13:17).

To whom much is given, much is required. Kings, presidents, rulers, pastors, elders, even the captain of the ship carry the burden of protecting those in their charge. They will be held accountable; thus, we are to give them due honor. Even if we do not agree with the king's policies: the way he spends the money, the wars in which he engages. This was the principle in play after Ananias had his man slap Paul in the mouth. Paul rashly responded, "*God shall smite you, you whited wall: for you sit to judge me after the law, and command me to be smitten contrary to the law?*" Then the council rebuked him for having spoken to the High Priest with such disrespect. To which Paul apologized, "*I knew not, brethren, that he was the High Priest: for it is written, You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people*" (Acts 23:3-5); quoting Moses, "*You shall not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of your people*" (Ex 22:28).

Raised in a culture in which we freely criticize our president, senators, and congressman, this can be a particularly difficult behavior for many westerners to desist. Not only are governors' policies open to insult, but so too are their entire lives, so that character assassination is nearly a national pastime. The newspapers, the entertainment world, and citizens in general, speak out at will. Our leaders at all levels of government, from local to national, are open targets to all who have a voice. Yet, as acceptable as this might be in our culture, it is an enterprise in which the Christian should not take place.

Jude warned that the Church would be invaded (especially in the last days) by men who would be disrespectful, discontented complainers, following their lusts and respecters of persons for their own gain, despising authority, speaking evil of honor. Those who would go the way of Cain's proud, corrupt disobedience, attempting to approach God on their own terms; the way of Balaam, teachers who seek to advance the cause of God by advocating an unholy alliance with the world; and the way of Cora, who caused strife and disputed the authority of Moses and Aaron.

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without

water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. (Jd 12-13)

Such grandiose, rebellious behavior is not to be taken lightly, and he makes it clear that this behavior will take place within the ranks of the local church. I can think of many so-called Christian leaders today who fit the bill. They work in various roles: social reformers, political pundits, preachers, evangelists; and they all have the title of Reverend. Some promote very liberal ideas while others very conservative ideas; but all are using the Church as a cloak for their mischievous ways. While some are clearly seeking financial gain, others are placing social reform above the gospel as they join forces with cults and unbelievers in their pious, yet flesh-driven, attempt to change society.

We have oft heard that God works in mysterious ways. We might say this was the case with Balaam, whom God made some use of even though he attempted to advance the cause of God by perusing an unholy alliance. It was certainly the case with Joseph and his brothers. Upon being reunited in Egypt, after they, in jealousy, had sold him into slavery, Joseph told them, “*you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive*” (Gen 50:20-21).

Just as it was wrong for Balaam to seek an evil alliance and for Joseph’s brothers to sell him into slavery; it seems clear that Christians should not have participated in the American Revolution. Even though (as in these other cases), God used this rebellion for good, so as to establish a powerful evangelical nation that has spread the gospel around the world; it does not justify the believer’s participation in the rebellion against England. God also used the persecution of the Church by the Roman Empire to spread the gospel and to grow the Church, but that does not justify Rome’s actions. It merely shows that God uses man’s mistakes and evil deeds for the good.

At the same time, to say Christians should not have participated in the American Revolution does not defend the injustices and tyrannical actions of King George III. It does, however, coincide with the theological teaching that the mission of the Church is something other than correcting the ills of world

governments—all of which are kingdoms of paganism, promoting their pagan cultures. Many like to think of America as a Christian nation, but this is not so. There is no such thing as a Christian nation. All nations are currently under the influence of the god of this world. Indeed, America is a nation with many Christians that has been blessed by God, and God has used it to promote Christianity; but it is not a Christian nation. When Christ sets up his kingdom on earth, then we shall see a Christian nation.

If reforming society and establishing godly governments was our mission, we would have received instructions for the same. Jesus would have addressed it. At least one of the apostles would have addressed it. But Jesus did not. The apostles did not. The fact of the matter is that in their day, under the Roman government, people suffered far worse conditions than we scarcely image.

The world in which Jesus and the apostles lived was a brutal environment. In this hierarchical society, slaves, void of any rights, were at the bottom. Slightly above them were freed slaves, and then freeborn citizens. Even the freeborn citizens were divided by class so that each had certain rights. The father, as head of the household, held complete control over his household, from slaves to relatives. It was called *patria potestas*, “father’s power.” He could force marriage or divorce, claim property as his own, or even sell his children into slavery. As *patria potestas*, he had the power to punish (by death if he so desired) any member of his household.

Jesus, eleven of the twelve apostles, and thousands of believers were murdered by Rome: burned, beaten, crucified, stoned, made sport, of and even flayed alive. Yet neither Jesus, the apostles, nor the early Church Fathers ever spoke out against Rome or encouraged socio-political reformation. Jesus certainly spoke out against the injustices in Israel, the people of the covenant, and the apostles chastised the Christians for their iniquities; but none spoke against Rome or encouraged their followers to do so. Their silence was not due to cowardice, or even to a lack of concern. It was motivated by their sense of duty, by their spiritual sacrifice which placed God’s purpose above their own.

It was Jesus’ duty to take his cross upon himself that he might provide a propitiation for our sin. It was the apostles’ duty, and still is, that of the Church, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus and provide sound instruction in biblical theology. This duty has eternal consequences. Establishing an earthly government is a temporal

achievement with temporal rewards, and it is not the mission of the Church. The government, any government, no matter how godly it may seem, will wither with future generations; for man is a sinner by nature and the unconverted heart will always follow its nature. It is powerless to choose any other course.

The Christian's choices during the American Revolution were simple: to follow the command of Scripture even though they suffered under the king's tyranny—even as Christ did; or to take matters into their own hands, to join the rebellion against the king, whom God had allowed to be placed in authority. Yes, in the end, God used this rebellion for good, nevertheless, “two wrongs don't make a right”; and those believers who participated in the revolt will likely have to give account for their actions.

Verses 2:18-25

^{2:18}Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. ¹⁹For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: ²²Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously: ²⁴Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Servants, be subject to your masters

For many, slavery is one of the more difficult issues to deal with in Scripture. Many are perplexed by the reality that Scripture does not outright rebuke slavery even as it condemns various immoral behaviors or the seven things that are an abomination to the Lord: “*A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren.* (Prov 6:16). Even more

disconcerting to many is that several passages condone slavery, even to the point of providing ordinances as to how it is to be administered.

The issue does not sit well with us; so much so that many unbelievers (recognizing it as a sore spot) employ the issue as they seek to discredit the holiness of Scripture and even God himself. The argument is that Scripture is inconsistent; condemning certain behaviors as immoral, yet overlooking and even accepting this obviously wrong behavior.

Puzzled by this as well, many would be defenders of the faith attempt to rationalize this apparent dilemma, so as to reason that it is different today in our enlightened world than it was in ancient times. The difficulty with this argument is the implication that God's morality or ethics have somehow changed with time; that the God of the OT is somehow not as merciful as the God of the NT. But God never changes; and God is the ultimate moral authority. There is no justification for something being moral or ethical at one point in history and immoral or unethical at another. Therefore, it behooves us to look deeper into this most sensitive topic, for there are more issues involved than simply one person's cruel lordship over another.

The first thing to know is that both the OT Hebrew term (עֶבֶד, `ebhedh) and the NT Greek term (δοῦλος, doulos)—servant or bondservant, speak to a system well defined by Judaism that is something very different from the cruel systems of slavery employed by Gentile nations throughout history. Because the practice of OT Judeo servitude slipped into history along with the Judeo dispersion, so that it is no longer practiced, the only perception of slavery we have in modern times is that of the cruel Gentile systems as practiced in various work camps populated by prisoners of war, or by plantation owners, or even the practice of human trafficking for the sex trade. But none of these Gentile systems equate to the Hebrew system outlined in the OT. So that, in reality, we are talking apples and oranges.

In that there is a vast difference between the systems, so that the only thing they have in common is service, it must be understood that we are speaking solely of the Judeo system. While there is no moral justification for the cruel Gentile systems (which are the outright product of man's fallen sinful nature) on the other hand, there is moral justification for the benevolent system of ancient Judaism. But to understand it we must banish from our thoughts any attempt to equate the cruel Gentile systems to that of the ancient Judeo system. Failing to do so is not being true with the text, or with history.

That being said, the primary concept of the servant or bondservant was that of free service; whereas the slave's service was mandatory. The term for slave is actually only used twice in Scripture: once to rebuke of Israel's sin (*Jer 2:14*); and once in The Book of the Revelation, describing the destruction of evil Babylon, in which its slaves, along with all its other possessions will be lost (*Rev 18:13*).

The Jews themselves had suffered under Gentile slavery for many hundreds of years. They were well aware of its cruelty. But servitude under Jewish law was vastly different. The servant was to be treated with respect and benevolence, regardless of why or how he came to be a servant. The Judeo system was humane; so that in essence, the servant was viewed as a valued employee rather than a subhuman tool to be employed to exhaustion, as characterize by Gentile slavery.

Several circumstances might result in one's servitude: a thief, an indentured servant who worked off a finical debt, a captive, or even a voluntary servant. Sometimes a servant might realize he/she was better off with the master than without him. Here there was food, shelter, clothing, protection, and even friendship. In such cases, once the seven-year release date arrived, the master and servant would go before the judges where the servant would receive an earring signifying that he/she was to serve the masters for life.

Israel's servants from among those captured in battle present an interesting situation of mercy. To understand it, we must dig deeper into history. Centuries earlier, the antediluvian world had become so extremely wicked that only some 1,656 years after creation, God destroyed all but eight souls. Yet, shortly after Noah and his God-fearing family resumed repopulation, man's fallen Adamic nature once again came to the forefront. In the short span of

10 generations and a few hundred years after Noah the majority of the population had already turned from God.

Ancient Jewish records tell us the people were defiant of God, choosing rather to follow Nimrod in the Valley of Shinar, as mentioned in Genesis 10. Although God had given man a second chance they thrust their defiant fists in his face. This time, rather than destroying the world, God virtually left mankind to themselves, to follow their wicked ways down the path to their own destruction. But God saw in Abraham a righteous man with a heart for God, and decided to work with him.

The striking thing is that Shem (Abraham's 8x-great grandfather and a survivor of the great flood) was still alive. Yet, even with Shem amongst them (one who had firsthand experience of God power and glory), still, man would not be persuaded to follow their Creator. This will be the case once again during the millennial reign of Christ, when near the end one-quarter of those born during that time of utopia will rebel against Jesus himself.

Shem lived until Isaac was 50 years old, so that he would have been a mentor to both Abraham and Isaac. Furthermore, Abraham and Isaac would have been only two persons away from a firsthand relationship with Adam, who walked with God: Abraham and Isaac knew Shem, Shem knew Lamech, and Lamech knew Adam.

God made a covenant with Abraham. His offspring would become a great nation; they would be God's people. He would give them a homeland and through Abraham's descendants would come the redeemer, who would pay the price for man's sin and free him from his bondage to sin. By him, the families of the world would be blessed.

From the time of the Abrahamic covenant forward until the time of Christ, God is dealing with the Jews, his chosen people. Not that Gentiles could not seek God if they so chose; but by in large, God was not seeking them, he allowed these stubborn, rebellious peoples to wallow in their own wicked. And similar to the antediluvians, once God commissioned Noah to build the ark, they were virtually the walking dead, without hope in spiritual darkness and doomed to eternal judgment.

Many centuries after Abraham, when God finally lead Israel into the Promised Land to claim their inheritance, they encountered these civilizations of evildoers, some of which actively sought to

corrupt Israel with paganism. Such was the case with the Midianites, whom Israel was told to destroy (*Nu 31:7-35*). However, after defeating the army and killing all the men, in disobedience, the warriors brought the women and children home with them. Although Moses reprimanded them, in mercy, rather than put them to death as directed, Moses allowed the younger females to live as servants. Yet, proving that God's judgment of the death penalty was correct in the first place, it was pagan servants such as these that eventually brought moral ruin into Israel. Ironically, it was Israel's moral decay and apostasy (introduced by their pagan captives) that resulted in the dispersion and their own captivity among the Gentiles of Babylon and Syria.

A few things are to be noted concerning Israel's captive servants. 1) These civilizations had long since stopped seeking God and were virtually the walking dead—although alive physically, they were dead spiritually and hell would be receiving them shortly. 2) When they attempted to corrupt Israel with paganism, God passed the judgment of the death penalty upon them. 3) In mercy, Moses allowed slavery for some as a substitute for death. 4) The benevolent rules that governed servitude among the Hebrews applied to the captives as well; thereby being the polar opposite to the cruel Gentile slavery with which we are familiar.

No doubt, many (especially those passionate about the issue; for logic never persuades passion) will refuse to distinguish between the humane system of Judaism versus the corrupt and cruel systems of the world; be that as it may, nevertheless, there is a vast difference. While God allows servitude as a means to care for the poor, to repay debts, and even as a means of salvation (in that it often brought non-Hebrews into the community of the elect where they would learn of the Lord); man takes advantage, turning it into a savage, narcissistic enterprise. Indeed, the only reason the poor and the pagan exist at all (and thus slavery) is due to man's sinful nature; so that it is man, not God, who is the responsible agent for poverty and slavery. It is man, not God, who is the responsible agent for all that man suffers.

Furthermore, Hebrew servants were to be released after their seventh year of service. Or, if they had a relative who could pay their bill, he could redeem them. Every fifty years, on the year of Jubilee, all servants were set free with a generous severance package. If a master mistreated his servant so as to injure him, the

servant was to be set free.

So it is that we approach these difficult passages; understanding the difference between the benevolent system of ancient Judaism, versus the corrupt and cruel Gentile systems. Furthermore, passing judgment on God's methods of dealing with our sinful condition is something for which we are not qualified, and to presume such qualifications is foolish. Who are we to question God's ways? He will have mercy on whom he will; it is for us to be grateful that we are among the recipients.

With all fear

Here, the term servant (οικεται, oiketai), speaks of a household or domestic servant, but the principles set forth should extend to other types of servants as well. In our society, we should extend this principle to employees in general. Although our modern society tends to separate the concept of servant versus that of employee, in ancient Israel this distinction is not so clearly defined. As far as service goes, there really is no difference: there is the Chief and the Indian, the boss and the employee, the officer and the soldier.

The term froward (σκολιός skoliós,) speaks of being crooked, bent, perverse, wicked, unjust, peevish. Many Christians in the early Church were under the yoke of slavery; yet rather than encourage rebellion and the breaking of their yokes, the apostles instructed them to endure, and to endure it in fear, denoting the idea of reverence or respect.

So then, we face yet another dilemma. First, we had to deal with this idea that God would allow his people to practice slavery; now we have an even more difficult pill to swallow. The expectation of obedience to one's master; be he good or evil. Furthermore, this idea of submitting to the master is one of the spiritual sacrifices Peter has been addressing. Just as he admonished his audience a few verses earlier, to ***Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake***, this submission to the master, be he good or bad, for it is ***for the Lord's sake***.

It is simply an ungodly thing to rebel against authority. Such rebellion is born of pride, which thing God hates. Sometimes, rebellion stems from a sense of self-preservation; yet this too is something Jesus taught us to avoid, for it betrays a decided distrust in God's sovereignty. There simply is no justification for rebellion.

Paul spoke of this same submission to the Corinthians.

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Are you called being a servant? care not for it: but if you may be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. You are bought with a price; be not you the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. (1 Cor 7:20-24)

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. (Eph 6:5-8)

The argument is basically that we are to be content in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, for there is a higher calling, a higher purpose to be considered; that is, that we are the bondservants of Christ. We are sojourners in this world, ambassadors of heaven; and our mission is to show forth his graces. It is not our mission to seek a more comfortable seat for the journey; nor is it to seek more comfortable seats for others. So that, regardless of our station in this world, regardless of our comfort on this journey, be it in freedom or servitude, it is our duty to follow Jesus' example, to obey his commands and to stand as lamps, lighting the path, as signposts pointing the way of escape from this soiled, wicked world.

That being said, similar to the aforementioned argument that Christians should not have participated in the American Revolution, it must be asked if Christians should have participated in rebellious acts against slavery when it is sanctioned by their government. Not that the institution of slavery is justified; for indeed, as noted Gentile slavery is a very cruel and evil system of wickedness that dehumanizes its victims, and brings havoc upon any nation that practices it. Indeed, America is still feeling the effect of it.

Not that ending this cruel institution is a bad thing; but it is the act of rebellion that is at issue. That God might make use of such rebellion as he did with the American Revolution, does not justify

the rebellion. The ends do not justify the means. Here, we must put emotion aside to see the entire picture. It is an issue of one's individual obedience to Scripture, an issue of spiritual sacrifice in which a wrong being perpetrated is patiently suffered without revolt, without rebellion.

Before someone cries racism, it must be understood that the issue transcends race; many millions throughout the ages, and even to this day, have been enslaved by their own race. The issue even transcends slavery, and it transcends recent history. The question is: Are Christians justified in their rebellion against the laws of their government.

Putting the issue of corrupt and cruel Gentile slavery aside and discussing evil in general we realize that it is not the mission of the Church to correct the ills of societies. The kingdoms of the world are kingdoms of paganism that promote their pagan cultures. The goal of the Church is to promote our king, Jesus Christ, as our savior from this wicked world and the door to a better kingdom. So then, do Christians trust the veracity of Scripture, counterintuitive as the passages may seem, so that sometimes we have suffered wrongly even as Christ did? Or do Christians attempt to take matters into their own hands, to rebel against the governing bodies that God has allowed to be placed in authority, and endeavor to correct the evil world by our their accord?

Yet another note of clarification; it is important to notice the emphasis on "rebellion" and "illegal" in the argument above. So that, as free Americans, to whom the government has given a voice in civic affairs, it is completely justified, even expected for Christians to raise their voices in a legal manner against all wrong, as the Quakers and many other evangelicals did in their efforts to end plantation slavery. But to object by breaking the law, as John Brown did with his armed insurrection against the government, would not have been justified.

Scripture has a lot to say about sin and malevolent behavior toward others, but it never instructs us to rebel against the government. Indeed, it is quite the opposite. It has provided guidelines that we might learn to cope as those who are strangers in a strange land, as emissaries of the heavenly land, that we might abide by the customs of this strange land and yet retain our testimony for our homeland and for our King, the Lord Jesus.

To the froward

Concerning the issue of submission, it must not be overlooked that Peter adds that this submission is to be ***not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward***, or in modern terms, the crooked. It is as if he knew we would rationalize our particular situation, take exception to his words, and construct reasons for our disobedience.

At first, the phrase ***with all fear*** seems rather curious, for it obviously applies whether the master is gentle or froward. We might understand fear of the froward master but why fear the gentle? Which leads us to understand that it is not the terrestrial master who is to be feared, but the Lord himself; especially when we consider this fear is modified, indeed, intensified, as ***all fear***. That is a powerful statement: all, being everything, the entirety within. Yet we read elsewhere, “*The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Heb 13:5-6).

The passage continues ***For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully***. The phrase ***if a man for conscience toward God*** further supports the understanding that the fear of the Lord is in view.

A few verses earlier Peter explained that submission to the king was ***for the Lord's sake*** (2:13). And earlier, he said ***if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear*** (1:17), which he goes on to explain, because our redemption came at a high price, even the blood of Christ.

Hereunto were you called

To patiently endure suffering, especially when it is without cause, ***is acceptable with God***. It is not our suffering that pleases God, but the way we respond to it. That is, if we respond even as Christ did, ***when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously***. It is a tall order, yet it is our spiritual sacrifice. How often have we read these words without really contemplating their practical implications? Regardless of the offense, the Christian is not to seek revenge, not to seek retribution, not even to lash out verbally, but humbly take it; commit it ***to him that judges righteously***.

Repay no one evil for evil. Respect what is honorable in the

sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men. Don't seek revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord." Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head." Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:17-21 WEB)

The world celebrates Jesus birthday, his death and resurrection, yet they could not care less about him. To the world, he is merely a means to dress up in nice clothes, throw a party and exchange gifts. I cannot help but think those who mock Christ by using him as an instrument for celebration yet despise all that he is and all he has done for them, are heaping coals of fire on their own heads, as when being kind to an enemy, giving him drink and water will "heap coals of fire on his head" (Ro 12:20).

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? . . . he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:46-49)

Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. (Isa 3:11)

By whose stripes you were healed

To the world Jesus is no more than a mythical curiosity; yet to us who believe he is precious for he is our cure, our hope, indeed our life. Alone, even forsaken by the Father, he took up ***our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.*** Once among the walking dead, as it were, now we are among the living. We were ***sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.***

Peter has referenced one of the most detailed OT passages concerning the Messiah. It tells the entire gospel message; and every element of the prophecy, which was written some 700 years earlier, came to pass. It is such a powerful passage that it is worth taking the time to read it in its entirety.

Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender

plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:1-12)

Shepherd and Bishop of your souls

Peter's use of both ***Shepherd and Bishop*** is interesting. The terms, respectively, are shepherd or pastor (ποιμήν, poimén), and bishop or overseer (ἐπίσκοπος, episkopos). Whereas, we, like all men, were as lost sheep wandering about the countryside without direction, without orientation, with no one to lead us to water or to the grazing fields; and most importunately, without a protector and thereby exposed to various dangers and predators, now we have been

rescued and taken into the flock of Christ, our great shepherd. With him as our pastor and overseer, we have nothing to fear. We are now secure in his pastoral arms and we have purpose and direction with him as our overseer, governing and making use of our gifts and talents.

Verses 3:1-6

^{3:1}Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; ²While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. ³Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; ⁴But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. ⁵For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: ⁶Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Wives, be in subjection

Peter's difficult and politically incorrect words continue. Our stubborn and rebellious nature does not receive his words graciously. Indeed, for many his thoughts are nothing more than an offense. As if telling us to honor and obey both the government and our masters is not enough, now he is really pushing the limit: **wives, be in subjection to your own husbands**. I dare say, Peter would not be a popular character in today's progressive western culture. Neither would Paul for that matter.

Before we delve deeper into this controversial subject, let us consider a few issues so as to put things in perspective. Throughout Scripture the woman is qualitatively, in every way, man's equal. Both male and female are created in the image of God. Each stands identically before the Creator. Each is to hold the other with mutual respect, revering each other as equal creations, as equal partners in humanity.

After taking a rib from the man to create the woman, the Lord brought her to the man. As we might imagine, Adam was delighted

and immediately he recognized their equality: *“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh”*. Without delay, he recognized the intimate connection: *“she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”* (Gen 2:23). But even more than being mere equals, they were a unit; each highlighting particular metaphysical qualities endemic to their gender, and each needing the other physically to procreate; thus, *“male and female created he them”* (Gen 1:27). As such, Adam’s priority in creation may signify leadership but not superiority. So it is that Paul speaks of the man as being the leader; but in the same breath, he says, *“the woman is the glory of the man”* (1 Cor 11:7). He then addresses their undeniable, indivisible oneness, pointing out that either ceases to exist without the other: *“as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman”* (1 Cor 11:12).

The reality of this indivisible unity is reinforced again by the Lord. Notice the name God gives them: *“Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created”* (Gen 5:2). Adam is not only the proper name of the first man, as Eve is the proper name of the first female, but Adam is also the collective name of both male and female, or of humanity at large. Each is the other half of the other. So that even before the union of marriage, indeed even aside from the marriage union, this unity exists, the basic essential unit of man and woman. Adam was made of the earth and Eve was made from Adam’s rib, thereby, forming an inseparable bond, a bond that would not exist had Eve been formed directly from the clay as was Adam.

There are three NT arguments presented for this paradigm in which man is the leader, the head of the family even as Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 5:24): (1) the woman was made from the man (1 Cor 11:8); (2) the woman was made for the man (1 Cor 11:9); and (3) the woman was deceived, not the man (1 Tim 2:14). Furthermore, Paul is quick to point out their equality, lest he be misunderstood: *“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God”* (1 Cor 11:11-12).

The first issue is the order of creation. *“God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”* (Gen 2:18). The root of the term, *help meet* (עֵזֶר, azar), means to surround—so as to protect, to aid, to help or succor. This is a

profound statement signifying the inseparable unity and fellowship between the man and woman. The idea is not that of a mere helper or a “go-for” if you will; it speaks to completing him, as being essential to his perfection. Thus, “*the woman is the glory of the man*” (1 Cor11:7).

Eve was not created to be Adam’s servant. The woman’s role is not that of a wench hustling about to fulfill man’s every desire. Such a concept is foreign to Scripture. The male was created first, but the woman stands side by side as an equal partner with the man, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Being first, he is the leader, the aggressor; even physically, he is the stronger. She was created to follow, to respond to his leadership, even as God the Son follows the God the Father; but this does not equate to servitude or even a diminished status. Qualitatively, even as the Son is equal to the Father the woman is equal to the man.

The second issue is a matter of function. While Scripture clearly attributes qualitative equality to both the male and the female (each sharing the same divine perfections), at the same time, it speaks of the different and vital roles ascribed to each. We might say the roles are not dissimilar to the right and left hand. As part of the same body, each is qualitatively equal to the other. They are similar yet different; and their difference is not merely the mirror image of each other. Each is hardwired, as it were, to perform some functions more efficiently than the other. For example, I have played the guitar for more than fifty years, so the fingers on each hand are somewhat dexterous. But the fingers on the right hand cannot do, with efficiency, what the fingers on the left hand can do, and visa versa. And this was not a learned behavior. The first time I picked up a guitar, it was natural, even necessary to play it right-handed.

It is a curious thing about the guitar and the tasks the fingers have on each hand. One hand is strumming or picking certain strings; the other is bending and stretching to various positions to depress the strings against the fretboard. You would think the activities could be easily swapped, but they cannot. The dominant hand wants to do the strumming and picking, thereby keeping the rhythm, while the less dominant hand has the more difficult task of stretching and contorting to form hundreds of fingering positions. One might think the dominant hand would be more adept at this most difficult task, but it is not so, it is the less dominant hand that

masters these difficult techniques. Not unlike a marriage in which the wife generally cares for the details, the finer and more personal aspects of the family, while the husband plows his way through the world like a bull.

So it is with the male and female: they are equal in nature, yet different in function. In that man (male and female) is created in God's image, it should come as no surprise that this concept of equality (in which different persons share the same nature yet possess different roles) is also true of the Divine. We understand that although Jesus (himself being the second person of the triune Godhead) is equal in nature to the Father and the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, his role is different from either of them.

That husband and wife have different roles within the family unit, does not speak of substance but of position or function. It is merely an organizational chart. Again, these roles are not qualitative; they are merely a matter of function. Just as a 60-year-old son is equal, qualitatively, to his 80-year-old father, still there exists a role, a structure, a function that remains for each. It is not a qualitative issue, for both are persons to be respected and treated as equals. Yet, their roles within the family structure and within the structure of society remain that of father and son.

So it is with the man and woman; each has a different function within the family structure and even in society at large. Having been created in the image of God, they share the same godlike attributes; at the same time, each highlights certain of these perfections more so than does the other. As mentioned, Paul said the woman is "*the glory of man*" (1 Cor 11:7). The term ($\delta\omicron\xi\alpha$, doxa) speaks to dignity, honor, praise. She is not only the glory of man in the physical sense, such as being the fairer sex, but she is the glory of man in the very working of her mind and soul. For she brings attention to such tender matters as affection and domestic necessities—those very qualities that often seem less urgent to the male; yet without them, man is a beast. Far from being man's wench, the woman is his splendor. It may well be said that if there is anything praiseworthy in man, it is accentuated in woman, for she is his glory. Here, Dr. Matthew Henry's comments are worth noting:

Man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made after Adam, and out of him, puts an honor upon that sex, as the glory of the man. If man is the head, she is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown

*of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth.*⁶

The third reason given for man's dominance is that of one's worldview: "*Adam was not deceived, but the woman*" (1 Tim 2:14). Although our modern progressive culture attempts to deny it, there is a marked difference in the way men and women see the world, in the way they respond emotionally, in the way they respond to others, etc. To this point, medical science has discovered a most profound process that takes place in the brain of the male embryo. A few months into gestation the mother's body releases a burst of testosterone in which the male baby's brain is bathed. A similar process happens again during puberty when the boy's body releases large supplies of testosterone, which cause change and maturing.

The interesting thing is that these large amounts of testosterone permanently impede the synopsis between the left and right brain; thereby creating the obvious difference between male and female emotions, worldview, and even thought processes to some degree. And it makes it so that the male is less able to perform certain functions—such as multitasking—as efficiently as the female. It also makes it so the male has a greater propensity to tune out surrounding noises (such as his wife's voice as he concentrates, say . . . on the ball game).

Throughout the annals of antiquity, with few exceptions, it has been a man's world. That is to say, as the physically stronger gender, men have generally held the dominant roles in society and family life. However, when this dominant role is abused, such as has been the typical scenario throughout Gentile history, women are devalued, even dishonored as second class citizens. To be a woman of a minority race in such a society is an especially burdensome role. The sinful nature of the human heart naturally shows preference to those of like kind, so that, those of another race or culture, or even nationality are often discriminated against. This is something that transcends skin color, for such discrimination often takes place even among those of the same pedigree; those who are separated by nothing more than a national border. As such, in most civilizations (both historic and modern), to be a woman in such a culture means you are the lowest of the low. But, this is not an issue of any particular race or culture; it is ubiquitous, true for every society in history; for it is an issue of total depravity—the fallen sinful nature

that all of us inherited from father Adam. This sinful nature is the root of the woman's humiliation.

Historically, only those cultures of revelation (i.e., the Judeo-Christian world) have considered woman as man's equal. Yet even here, due to sin and the influence of various ungodly cultures, too often women have been deprived of their proper status. In ancient Israel, every decline in the woman's status was the direct result of the nation allowing foreign, pagan influences and customs into the community. The same holds true among certain nominal Christian communities who hold the woman to an inequitable status with the man.

It is the influence of sin and willful ignorance, not Scripture, which generates this practice. Scripture is the woman's greatest proponent. Godliness, as set forth in Scripture, respects and protects the woman. As such, regardless of how piously it may present itself, any society or religious philosophy that devalues the female is a society or religion that does not follow biblical principles and is thus an ungodly society. Not that respect for women is the sole litmus test to determine righteousness, but its absence is a clear indication that unrighteousness is present; and its absence has been apparent throughout virtually every culture in history save those of revelation.

So it is that we now address the topic of the wife's submission to her husband. Various reasons have been set forth for this submission, but here Peter is appealing directly to the woman's evangelical duty. The idea is that the woman's godliness, her *chaste conversation coupled with fear*, might win the husband to the Lord. So once again, as with submission to the government and to the master, the reason for the wife's submission is for a cause greater than herself; indeed, it is a work done for the Lord, a task of his appointed emissary. It is a spiritual sacrifice.

Chaste conversation

The term **conversation** (ἀναστροφή, *anastrophé*), is more precisely, in today's language speaking of behavior. This behavior is to be of a godly, temperate nature through which the love of Christ shines forth. For the woman to enhance her outward beauty with hairdos and jewelry and seductive clothes might have its place if she is seeking a child from her husband, but it does nothing as far as getting him to see Christ within her. This is accomplished by *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of*

great price. The phrase *of great price* could be translated *very precious*. God places great value on the wife's willingness, to live a godly, chase life from the heart, even as Sarah and other renowned maternal patriarchs.

Setting forth Sarah as the example, he said *whose daughters you are, as long as you do well*. Peter has been addressing the Jews of the dispersion and thus speaking to Jewish women who physically were descendants of Sarah. But he is alluding to something higher; he is speaking to Sarah's faith. It is not dissimilar to Jesus confrontation with the leaders of Israel; they argued they were Abraham's children and he told them they were of their father the devil (*Jn 8:38-45*). They were indeed the physical descendants of Abraham, but Jesus was speaking of their hearts, their faith in God, or rather the lack thereof.

It may seem confusing that first he says *your chaste conversation coupled with fear*, then he says *not afraid with any amazement*, but there need be no confusion. The first is speaking to the same fear he addressed earlier, honor, and respect for the position. The second (φοβέω, phobéō), speaks to being afraid or terrified of the husband. The term *amazement* (πτόησις, ptōēsis), could be translated into modern English a little better; for it speaks of being scared or frightened, so as to further qualify the fear; thus, as Young translates it, "*not fearing any terror*". We must keep in mind that he already showed concern that some of these women might be married to unbelievers. In which case we can understand that he is telling them: Even if your husband does not treat you fairly, you are not to be terrified but you are to do the right thing, be submissive, chaste, godly, and do not be frightened, but trust and fear the Lord.

Verses 3:7

^{3:7}*Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

Heirs together

In this pithy comment, Peter addresses both issues of equality and position: *as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life*. Her dependence is merely a difference of

function, it is not inferiority. Her physical stature is smaller, but at the same time she is also more beautiful, and her mental and spiritual and moral and emotional attributes are every bit acute as his. She too is an independent individual with freewill and purpose, created in the image of God.

Giving honor unto the wife

Nowhere in revelation will we ever find the idea of the woman's subjection or bondage as that of a slave. This distortion is propagated by Satan and practiced by heathen cultures. The husband is to ***honor*** his wife; the term (τιμῆν, timé) speaks of esteem to the highest degree, to hold as precious, of great value. It is this type of leadership to which she responds favorably; or, conversely, the lack of, to which she responds negatively.

To some, this command for husbands to honor their wives may not seem to be a spiritual sacrifice of the same caliber as the previous commands for submission issued to wives, slaves, and the population at large to civic authority. But upon examination, we shall see that this is no less a spiritual sacrifice than is that of submission. And furthermore, it is a responsibility for which the husband will be held accountable to the Lord.

The implication of ***according to knowledge*** is the knowledge of Christ's sacrifice; thus, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Eph 5:25). And here is the rub; the issue that elevates this seeming innocuous spiritual sacrifice to that of one's submission to authority. Love such as this flies in the face of our narcissistic sinful nature, which prefers to put self before all others. Yet here, the husband is to put his wife before himself; even to give his life protecting her if need be. He is to cherish her, giving all deference to her as the ***weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life***. This is the man's spiritual sacrifice—true, self-effacing love for his wife. When this reality exists, the wife's submissive role comes naturally.

Earlier we addressed the reasons for man being made the head of the family; one of which was Eve's deception; for "*Adam was not deceived, but the woman.*" This reality brings us back to Adam's love for Eve; for it was a love that required the sacrifice of his own life. A love even as Christ had for the Church and gave himself for it.

Both Adam and Eve had been warned not to eat fruit from

the tree of knowledge of good and evil; for if they did they would surely die (*Gen 3:3-5*). Yet Eve listened to the enemy's arguments and was persuaded by his twisted logic. Adam was not deceived or persuaded to eat by arguments or twisted logic. Adam simply chose to eat from the forbidden tree out of his love and desire for Eve. He knowingly and willfully disobeyed the Lord. We might say his eyes were wide open. He realized that this woman whom he loved more than life itself, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, was now separated from him. Yet he and she, together, were humanity. Somehow he realized that in order to provide her redemption, he too had to become like her.

He could only hope for God's mercy. And indeed, upon their first encounter with the Creator after the transgression, God alludes to the coming redeemer. To the serpent—as an agent of Satan—who had beguiled Eve, God said, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"* (*Gen 3:15*). Of course, as Scripture unfolds, both the conflict and the wounds are explained in greater detail; but this is the first indication of the sacrifice Jesus would endure to secure man's redemption.

To the woman God said, *"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you"* (*Gen 3:16*). Thousands of years later, the Apostle Paul commented on the birthing process and its complicity in salvation: *"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing (1 Tim 2:14-15)*. And so it was, from the loins of a woman came forth our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

Lastly, the Lord dealt with Adam, condemning him to a life of hard labor, followed by the death penalty.

Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return (Gen 3:17-19).

In the very next verse, something truly telling takes place. It is

Adam's immediate response: "*And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living*" (v. 20). There is no hint of bitterness. No resentment for the sacrifice he made or the punishment he received. He had nothing but love and respect for the woman. This is the meaning of love, when Paul insisted: "*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them*" (Col 3:19). The term bitter (πικραίνω, pikraínō), speaks of being exasperated, angry, indignant, and irritated. Adam exemplified Paul's words. His sacrifice was done from a willing heart; it flowed forth naturally, without a second thought. Even after receiving the harsh punishment of death, he had no regret, no bitterness, only love and admiration. Earlier, he had confirmed her equality with himself by acknowledging that she was "*bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh*"; now he declares she is "*the mother of all living.*"

That your prayers be not hindered

Finally, in this passage, we see the fallout for the man who does not love his wife and hold her in great esteem. Peter said do this ***that your prayers be not hindered***. This is a very disconcerting thought; that one's prayers should fall on deaf ears. The implication goes beyond mere denied requests; it goes to the core of fellowship with the Lord. For if he is not listening to our prayers we have no conversation with him, and thus, no communion. Husbands, love your wives for your spiritual health depends upon it.

Verses 3:8-9

^{3:8}Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: ⁹Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; ⁹knowing that you are thereunto called, that you should inherit a blessing.

Be ye all of one mind

It is always a necessity for a group, if they are to function as a unit, to share the same values, the same goals. So it is that modern businesses publish mission statements and core values to ensure that everyone in the company understands what it is they are attempting to accomplish. The idea behind ***be ye all of one mind*** is just that; there is a specific mindset around which we are to unite. It is more than mere unity for unity's sake. Peter presents these core values,

these virtues that define this mindset: *compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: . . . that you should inherit a blessing.*

The transliteration of the term for *compassion* (συμπαθής, sympathḗs) sounds familiar and needs no translation; it is the idea of bearing each other's burdens, maybe better stated as commiserating. Earlier we discussed the term *love as brethren* (φιλάδελφος, philádelphos). It speaks to affection, to having delight in, and to cherish inordinately; it is a fraternal brotherhood that is a more personal and intimate love than *agapeo*. This is the love Jonathan had for David; Jesus had for Lazarus and John; and which Peter had for Jesus (*1 Sam 18:1; Jn 11:36, 20:2, 15:13-14*).

Today we might translate the term *pitiful* (εὐσπλαγχνος, eúsplanchnos) as tender-hearted, compassionate. The idea is to be touched by or to ache over the distress and affliction of another. And the charge to be *courteous* (φιλόφρων, philóphrōn) is more than formal words and civil platitudes, it is a truly sweet and gentle disposition with regard and respect for all. Perhaps the passage in Philippians and Romans will help to further describe the desired mindset Peter has in mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (Phil 2:3-9)

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that

weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (Rom 12:9-20)

Not rendering evil for evil

Keep in mind that Peter is still listing spiritual sacrifices. So that when he says ***Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing;*** we should understand this behavior as such; it is our spiritual duty. The old man wants revenge, it wants to return a curse with a curse, hit back when it is hit; but it is our spiritual sacrifice to refrain. Yet he is not asking us merely to hold back with every ounce of restraint we can muster, he is telling us to refrain willingly and naturally from the heart, so that the idea of vengeance is not even entertained.

Inherit a blessing

Here again, we have a reference to the election of believers, ***knowing that you are thereunto called.*** Once in darkness, as lost sheep without a shepherd, yet (for reasons known only to God) he called us to follow him, to follow his example, to be like him. And we were called to this life that we ***should inherit a blessing.*** Here, the participle ***that*** (ὅτι, hina), signifies the purpose of the calling.

Verses 3:10-12

^{3:10}For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Love life, and see good days

Peter's statement ***he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile*** is not so much a promise as it is a warning. And it speaks of

something more than the actual words that are spoken. As for the warning, he is not promising us that everyone who abides by this ethic will have a long life; but he is warning us that those believers who do not abide by this ethic are very likely to have their lives cut short. In that such believers are a hindrance to the gospel message, God is likely to bench them, take them out play as it were.

This takes us to the second point, that something more than the words being spoken is in view. It goes directly to spiritual growth and allowing the Spirit of God to overcome the old nature. James had something to say about this.

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. . . . the tongue is a little member, and boasts great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (Jam 1:26; 3:5-8)

James uses tongue as a euphemism for the thoughts and intents of the mind, which of course control the tongue. The only way the tongue is controlled is by a renewal of the mind, which is only accomplished by a renewal of the spirit by the Spirit of God; and thus, spiritual growth. So that, a believer whose thoughts are not controlled so as to ***eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it*** is a believer who is not allowing the Spirit of God to create spiritual growth within. If growth does not occur, he becomes a hindrance to the gospel message; for the world will use the soiled messenger to discredit the message itself. It was this sin that caused King David to lose his newborn son: *"because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto you shall surely die"* (2 Sam 12:14).

Of course not every early death is due to an individual's sin; God has other reasons for taking his people home beyond the punitive. Sometimes he even does it out of mercy. Consider the words of Isaiah.

The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the

righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. (Isa 57:1-2)

Verses 3:13-15

3:13 And who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good? 14 But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Who is he that will harm you

Clearly, Peter is not suggesting that believers will never suffer harm when he asked: ***who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?*** Throughout the letter he has addressed the suffering they have already incurred, and even in the next breath, he said ***if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you.*** Furthermore, his letter is written only a few years before ten successive Roman emperors are about to rain two centuries of persecution upon the Church. What he is doing is referencing two Scriptural principles.

First, God will provide the necessary grace to see us through whatever befalls us. Such was the case with Paul when he asked the Lord to cure him of his chronic affliction. The Lord did not make him whole but told him, *“My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* To which Paul responded, *“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:9);* thereby realizing that God had something better in store and that the imparted grace was of greater value than would be the removal of the thorn in his flesh. And so it is here, as is suggested by ***if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you.***

God's grace was sufficient for Polycarp as well. John's former student and the bishop of Smyrna, who was the angel or messenger that Jesus addressed in the book of the Revelation. His martyrdom occurred in 155 AD. An early account of the event tells us that during the public games, a cry went up from the crowd, “Away with the atheists” (for this is what they called Christians who refused to worship the pagan gods and the Roman deity), “let Polycarp be

searched for.”

The troops found him in the upper room of a building from which he could have easily escaped. But having already told his disciples of a dream in which he was burned alive, he calmly went with his captors. Before leaving he requested an hour alone for prayer. His captors gave him two, marveling at the composure, piety, and obvious innocence of this gray-haired old man. Tradition tells us that some of these guards evidently converted to the faith.

On the way back to the city, the captain of the guard pleaded with Polycarp, asking him “What harm can there be to say Caesar is lord, and to offer a sacrifice to save your own life?”

Polycarp responded, “For me, only Jesus Christ is the Lord.”

Upon entering the stadium, Polycarp heard a voice from heaven telling him, “Be strong and play the man.”

The governor offered him a choice: “Curse the name of Christ and make sacrifice to Caesar, or death.”

“I have served him eighty-six years and he has done me no wrong.” Polycarp answered, “How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”

When the governor threatened to burn him alive, Polycarp replied, “You threaten me with the fire that burns for a time and is quickly quenched, for you do not know the fire which awaits the wicked in the judgment to come and in everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting? Come, do what you will.”

As they tied him to the stake he said, “Leave me as I am, for he who gives me power to endure the fire, will grant me to remain in the flames unmoved even without the security you will give by the nails.” At this the crowd pressed in, tossing their sticks into the flame. It is then that Polycarp offered his now-famous prayer.

O Lord God Almighty, Father of your beloved and blessed Child, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received full knowledge of you; God of angels and powers, and of all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous, who live before you, I bless you that you have granted unto me this day and hour, that I may share, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. And may I today be received among them before you, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as you, the God without falsehood and of truth, have prepared beforehand and

shown forth and fulfilled. For this reason, I also praise you for all things. I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved child, through whom be glory to you with Him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages that are to come. Amen.

The flames rose, but as they gathered intensity they began to flare out, arching about him so that he was not harmed. Seeing that he would not burn, at last, the executioner reached up and stabbed him with his spear. In this account of the event, the volume of blood spewing from the wound quenched the fire, causing the crowd to marvel at the difference between themselves and the Christians.

This leads us to the second Scriptural principle in view: that of true danger. As our Lord teaches, true danger is not the harm one might incur in his mortal body, but the harm that threatens his immortal soul and spirit. To wit Peter said, ***be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.***

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. (Mat 10:28-31)

The theme to “fear not man but fear the Lord” continues with the phrase ***sanctify the Lord God***, which seems to be referencing a passage in Isaiah, in which the Lord instructs them not to rely upon their own power and counsel against the kings of Syria and Samaria but to rely upon the Lord: *“neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary” (Isa 8:12-14).* In that the very nature of God is holy, which is the meaning of sanctify; the rest of the phrase ***in your hearts*** is to be understood as regarding him as holy in our estimate of him. The implications would be to reverence, obey, and rely upon him.

Be ready always to give an answer

It is every Christian’s duty to give a rational answer for his faith; thus, ***be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*** This does not say that everyone is expected to be a theologian,

but it is to be understood that two basic things are expected of every believer. First, Christianity is not a belief system without merit, so that every Christian should be able to address the obvious reason for belief in God's existence, i.e., the wondrous creation in which we live. Secondly, as believers we have yet another reason beyond the wondrous creation to substantiate our faith; we have the esoteric reality of *the hope that is in you*; our spirit being alive unto God—the Holy Spirit communing within our very being. Every believer should have a personal, metaphysical experience with the Lord. Thus the words of the old hymn, “You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart.”

Faith is not blind, it is not without reason. The meaning of the term faith in today's culture has been distorted so as to suggest a belief in something without reasonable cause or tangible evidence, i.e. blind faith. Sadly, many public figures within the Christian community seem to passively accept this utterly false misrepresentation. Here, I would like to insert an excerpt from a paper I published in *Answers in Research*.⁷

Actually, there is no such thing as blind faith; this is a euphemism for wishful thinking, or even unrealistic thinking that is contrary to reality. As used in Scripture, the concept of faith infers confirmation. By definition, faith is an evidence-based system that holds to a particular view that is substantiated by data. We generally use three concepts (trust, belief, and faith) to translate the original Greek (πίστις, *pistis*); but the definition is not left to our imaginations. *Pistis* “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (*Heb 11:1*).

According to this ancient biblical definition, science itself is a faith-based system. For it is a system often governed by “*the evidence of things not seen*”. Indeed, this is an essential *modus operandi* in science. Even without direct observation, science believes in many concepts and systems at the subatomic, supergalactic, and even macroscopic level of our familiar environment. Black holes, certain astronomical objects, the chemical composition of celestial bodies, the recent evidence that water once existed on the surface of Mars, and many other topics are unobserved beliefs that are held due to certain data sets that infer their reality: “*the evidence of things not seen*”. Even gravity and the earth's magnetic poles fit the description. We cannot directly observe either, nor even thoroughly explain them, but we can see and measure their effect

and we believe they exist.

Because predictable outcomes are observed in a particular concept, physical body, or system, scientists believe that a particular concept, physical body, or system exists. By definition these are faith-based beliefs; the precise implementation of the biblical concept of faith: *“the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”*.

Although modern scientists clearly come to certain conclusions based solely on *“the evidence of things not seen”*, I find it curious, if not amusing, that many refuse to address the faith-based aspect of their work even as they pretentiously pride themselves on accepting only those things that can be duplicated and proven in a laboratory setting. It is for this ostensible reason (the inability to reduplicate in a laboratory setting) that many scientists dismiss or even blatantly deny the possibility of metaphysical realities. Yet strangely, they find no problem with their adamant, even passionate, adherence to the completely un-testable (not to mention illogical) notion of evolution and the big bang. This is beyond pretentious; it is nothing less than disingenuous.

Using the same sound logic a true scientist uses when trusting the inferences of his data set, those not offended by the inferences of this data set (i.e. the universe) have concluded that it is an amazingly imaginative and ordered structure; and given its intricate and precise nature, from the macro super-galactic level down to the subatomic quantum level, and then topping it off with the inexplicable mystery of life itself, an intelligent Creator is the only logical and plausible cause. Therefore an intelligent Creator exists. God exists. The precisely ordered universe and the astounding physical and metaphysical life it contains are the evidence. This is not only the conclusion of the simple observer but of hundreds of well-qualified scientists from numerous scientific disciplines. It is for this reason that we read:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork (Ps 19:1).

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the

invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom 1:17-20).

Meekness and fear

Once again we encounter the term **fear**, and here again, as discussed earlier, it is referencing the fear of God. But notice the context this time: ***give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*** Our efforts at evangelism and apologetics should not exude a smug, obnoxious holier-than-thou attitude. Neither should it be contentious, but humble and reverent; even as Jesus was before the Sanhedrin and Paul at Mars Hill.

This command has acute meaning for Christians in this modern age in which the religion of secular humanism and the corresponding hypothesis of evolution is aggressively and belligerently used to taunt all who do not accept the ideas of secular humanism, evolution, and the big bang as fact. Young Christians in high school and college are especially subject to such sarcastic attacks. The attacks can be ruthless, yet our response is to disclose a particular demeanor, which is clear, articulate, meek, and in the fear of the Lord.

Suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you

Faith is our means to joy; even in the midst of sorrow; for we know that one day it will end and we will be with our Lord. He will not overlook our suffering, but will reward our faithfulness, and we shall receive the end of our inheritance.

Verses 3:16-18

^{3:16}Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. ¹⁷For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. ¹⁸For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

A good conscience

The conditions upon which our answer for the faith is predicated continues: meekness, fear, and ***having a good conscience***. The term ***that*** (ὅτι, hína), in the phrase, ***that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed***, speaks to the outcome of our good conscience; and the primary participle ***for*** (γάρ, gár), assigns the reason for the good conscience, ***for it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing***. Then the conjunction ***because*** (ὅτι, hóti), translated as ***for*** in the next phrase, reveals the rationale for the entire argument; ***for Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust***. So that; because our Lord, who suffered without sin for us, who are sin, it is our spiritual sacrifice to follow his example, to live with a pure conscience and thereby shame the enemy. Then we have another ***that*** (ὅτι, hína), which provides the reason for Christ's suffering, ***that he might bring us to God***.

The scenario is a continuation of the spiritual sacrifices which Peter has been discussing. Here, it is the spiritual sacrifice of a good conscience. But the good conscience is not satisfied merely by conveniently forgetting our failures and faults. It speaks to the absence of ungodly behavior, which eats at our conscience. And the issue is not so much even that our conscience is offended, but that whatever it is that has caused the offense is likely known to others, which then gives them cause (in their own minds) to discredit the message with the messenger. Paul addressed this basic issue when writing to the Romans. *“You that make your boast of the law, through breaking the law you dishonor God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles” (Rom 2:23-24)*. Yet, if our behavior is holy, in the Day of Judgment these accusers will have to give account for their accusations. For *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies” (Rom 8:33)*.

The will of God

At times, God may deem it necessary for his people to suffer affliction in order to achieve a desired outcome, which may not be attained otherwise; thus, ***it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing***. Some of the happiest moments or the most brilliant traits of character might arise out of one's trials. Thus, if God sees fit to allow our suffering that some greater good may come of it, it is better that we suffer in innocence

than for something for which we actually deserve punishment. Furthermore, if we suffer without cause, we shall have the testimony of our own good conscience to speak in our defense as we implore God's mercy.

Quickened by the Spirit

The understanding that Christ was ***put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*** is the heart of the gospel. Without these truths, Christianity is a complete waste of time; indeed, it is more than a waste of time it is an enterprise of the fool-hearted. Throughout history, Christians have suffered severe persecution for their faith; millions have been beaten, tortured, killed; yet: If Christ did not die for our sins, rise victoriously from the grave and then return to the Father, so as to give us hope of the same, for what purpose do we follow him and suffer for it? So it is Paul said,

if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (1 Cor 15:16-19)

Herein is the very essence of the gospel—the vicarious death and the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without this, we have no salvation, no hope. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that these doctrines are rejected by various “Christian Cults” such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormonism. We call them Christian cults because they talk a good talk. They pray to God, speak of God, quote the Bible, teach morals and ethics, and even speak of Jesus; but they deny the deity of Christ and they deny his physical resurrection from the dead. In essence, they deny the very gospel they supposedly profess. They are institutions of the enemy; wherein he has twisted the truth, even as he did in the garden.

Verses 3:19-21

¹⁹*By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;*
²⁰*Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. ²¹The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

²²***Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.***

Preached unto the spirits in prison

Admittedly, this passage has an apparent degree of difficulty. Several theologians offer various interpretations; however, I believe it need not be as difficult as we often make it out to be. When viewed in light of other passages concerning this subject, it seems (at least in my mind), to coincide with our general understanding of Hades. However, whatever the meaning may be, Peter is not setting forth a doctrine on which our theology rests, but merely referencing a historical event. Therefore, we have room for various understandings of this cryptic passage without compromising the gospel message.

That being said, to understand the passage we must answer a few questions. Such as: What was Jesus' message? Why was he preaching it to them? What is the prison? And, who are the dead prisoners? Peter answers the first two questions: ***Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. Therefore, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.***

He preached the gospel of salvation. The purpose of the message was to prepare the way for the judgment of their works, but also to assure them of their eternal salvation. As such, this narrows the identity of the dead prisoners to those who died in righteousness; that is, those who sought the Lord and his salvation. To which, Jesus is appearing to tell them the good news of their hope being fulfilled.

Similarly, the location of the prison is narrowed to but one possible site—Abraham's bosom; that portion of Hades in which the righteous dead abide, awaiting their resurrection. Christ told them he had secured their atonement and that their resurrection was imminent. In today's culture, we generally associate the term Hades with evil, however, this is only half true. Hades is the region of the unseen dead.

The Jews understood these separate abodes; Paradise for the righteous and another tormented abode for unrighteous. Jesus told the thief, "*Verily I say unto thee, Today shall you be with me in paradise*" (Lu 23:43). Jesus also spoke of the deaths of the beggar Lazarus and the rich man. Lazarus was carried by the angels to

Abraham's bosom, while the rich man was buried only to find himself in hell, tormented by fire (*Lk 16:19-31*). The rich man looked across the divide and saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Then he asked Father Abraham to send Lazarus with a wet finger to cool his tongue. To which Abraham responded, no one can pass across the great gulf that is fixed between us. Although many mistakenly think of Lazarus and the rich man to be a parable, there is nothing to indicate that thought. Jesus said, "*There was a certain man . . .*"

More precisely, it is Gehenna (γεέννα geenna), the everlasting lake of fire that is the eternal abode of evil. The righteous in Hades will be resurrected; then at the Judgment of Great White Throne, the remaining residents of Hades will be cast into this lake of fire (*Rev 20:14*). Enoch also spoke of these abodes (*En 21-22*). The dark and foreboding—prepared for the unrighteous, and the fallen angels; and the bright and joyous—the dwelling of the righteous. This is where Jesus descended to proclaim his victory and to lead the souls of the righteous to heaven, so that now, when the righteous depart they go to be with the Lord (*Phil 1:23*).

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. (Eph 4:8-10)

For you will not leave my soul in hell; neither will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption. (Ps 16:10)

He seeing . . . spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. (Acts 2:31)

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Mt 27:52-53) Also see (2 Cor 5:6-8; Rev 6:9-11, 7:9)

Days of Noah

The intense wickedness of the antediluvian world was fueled by certain fallen angels who had left their station and took up habitation with human women. To them a hybrid alien race of giants was born, which in Hebrew are called naphilim (נפילי, n^ophîyl).

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after

that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (Gen 6:4)

Both Jude and Peter speak of these fallen angels, which Enoch said are now being kept chained under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day (*Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Enoch 10*).

The book of Enoch lends some insight into the antediluvian world. Although not part of Scripture, Enoch's work was esteemed a valid, historic record by ancient Jewish tradition; it was even found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Jude and Peter, as well as several early Church Fathers (Barnabus, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origin, and Clement of Alexander), referenced Enoch. Tertullian set aside an entire chapter defending Enoch's work. Given the prominence that Jude and Peter assign to it, we might consider it to be Holy Scripture for the antediluvian world.

Enoch explained that two-hundred angels, known as Watchers, defiled themselves by leaving their first estate to cohabit with human women. To them, a hybrid race of giants was born. These Nephilim, the evil children of the Watchers, are what we know today as evil spirits. These are the demons who roam the earth seeking to inhabit and destroy whomever they can. Enoch explained it as such:

Now the giants, who have been born of spirit and of flesh, shall be called upon earth evil spirits, and on earth shall be their habitation. Evil spirits shall proceed from their flesh, because they were created from above; from the holy Watchers was their beginning and primary foundation. Evil spirits shall they be upon earth, and the spirits of the wicked shall they be called. The habitation of the spirits of heaven shall be in heaven; but upon earth shall be the habitation of terrestrial spirits, who are born on earth. The spirits of the giants shall be like clouds, which shall oppress, corrupt, fall, content, and bruise upon earth. They shall cause lamentation. No food shall they eat; and they shall be thirsty; they shall be concealed, and shall rise up against the sons of men, and against women; for they come forth during the days of slaughter and destruction. (Enoch 15:8-10)

Enoch tells us the Watchers also mixed with animals and created freakish beasts. They taught men about metallurgy, mirrors, weapons, and warfare, as well as various other crafts and sciences

such as herbs and astronomy. They taught women how to adorn themselves with makeup, and how to abort babies. They also taught certain metaphysical mysteries, about astrology, and how to practice sorcery and incantations (*Enoch 7-8*).

It was the extent of evil that these Watchers and their offspring, the Nephilim (who practiced cannibalism and vampirism), created and taught to men that caused the Lord to bring the civilization to an end via the flood. Only Noah (who was perfect in his generation—i.e., pure, without hybrid blood) and his family was saved. No doubt, as Tertullian argued, Noah (Enoch's grandson) brought the book of Enoch with him, thus providing a vivid description of the antediluvian world, as well as the antediluvian prophecies concerning the Messiah and the last days.

Notice that the passage in Genesis 6:4, *There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, . . .*” Fallen heavenly beings corrupted humanity once again after the flood. But this time, for reason unknown to us, the hybrid population did not multiply exponentially as it did before the flood when it grew to infect nearly every bloodline.

Many of the civilizations God told Israel to destroy were whole populations of hybrid giants. In one report, when the Hebrew spies came back to tell Moses what they had seen across the Jordan, they said, “*we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight*” (*Num 13:33*). There were other such hybrid people mentioned well, such as the Anakins, the Emims, Basham, and the Philistines. God had commanded Israel to exterminate these hybrid races, but they failed to complete the task.

As dispensationalists, we understand that history is divided into various timeframes and the redeemed (although all redeemed by Christ's work) are divided into various classifications; such as the Jews, the Church, the righteous who will be born during Christ's millennial reign, and the righteous antediluvians, etc. As such the designations ***Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah*** clearly identifies a certain cohort of the redeemed. Because it seems very unlikely that Jesus only preached to the antediluvian souls, it seems plausible that Peter referenced them as a segue to Noah and the flood, that he might speak of baptism.

Baptism does also now save us

Peter speaks of the flood as a symbol of baptism. The term, figure (ἀντίτυπον, antitypon), speaks of a symbol or antitype. The original meaning of the term referenced the impression left on an object after being struck by something. Peter saw a connection between the waters involved in Noah's salvation and the water involved in the believer's salvation, ***The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us.*** Yet, so as not to be misunderstood, Peter makes it clear that salvation is not achieved by the mere application of water, ***not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,*** but by faith, or as he calls it here, ***a good conscience toward God by*** (or through) ***the resurrection of Jesus Christ.***

Who is gone into heaven

Peter's reference to Jesus having secured man's redemption, returned to heaven, and is now in authority seated ***on the right hand of God*** is meant to encourage his readers to persevere in their various trials; for their inheritance is with him, who also suffered but returned to his rightful seat of supremacy over all Creation.

He is careful to make the point that ***angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*** The term (ὑποτάσσω, hypotássō), is the aorist past participle for subordination; the significance being the aorist past, which means the subjection of the angels, authorities and power is complete, Jesus is currently in control. This reaches back to Peter's exhortation to ***submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors;*** for they only have their authority because Jesus has permitted it. Therefore, to fight against these authorities is to fight against the Lord's plan for the ages.

Verses 4:1-4

^{4:1}Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; ²That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. ³For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: ⁴Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

Forasmuch . . . arm yourselves

The participle forasmuch (οὖν, oûn), is also translated therefore, wherefore, accordingly; thus signifying the reasoning for the argument. Here the argument is that having suffered for us in the flesh, Christ has returned to his position of supreme authority over all of creation; therefore we are to suffer as well, so as to die to the flesh and to live unto God.

The term arm yourselves (ὁπλίσασθε, hoplísasthe), is in the aorist, middle voice, imperative; which carries a few points of significance. The imperative, of course, is a command. The aorist tense, as opposed to the imperfect tense, signifies a singular activity versus continued activity, such as *do it and be done with it* versus *keep doing it*. The middle voice tells us the subject of the verb is both the cause and the recipient of the action. Here the subject is yourselves; so that the translation of this single word is “You arm yourselves!” It is the picture of a warrior getting ready for battle.

The thing of interest is that this arming of oneself is done by oneself; that is, the believer has an active part in it. This is not to negate the role of the Holy Spirit, for we know that we can accomplish nothing good without the Holy Spirit; but it definitely signifies a certain symbiotic relationship between the Spirit of God and ourselves. So that, while God gives us the ability to don the armor, donning the armor is still an action we must take. God will not dress us as it were. The armor is the same armor Paul speaks of in when he said:

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; . . . (Eph 6:13-18)

Suffered for us in the flesh

Peter uses the term flesh (σάρξ, sárx), in the concrete-literal

sense to speak of Christ's suffering; then in the next breath, he uses it in the figurative-literal sense to speak of our fallen human nature. Thus, because *Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh.*

One of the primary features to distinguish fundamental Christianity from liberal Christendom is its adherence to a literal, historical, grammatical, contextual hermeneutic of Scripture, which fundamental Christianity accepts as inspired by God. Therefore, let's define the meaning of literal, historical, grammatical, and contextual.

We use the term, literal, to say every passage has a plain meaning. The author or speaker had a singular understanding in mind when he wrote or spoke. We refer to this as a meaning with a single sense. It is the interpreter's goal to understand the author's plain, singular meaning.

It is the nature of language, both written and verbal, for writers and speakers to express themselves in various ways. The authors of Scripture were no different. We all have favorite words and idioms we use frequently. We may have a certain style of expression, such as short, pithy sentences, as in the manner of John Steinbeck; or long, drawn-out sentences, connecting one parenthetical idea to another, as in the style of Nathaniel Hawthorne. But always, if the speaker is coherent, there is a plain singular meaning in mind.

Words then, as now, have figurative and concrete uses. Each usage is considered literal: one is figurative-literal the other is concrete-literal. Therefore, literal simply refers to the author's contextual meaning for the term, be it a figurative or concrete sense.

When we use the idiom, "It's raining cats and dogs," everyone within our culture understands it is a euphemism for "It's raining hard." When we say, "It's raining hard," everyone within our culture understands that we are using "hard" in the figurative sense. The concrete-literal meaning of hard is not easily penetrated, firm, solid, which does not fit our context. There is nothing solid about raindrops. But there are several figurative meanings for hard. In this phrase, hard is a reference to the inclement weather. This is the speaker's obvious meaning, and to understand it as such is to understand it literally. It is a legitimate, figurative-literal use of the

term.

Likewise, when James said, “*the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity*” (*Jm 3:6*); he did not mean fire in a concrete-literal sense, as Luke meant it when he said Paul “*shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm*” (*Ac 28:5*). Nor did James mean world in the concrete-literal sense. His use for both terms is plainly in the figurative-literal sense. But we must take it yet another step to arrive at the literal-meaning. Even James’ use of the generally concrete term, tongue, is a euphemism for the thoughts and intents of the mind which control the tongue. This is the plain meaning of his figurative speech. This is literal interpretation. The idea is that the expression of thoughts flowing from our sinful nature has destructive power.

So then, by literal we mean the author’s plain, obvious, intended meaning, whether the usage is figurative or concrete. Furthermore, although Scripture has meaning for all time, there is also a determined historic aspect to it. As such, there is a determined historic aspect to hermeneutics. These documents were written by and to historic figures. Correct interpretation on our part demands that we understand the historical setting in which they were written and received.

Learning this historical background is more than knowing the date and the author of a particular writing. It requires careful consideration of the author’s background, the recipient’s background as well as the circumstances in which it was written. Sometimes it requires knowledge of the culture, the historical events leading up to the occasion in question, or even the geography; and always, it requires an understanding of the historic terms as defined at the time of the writing.

Language is our basic means of communication. If a language is to have consequence, its users must agree upon a recognized structure and a common meaning for each term. Every language functions on this basis. It is this common agreement in our English language that enables you to understand the words I have written.

We monitor and modify the structure of a language by rules of grammar. We obey most of these rules without realizing it. With proper instruction, as children, we learn to speak correctly long before we actually study grammar. But this does not negate the need for the rules, or for our need to understand them. Grammatical rules

are based upon past usage; but because language is fluid—ever-changing, to some degree—so too are the rules of grammar. Thus, they sometimes change to reflect current common usage. But these changes are slow, generally taking place over decades or even hundreds of years.

Being removed from the source by so many years, the grammatical considerations in the hermeneutical process require great detail. We must consider the historical meaning of a given term and the function of that term in the phrase, the clause, or the sentence. Then we consider the function of a phrase in a sentence and the purpose of a sentence in the paragraph, the relationship of one sentence to another, and one paragraph to another.

The context in which a passage is written is of extreme importance. In some ways, contextual considerations are akin to grammatical considerations. We might even think of them as an extension of grammatical issues. The grammatical study is concerned with everything from the meaning of a word to the connection of one sentence to another. Contextual considerations transcend the immediate grammatical issues, to deal with the general argument, the logic, the story, or the flow of thought. What is the author's point? How has he substantiated it? What led him to this point? What conclusion does he draw from it? Or for instance, in the case of historical drama: What is the situation? The background? Who are the characters? etc.

Furthermore, contextual issues must consider the main theme of the book, the rest of the author's work, the rest of Scripture. Thus, the question is, how does this passage fit into the immediate and broad context? Without such considerations, we are liable and likely, to interpret a passage out of context. That is, we could make it seem to say something entirely different than the author had intended.

This brief lesson on hermeneutics may seem out of place, but it has a specific purpose; which brings us back to the term *σάρξ*, *sárx*, flesh, and its concrete-literal versus figurative-literal meaning. Some well-meaning yet ill-informed Christians, who allow only for the concrete-literal understanding of flesh, have attempted piety through some rather strange means. In their application of several figurative-literal passages clearly referencing man's sinful nature, they have denied their body any pleasures, even pleasures that are clearly not an offense. They even go so far as to inflict pain and

suffering upon themselves. About which, Paul has said such practices, “indeed appear like wisdom in self-imposed worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but aren't of any value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col 2:23).

Jesus said “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24), and Paul said, “if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live” (Rom 8:13); yet clearly neither expected his hearers to travel inclement weather without coats, or to sleep in the mud, or to eat nothing tasty. Both Jesus and Paul spoke to the sinful nature of man, which we all have inherited from Adam. This is the self that is to be denied, the flesh that is not to be satisfied.

Wrought the will of the Gentiles

Peter argued, *the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles*, which is the awkward way the KJV is saying *we have spent enough of our past time doing the desire of the Gentiles*. Again Peter speaks to the deeds of the old man, but here he uses *will of the Gentiles* as a euphemism for the desire of the sinful nature. For certainly he did not believe that Jews (his primary audience) were immune to walking in sin without the influence of the Gentiles. We need only to read Moses to refute that idea.

The terms he uses to describe the former life is interesting: *lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*. The World English Bible translates these as *lewdness, lusts, drunken binges, orgies, carousing, and abominable idolatries*; Young's Literal Translation says, *lasciviousness, desires, excesses of wines, revelings, drinking-bouts, and unlawful idolatries*. Cumulatively, these graphic terms pretty much paint a picture of outright hedonism. Lasciviousness (ἀσέλγεια, asélgeia), speaks of unbridled living such as to know no restraint, one that is up for any whim and reckless insolence that might be dared upon him. Lusts (ἐπιθυμία, epithymía), is a passion and desire for unlawful pleasures. Drunkenness (οἰνοφλυγία, oinophlygía), in the context, seems to speak to habitual drunkenness. Revelings (κῶμος, kōmos), speaks to carousing. It paints a picture of a group of drunken friends singing and swaying their way through the streets, which was an activity especially associated with the cults who followed the god Dionysus. Banquetings (πότος, pótos), could be called drunken parties.

Abominable idolatries (ἀθέμιτος εἰδωλολατρεία, athémitos eidōlolaatría), is the idea of unrighteous worship of idols, which the scholars Reinecker and Rogers depict as especially having a drunken and sexual connotation.

We are not to assume that these Jewish converts in Asia Minor, to whom the letter is addressed, were famed hedonist—self-indulged pleasure-seekers of the worst kind. There is no historical data to substantiate such a claim, and furthermore, Peter includes himself among this cohort. Rather, it seems clear that he speaks to the human experience. One might not indulge in such self-indulgences to the same degree as another, but we have all indulged to some degree; and thus, all are guilty. One sin as opposed to another, regardless of the degree of debauchery, puts us all in the same camp. Just as Jesus said, “*whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart*” (Mt 5:28). With standards like this, who among us is without sin? So it is that Paul wrote, “*sin, finding occasion through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of coveting*” (Rom 5:7 WEB).

Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. (Rom 13:11-14)

Peter said we have spent enough time following ***the will of the Gentiles***. The term will (θέλημα, thélēma), is the same term used of God’s will. It is a choice, a purpose, a determination. Here it is the determined purpose of the world to follow their hedonistic behavior. Therefore, ***they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.***

They think it strange (ξενίζω, xenízō), or more precisely they are surprised and entertained by the notion, that we no longer have the desire to rush headlong with them to the pleasure of the flesh. To this day, nothing about this has changed. Christianity is a source of entertainment to the world; the butt end of their jokes. Scarcely will you find a comedian today who does not get a lot of mileage out of making fun of Christianity. But Jesus warned, “*Woe to you who laugh now! For you will mourn and weep*” (Lk 6:25).

Not only is Christianity a source of entertainment to the world, it is an even greater offense, a spiritual felony, if you will; for the gospel convicts them of their sin. Speaking to this issue, John harkens back to Cain and Able: “*Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you*” (1 Jn 3:13). Earlier, Peter reminded us that Jesus is “*unto them which be disobedient, . . . a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense*” (1 Peter 2:7-8). And Jesus explained;

If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (Jn 15:18-19)

As such, we Christians should not be offended when the world makes fun or even when it attacks us: be it the entertainment world, the government, local school boards, colleges, or any of the sundry political groups with ungodly agendas. In fact, scorn and hatred are to be expected, so that we should begin to worry when the world is pleased with us, for we are likely not setting forth the whole truth of the gospel message “*Woe, when men speak well of you! For their fathers did the same thing to the false prophets*” (Lk 6:25).

Verses 4:7-8

⁷But the end of all things is at hand: be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. ⁸And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

The end of all things

The plea for holy living due to the reality that ***the end of all things is at hand*** is a familiar theme in the NT.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. (2 Peter 3:11)

Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws near. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned: behold, the judge stands before the door. (Jam 5:8-9)

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. (Phil 4:5)

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. (Rom 13:12)

Here, Peter paints the picture of one having a sound mind and a prayerful demeanor that is ever watching for the Lord's return. The term sober (σωφρονέω, sōphronéō), is something more than simply not being a drunkard; it speaks to being sane, sensible, rational; which then, negates some of the rather outrageous antics some professing Christian's act out, generally in an effort to secure their civil liberties, which they feel the government has offended. Paul gave his readers a similar charge: *"denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; (Tit 2:12-13)*

Above all things have fervent charity

Here again the issue of spiritual sacrifice continues, ***above all things have fervent charity among yourselves***. The phrase, fervent charity (ἐκτενής ἀγάπη, ektenēs agápē), in our vernacular is more precisely, unending love. As mentioned earlier, *agápē* speaks to a certain kind of sacrificial benevolence rather than passionate kind of love (ἠράσθη, ērasthē) as used in LXX for *"the king loved Esther above all the women"* (Es 2:17) [the root ērasthē is Ἔρως, Eros, also the name of the Greek god of sexual attraction]; or even the warm friendly love (φιλέω, philéō), used when Jesus weep at Lazarus sepulchre and the Jews said, *"Behold how he loved him"* (Jn 11:36).

We throw the term love around rather flippantly; using it to describe a whole range of emotions and devotions, some of which hardly qualify for the NT concept of *agápē*. The essence of love is self-sacrifice; it is the opposite is selfishness, narcissism. John tells us that *"God is love"* (1 Jn 4:16). Such a statement has rather important implications. Since God is love and man is created in the image of God, man too, in a similar manner, is love. But of course, Adam's disobedience corrupted man's image and thus corrupted that attribute of man that is love. The result is a strange union between the divine and the malevolent; so that the perfection of love is distorted by the darkness of narcissism, and the two are constantly at war with each other. As such, the unregenerate man is unable to express love fully, or even to express it partially in a pure manner.

In a practical sense, the consequences of this strange union

between the divine like and the malevolent is a series of fractured relationships: neighbors fight with each other, the best of friends forsake one another, siblings embrace jealousy against each other, children rebel against parents, husbands and wives compete for standing. Although some individuals seem to possess narcissistic tendencies to a lesser degree than others, all are infected. No one is void of this disease. Therefore, there is no such thing as a perfect love amongst all of humanity. Because some hold the attribute of love in greater esteem than narcissism, it seems prudent to take a short detour with a note of practical advice. When seeking a partner it behoves young lovers to steer far away from anyone who wears their narcissism on their sleeve; for they will never love you satisfactorily.

It is only when the human spirit is reborn by the Spirit of God that one has the ability to love without corruption. This new birth does not do away with the corrupt nature, but it does make it possible to overcome the corruption; and thus, it makes pure love a possibility. To wit, John continues: “*God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him*” (1 Jn 4:16).

So then, how do we define love, this *agápē* about which we have been speaking? No one has ever defined it better than the Apostle Paul, wherein the KJV has translated love as charity. Paul makes use of several adjectives and scenarios and yet we will notice there is a common theme about which they revolve, i.e., selflessness.

Love is patient and is kind; love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. (1 Cor 13:4-8)

Thus, it is that Jesus said, “*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13)*. Can there be any greater display of selflessness?

cover the multitude of sins

It is this love, from the heart, as described by Paul that ***shall cover the multitude of sins***. Peter is quoting Proverbs, “*Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all wrongs*” (Prov 10:12). But what does this mean? To understand it properly we must consider the context, which is how one should behave toward another. There is no

indication that our love will make atonement for our sin. Such a thought is completely foreign to biblical teaching; for we know it is Jesus Christ that “*God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*” (Rom 3:5).

Solomon’s contrast of one’s hatred versus one’s love provides us some clarification. Hatred leads to the defamation, reproach, and dishonor of the one hated; but love is willing to forgive, to bury the hatchet, and to preserve the other’s honor. The apostle is speaking of the scenario in which one’s love and esteem for the other’s goodness is such that he/she is insensible to their imperfections. Thus, rather than dwelling on every fault, faults are overlooked so as to see only one’s goodness. It is the idea behind Paul’s comment that love “*bears all things*” (στέγω, stégō), to cover with silence, to endure patiently (1 Cor 13:7).

Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive his brother seven times; the response, “*I say not unto you, . . . Until seventy times seven*” (Mt 18:22); which coincides with Peter’s comment, ***the multitude of sins***. But living a life of love has implications beyond forgiving the offences of others. It has a direct, limiting effect upon our own sinful behavior; in that love breeds goodwill, whereas hatred harboured toward another most definitely breeds its own sins. Thus, “*all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another*” (Gal 5:14-15).

Then, of course, living such a life of love has an added benefit; as our Lord said, “*Forgive, and you shall be forgiven*” (Lk 6:37). Just as others will execute various offences against us, so too will we offend them. It is inevitable to some degree, because we are all sinners. Yet, if we live a life focused upon love for others rather than revenge and spit, others will consider this and be more apt to forgive us as well.

Of course this love one for another does not negate the necessity of confronting a brother living in habitual sin, as Paul did with the Corinthians and Jesus did with the Sadducees and Pharisees. This is yet another issue. Not dissimilar to the healthy love one has for family members; a love that overlooks personality faults yet seriously confronts self-destructive behavior.

Verses 4:9-11

4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 10 As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Hospitality one to another

Hospitality is a continuation of the theme of charity. The idea is to execute this hospitality and personal sacrifice without murmuring about it; without complaining about the cost or the personal hardship incurred. It is to make the guest feel welcome and happy. The two extremes are exemplified by Mary and Martha and then again with Mary and Judas. In one scenario, Mary set at Jesus' feet listening and learning while Martha was serving everyone. Martha complained that she was doing everything while Mary just sat there. Then when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with ointment Judas complained that she was wasting their resources. This is not to put Martha and Judas in the same category, for indeed they had different motives. Martha was merely exhausted and seeking some help and perhaps recognition, while Judas was a traitor who hoped to use the resources for himself (Lk 10:38-42; Jn 12:3-8).

Minister (διακονέω, diakonéō), is the same term we translate as deacon. The meaning is that of service, to attend to another, to render aid, to minister. While the first use, ***even so minister the same one to another*** is clearly speaking in a general sense as employed in hospitality, the second use ***if any man minister*** could reference the office of deacon. However, the qualifying phrase ***let him do it as of the ability which God gives*** would indicate the use of one's personal resources versus the administration of those of the church in an official capacity. The differentiation may seem of slight importance, with the only significance being that the idea is then applicable to all believers rather than merely to the officeholders alone.

Gift (χάρισμα, charisma), when used without the article (as it is here) ***As every man has received the gift***, speaks to any kind of gift. So that, in this context the gift is any endowment in one's possession that might be used for the welfare of others. Whatever

the gift or favor and advantage God has bestowed upon us, it should be held in trust, as it were, seeking the occasion to do good to others.

The ability which God gives

This ministry is to be exercised to the full extent of ***the ability which God gives***. The thought is reminiscent of the parable of the talents. The master endowed talents to each servant according to their abilities. The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third but one. While the first two invested and multiplied their cash, the third buried it in the ground, for fear of losing it and thereby infuriate his master. Subsequently, the first two were honored accordingly while the third was severely punished. Of course, the parable is addressing the entirety of God's domain, and thus does not have complete application for the Church; in that the Church is not the entire kingdom of God but a portion of it. So that, in this parable whereas the third servant who had failed to make use of his talent was cast into hell; this is not so within the Church. True believers who fail to use their gifts are not cast out of the kingdom, but they do suffer the loss of rewards (*1 Cor 3:15*). Nevertheless, the idea of using one's gift to the best of one's ability remains.

Speak as the oracles of God

Those who would speak of God are to ***speak as the oracles of God***. This is a term we find elsewhere to reference the OT.

What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God (Rom 3:1-2).

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (Heb 5:12)

If one is going to set about so as to teach and explain God's word, that he might edify his neighbor, he has the responsibility to teach doctrines and truths in accordance with that which has been revealed to the authors of Scripture, who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And he is to teach as if he were himself speaking for God; ergo, with reverence and with the certainty that of which he speaks is in accordance with revealed truth; for he will have to give account for his teaching, and it will not bode well for those who teach false doctrine.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. . . . Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (Mt 7:15-19).

With a heavy heart in Ephesus, Paul called the elders together to warn them of the false teachers who would soon be invading them. This invasion has been an issue for the Church since its conception. Indeed, it was an issue that Israel had to deal with as well.

after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Ac 20:29-31).

To the Church in Rome, Paul warned:

mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they . . . by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (Rom 16:17-18)

To Timothy he warned:

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: . . . From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (1 Tim 1:4-7).

The closer we get to the coming of the Lord we are to expect an increase of false teachers. As the time draws near, Satan will be working ever harder to deceive as many as possible.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

One such insidious and subversive false theology is running rampant within the Western Evangelical world. Its origins can be traced back to the healing and revival meetings of the Charismatic movement in the middle 1900s. Back then, mainstream evangelicals dismissed the teaching for the falsehood that it is. Today this

erroneous doctrine is broadcast night and day by slick-looking, energetic, smooth-talking televangelists on Christian television and radio networks. Consequently, it has found its way into the pews of many evangelical churches. Even in those churches in which it is not taught from the pulpit, it is very likely practiced among certain parishioners who follow and support some of these polished con artists—these thespians playing the role of purveyors of truth.

The poisonous false doctrine of which I speak is the pervasive Prosperity Theology, the Health and Wealth Gospel or, as it is often called, Name-it-and-Claim-it-Theology; it is the idea that living godly will yield financial rewards. Godliness, at least in this arena, is exhibited by giving generous contributions to the ministry; giving with a positive “I shall prosper” attitude while visualizing positive outcomes: perhaps a BMW and a Lexus filling the two-car garage, and plenty of steaks on the grill. Such material rewards are deemed to be God’s blessing because Christians are to have dominion and prosper. But it does not stop here. When these “godly” individuals congregate, God provides them an opulent building with imported stained glass, expensive pews, and a preacher dressed by Armani.

This seemingly pious ideology is a decidedly anti-Christian theology, contrary to the teachings and experiences of both Jesus and his apostles. Metaphorically, believers often speak of receiving the meat of the Word from a Bible lesson or a particularly applicable sermon. Using this imagery, what makes this false theology so insidious is that it is generally served with the gospel; so that this sweet dessert is placed alongside the meat of salvation and good works, thereby making it appear as if they were all prepared by the same chef, or at least in the same kitchen. But they were not. As pleasing as this dish might be to the eyes and the palate, this sweet intoxicating dessert is pure poison, and once it hits the bloodstream, recovery is most difficult.

While this seductive theology ostensibly promotes godliness, in reality, it advances a lie of Satan. The misapplication and distortion of certain Scriptures are crafted with the same subtlety as Satan’s plea to Eve, “*Yea, hath God said . . . ?*” Yea, hath not God said He will fill your storehouses? Lavish you with riches? Build you a city with streets of gold? Give you all the desires of your heart? Yea, hath not God told you this?

Did not Jesus warn that we cannot serve God and money

(Matt. 6:24), that the deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word (Matt. 13:22), and that it is very hard for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom (Mk. 10:23)? And did not Paul warn against those who would pursue these lies and distortions?

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Verses 4:12-15

^{4:12}Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

Think it not strange

As if to reinforce the encouragement he has already offered concerning the believer's persecution and subsequent rewards, Peter again addresses the suffering his readers are experiencing and shall continue to experience: ***think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*** But these sufferings were not particular to the early Church. They have not ceased. Since its inception, Christianity has been persecuted.

For several centuries, in the western world, we have been fairly immune to persecution; but this is not the case for millions of Christians in some fifty countries around the world. According to the 2017 World Watch List by Open Doors, Christian persecution is on the rise, so that some 215 million Christians currently experience

varying degrees of persecution for their faith. While a large majority of these persecutions are perpetrated by Islam, Hinduism, and Communism, even countries such as Mexico and Colombia, once considered primarily Christian nations, are killing Christian leaders for their faith. And after decades of secular humanism being taught throughout the West, even in America and Europe Christians are increasingly despised for their beliefs. It is the story of Cain and Able all over again. Cain killed his brother “*Able because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*” (1 Jn 3:13). So it is that Jesus said,

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his lord.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you, . . . (Jn 15:18-20).

After they killed Jesus, they killed Stephen; and one by one, in the following decades, they killed each of the apostles but John, whom they tortured and banished to the Isle of Patmos. Then came more than two hundred years of brutal persecution under ten consecutive Roman Emperors—each more savage than the last. Satan’s attempt to vanquish Christianity by killing and torturing as many as possible had failed; for as it is said, “The blood of Christians is seed”, and the Church kept growing and spreading throughout the world.

For a short time, Satan changed his tactics; rather than persecute, he would infiltrate and corrupt from within. Once the Edit of Milan was signed in 313, government infiltration soon followed. The Church was flooded with nominal converts who were baptized merely to satisfy the government. Many became leaders in the Church. Emperors were replaced with political Popes and the state-run Church became increasingly filled with corruption, crime, all manner of evil and, once again, persecution—killing those Christians who refused to follow the fraudulent doctrines of the state Church: the terrible Dark Ages, and the Inquisition in which several orthodox Christian societies were persecuted, as well as the crusades, were all the work of this compromised political Church.

Still, Christianity continued to flourish. When it spread into Persia, the pagan priests of sun worship were distressed, for it eroded

their great influence over the population. Thus, the pagan priests convinced Persian monarchs to also persecute the Church. A similar persecution occurred when the orthodox gospel spread to the Goths, in Spain. The Goths had converted from German paganism to the Arian cult which denied the deity of Christ; but when the king's son converted to orthodox Christianity, the king was so infuriated that he had his own son cut to pieces, which triggered an all-out assault on the Church. Similar scenarios happened in the Netherlands, India, Asia, and worldwide as the offense of the gospel spread worldwide.

Partakers of Christ's sufferings

Rather than being bewildered by the persecution, we are to ***rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings***. The idea is that it is an honor to be associated with our Lord, even to be associated with his suffering. For the suffering is but a moment and his glory is eternal, when his glory is revealed, we will ***be glad also with exceeding joy***. So it is James said, "*count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*" (Jm 1:2-4).

Busybody

It is very interesting that Peter lists being a ***busybody in other men's matters*** right alongside being a murderer, a thief, and an evildoer. Especially since being a busybody is almost a sport for some. A busybody (ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος, allotriepískopos), is one who meddles in other people's affairs, a mischief-maker, an agitator.

This specific term is only used here in the NT. Yet there are several other passages that speak to this behavior. Twice, Paul spoke to the Thessalonians about this matter: "*study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you*" (1 Thes 4:11). And again in his second letter:

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread (2 Thess 3:11-12).

Here busybodies (περιεργάζομαι, periergázomai), is Paul's play on words, those who work all around, who cause commotion; thus busybody. The idea is the same; they meddle in the affairs of others.

Meddling in other's affairs was seemingly just as popular then as it is now; for Paul also mentioned it to Timothy when giving instruction as to who should be allowed into the society of indigent widows who served the church and received support from the congregation.

the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Tim 5:11-13).

I suspect that what makes the busybody business as offensive as murder and evil-doing is that it springs from a proud and cruel heart that soothes itself by demeaning others. After meddling in another's affairs to discover small stories and petty scandals, the busybody's next step is to go about the pleasurable business of gossip.

However, lest we confuse the malicious activity of busybody versus the saintly activity of having genuine concern for our neighbor, Paul has also exhorted, "*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*" (Phil 2:4). Of course, the furthest thing from Paul's mind here is that of being a busybody. But when benevolence and Christian duty demand our concern about others, it requires the utmost sincerity. Our purposes must be compassion for the sick, the poor, the helpless, or the spiritual welfare and edification of the wayward. The motive is not to meddle and gossip, but to be of genuine service. The local church is to function as a family; and families support one another in love and honesty.

Verses 4:16-19

4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Not be ashamed

Peter had come a long way. Having once been ashamed of the Lord himself, albeit, for a brief moment of weakness, he knows of what he speaks. He had suffered the humiliation of his shame, but now he boldly proclaims the folly of such actions. Eventually, he would boldly face his death for his belief. The world seeks to ridicule and malign Christianity and biblical doctrines. In the modern world, despite the glaring dearth of evidence, the academic world attempts to paint you as an idiot if you accept the reality of a Creator and reject the insanity of the big bang and evolutions hypotheses, in which matter sprang into existence from nothing, and organic life arose from inorganic matter and then evolved into the intellect of mankind. Sadly, peer pressure has caused many professing Christians to be ashamed of the biblical teaching of creation and somehow attempt to accept both the secular view of evolution and the biblical view of creation. I shudder to think what they would do in the face of harsh persecution, when simple ridicule has them so scared.

We are not to be ashamed of our faith, our doctrines, our Lord, but rather, we are to ***glorify God on this behalf***. The statement is followed by the demonstrative conjunction for (ὅτι, hóti), which is causative and could also be translated, because. ***For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God***. The reason then that one is to give God glory on behalf of personal suffering is that judgment starts at home.

While we might be tempted to consider the chronological order of judgment, in which Christians stand in judgment at the Bema Seat of Christ before unbelievers are judged at the Great White Throne, I rather think that Peter is speaking of something entirely different. The term ***must begin*** (ἀρχομαι, árchomai) is the present middle imperative, thus indicating that this judgment is in the here and now. In that the context is clearly that of suffering and trials, it would appear that the judgment (κρίμα, kríma), here indicates the severe trials being suffered.

Given the juxtaposition between suffering for doing good versus suffering for doing wrong, which he has mentioned twice it would appear that Peter is referencing these trials, at least in part, to a form of judgment designed to purify the believer. This was definitely the case in Corinth:

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor 11:30-32).

This is not to say that trials and suffering are always caused by sin; for Peter has clearly stated that suffering is often without cause. But he does seem to be referencing the idea that judgment starts at home. It has been said that the storm falls on the hills before the valley. In the days of Judges, in the time of Ruth and Boaz, when Israel's disobedience brought them famine, there was yet bread in Moab (*Ru 1:1 see also Jer 25:29; Ex 9:1-7*).

In that his readers are Jews of the dispersion, it is very possible that Peter is telling them that if we (the Jews who believe) suffer like this, how bad shall it be for our Jewish brethren who do not believe? However, regardless of referencing the Jew of the dispersion or the Church at large, the principle holds: unlike the judgment of the wicked, which culminates in destruction; the judgment of the righteous serves to refine them, to purify them. So that, if we having been forgiven our sins are judged ***what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?***

Therefore he said, ***let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*** He is our Creator, our Judge, our redeemer, and our High Priest. As our Creator, he will be faithful to the design he has in view, to the purpose he has planned. He has created us for, and redeemed us to, a joyous eternal life with the honor of his fellowship. Although we experience misery and pain in the here and now, these are not part of the eternal life we shall enjoy with him. But that is not to say he has no concern for our current troubles; for we have a High Priest with intimate knowledge of our pain; so that, we can always come to him with confidence with an unwavering trust in his love and concern for our best interest.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:14-16).

He is also faithful to provide us comfort and grace in the midst of our pain: *“though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).*

Verses 5:1-4

^{5:1}The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: ²Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; ³Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

The elders

Peter now turns his attention to the elders. The apostolic model of local church government was quite different than most churches in the modern western world. The 1st Century local church was led by a select group of men identified by three terms, which seem to be used interchangeably: pastor (ποιμήν ποιμήν), bishop (ἐπίσκοπος epískopos), and presbyter or elder (πρεσβύτερος presbýteros). Borrowed from the idioms of their day, each term denotes a certain aspect of leadership. Pastor, speaks to the role of a tender shepherd. Bishop, signifies a business like function. Elder, refers to a wise counselor. These leaders in the early churches were a self-perpetuating, self-nominating, and self-disciplining body who provided their flocks with theological instruction, protected from heresy, and a mature example of Christian living.

The appointment and training of these leaders were also different than what it is today. It was not an easy thing to become an elder. To qualify for the appointment one had to be a man of proven character and spirituality, a man above reproach both

within and without the local church body. It was not a position to be taken lightly (*1 Tim 3*). From among those willing to commit, certain qualified men were chosen and nurtured for the role. It was not a popularity contest, nor was a leader selected simply because of his social status. Each congregation had a core of qualified elders trained in biblical theology and ministry. Today, we generally have one. We call him the pastor. Rather than growing this leader from within the church as was the early model, we examine the resumes of outsiders for hire.

Feed the flock

A primary function of early church leadership was to guard against heresy and to equip the saints. Church leaders not only exposed and denounced false teachings they also made it their priority to teach sound doctrine to the flock. Modern church leaders, even among those churches with sound theology, generally no longer do this. Although they will refute false teachings concerning Theology Proper (One God, the Trinity, etc.), they typically neglect those false teachings of practical theology that are more likely to invade their congregations. And spending quality time with the parishioners to teach doctrine and theology is something few church leaders even think of, much less accomplish. They are too overwhelmed with sermon preparation, administrative duties, program preparations, expansion strategies, and building plans.

To illustrate this point I cite a survey I conducted while doing doctoral work in seminary. I had been concerned for some time about the various leadership roles in our modern western evangelical churches. The title of my doctoral project was “The Pastoral Neglect to Provide Leading Laymen with a Basic Foundation in Theology.” To further research this topic I surveyed pastors, and the leading laymen of their choice, within numerous churches from a certain conservative and evangelical association throughout the states of Washington and Oregon.

I expected to find relatively few pastors providing theological and ministerial training to their lay leadership. Likewise, I expected to find a fair percentage of the lay leaders to be less than qualified for their task. However, the results were more staggering than I could have ever imagined. I had peeked behind the facade of neckties, choirs, sermons, beautiful buildings, and spirals reaching to the sky. I felt as though I had ripped the mask off a deeply rooted

and shameful ugliness. I had revealed an aspect of Western Evangelical Orthodoxy that is generally shrouded in pretense. I had uncovered an area about which most of us would rather plead ignorance or make excuses. Not willing to confront it face to face, analytically, and honestly, we choose simply to neglect it, and dutifully don our weekly Sunday vesture to mask the embarrassment.

What had I discovered? I found that although 97% of the leading layman regularly prepared and taught Bible classes, and 78% believed they were qualified to provide spiritual counsel, only 3% of their pastors provided them with hermeneutical training. Less than 20% provided some form of theological training, and only 7% of the pastors provided some kind of training in spiritual counseling.

Although they admitted to having very little training for these tasks, most of the lay leaders believed they were qualified. However, their ignorance betrayed itself at the end of the questionnaire. I asked them to answer three simple, but pertinent, theological questions. I didn't attempt to stump them by choosing particularly difficult topics. Rather, I chose subjects that have a special concern to anyone who teaches biblical classes or gives spiritual counsel. Put simply, I chose subjects that anyone doing what they did should know cold. First, "Why does God allow evil?" Second, "Define total depravity." And third, "In what way is man created in the image of God?"

I did not expect lengthy theological treatises or even biblical references. I merely wanted to see if these teachers had a general understanding of the things they were teaching. The results were astounding. Only 24% were able to answer the question as to the image of God. A mere 16% correctly answered why God allows evil, and no one, not one, could define the meaning of total depravity. Overall, these leading laymen, these spiritual advisors and pillars in their churches, had only 13.5% correct answers, and no one answered all three questions correctly.

Although not comprehensive or conclusive, this small research project had shed light on a great and shameful display of ignorance within the leadership of our local church bodies. Sadly, our churches are largely filled with leaders who have little or no training for the task set before them. We might say they are the modern Nicodemus. How is it, they are teachers of the church and do not know these things?

In this case, they did not know these things because their

pastors had not taught them. Not surprisingly, the survey among the pastors revealed that the majority viewed their teaching responsibility as a low item in the order of necessary weekly tasks. But this was not the case in the early local church model wherein the pastors understood their responsibility to nurture and train would-be leaders that they too could effectively teach others and fight the enemy with sound doctrine. This means theological training as well as training in ministry, character, and spirit.

Taking the oversight

The governance of these early congregations was different as well; far removed from either of the two extremes we see today; i.e. congregational rule, or papal rule, or even the various other modern forms of governance staggered somewhere in between. The church was a family in every respect. In a family, parents make decisions to direct family activities; it is not the collective vote of the siblings as in the congregational model, and parents are not aloof, untouchable icons on a pedestal as in the papal model. They are active participants in the family: teaching, leading by instruction and example, helping the children to make correct choices and sound decisions, providing loving discipline when necessary, teaching character and training them as they mature to become adults

prepared to raise families of their own.

But such hands-on ministry is foreign to many churches. Whether the congregation is large or small, a primary feature of modern church leadership is the management of the operation, the building, the facilities, the programs. Indeed, it seems the larger a congregation gets, the less hands-on ministry takes place; as it is replaced by programs and entertainment and flashy sermons that are often littered with comments that are theologically incorrect.

Not for filthy lucre

There is not much money in the ministry, nor should there be; Paul even made it a point to pay his own way. Yet then, as now, some find a way to turn ministry into a gold mine, so as to do exactly what Peter warned against. He also warned leaders about lording over God's heritage, which is the church, the chosen, the flock of believers. They belong to the Lord, not to the leadership. Sadly, this too is so often offended, especially among the wayward "Christian" cults that teach perverse versions of the gospel.

No doubt those who lead for profit and power shall have received their reward and their eternal future looks awfully bleak. I would seriously doubt their reception of a *crown of glory that fades not away*.

Verses 5:5-6

⁵*Likewise, you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.* ⁶*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*

Clothed with humility

Peter has already exhorted wives to submit to their husbands, servants to their masters, and citizens to their government, now he tells the young to submit to *the elder*. However, lest the progressive, politically correct amongst us object to this hierarchy, notice that he also adds, *Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility*. As such, submission and humility is not merely between the lesser authority to the greater authority or even simply between peers, but it is a mutual humility that flows downward as well from the greater authority to the lesser authority. So it is we read his previous exhortation to the elders: *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock (5:3)*. Was this not the lesson Jesus taught the disciples when he washed their feet?

What the progressive, politically correct, prideful heart fails to realize is that this humility and submission to authority, which Scripture demands, is not a matter of cowardliness or helplessness in the face of another's power, but a matter of respect for humanity in general, and for the order that God himself has set in place. The self-willed, self-centered progressive mind also fails to understand that just as God will hold the lesser authority accountable for submission to the greater authority, he will hold the greater authority accountable for the quality of leadership he has provided. Thus, *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb 13:17)*.

Then Peter addresses the primary problem with mankind—

the unwillingness to humble oneself *under the mighty hand of God*, which is a byproduct of pride. It is especially irksome for man to humble himself before God, so as to place his trust in him. We are self-willed and prideful beings; the idea of giving up control so as to let another, even our Creator, have first place, is a woeful concept. Herein, we find the only impetus for the absurd hypotheses of the big bang and evolution; for certainly there is nothing beyond conjecture to support either. But the teaching placates the rebellious, prideful heart of man, which objects to the notion of humility before the Creator. If man can somehow rationalize the idea that the universe and humanity is an accident, that there is no intelligent Creator; he is then free of the Creator's restraints and morality. He is free to pursue his progressive, politically correct ideals and his hedonistic passions.

But as proved time and again throughout history, this self-deceived worldview leads to an inevitable demise, as man's depraved heart rapidly escorts an unrestrained society into self-destruction. Paul addressed this very issue with the antediluvians.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Ro 1:19-22, 28-32)

Exalt you in due time

On the other hand, man's humility unto God provides the very thing that every human being is seeking: security, acceptance, hope, salvation. It is this humility that leads to the freedom and joy that man so desperately desires. ***Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.***

Verses 5:7-9

^{5:7}Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you. ⁸Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁹Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

He cares for you

God rejects the proud (as observed with the antediluvians) and leaves them to their own depravity, but the humble he invites into his confidence. Thus, if you are one who has humbled yourself before the Lord, it is your privilege to cast ***all your care upon him; for he cares for you.*** So it is we read,

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:14-16)

I am struck by three things in Peter's passage about the ever-present spiritual warfare we encounter on a daily basis: be alert, believe, and be comforted in the knowledge that you are not alone.

The exhortation to ***be sober*** is something beyond merely not being a drunkard; it connects to the previous phrase, ***Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you.*** So that even in the midst of battle we are to be free of the anxiety that would inhibit clear thinking and sound decisions. The lion's roar is meant to instill fear and confusion into the hearts and minds of its prey. Peter tells us to expect an attack, but also to trust our Lord and to stay calm, to think clearly and to take appropriate defensive actions. We must remember that greater is he that us than he that is in the world (*1 Jn 4:4*).

It seems Peter is using the term *the devil* to speak of the kingdom of evil. Unlike our God, Satan himself is not omnipresent, and thus cannot be stocking every believer at all times; yet he has a host of subjects in his employ (both natural and supernatural) and they do their best to devour whom they can. So that, being alert, *sober and vigilant*, speaks to being aware of the snares placed before us by evil humans as well as the snares of Satan and his minions.

The comfort found in *knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren* offers various benefits. We know this is a burden universal to all believers and not merely the result of God's anger with us. We are encouraged to endure and overcome via the grace of God, even as others have. We find strength in knowing that we are not alone, that others experience the same trials.

There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Verses 5:10-14

¹⁰*But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.* ¹¹*To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* ¹²*By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand.* ¹³*The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, salutes you; and so doth Marcus my son.* ¹⁴*Greet you one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Peace be with you

Peter closes much as he began by referencing several important biblical doctrines: God's grace, the elect, salvation through Jesus Christ, suffering for the faith, the believer's holiness, the believer's strength which is bestowed by God, the believer's comfort which is provided by his relationship with God, and the eternal glory and power of our Creator. And finally, he pleads with them once again to love one another.

Endnotes

¹ Zeilinger, A. 2006. Spooky action and beyond. Interview by *Die Weltwoche*, January 3, 2006 <http://www.signandsight.com/features/614.html> (accessed August 12, 2007).

² Overbye, D. 2006. New tests of Einstein's 'spooky' reality. *International Herald Tribune*, January 10, 2006. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/12/28/healthscience/sneinstein.php> (accessed August 15, 2007).

³ On the Gregorian calendar Nisan usually falls in March–April.

⁴ Because the Jewish calendar follows a 360 day year, versus our modern Julian calendar of 365.25 days, conversion is required. To make the conversion we calculate the actual number of days for the prophecy in the Jewish calendar: thus, 69 weeks of years is 173,880 days. This equals 483 years in the Jewish calendar, or 476 years in the Julian calendar.

⁵ From 445 BC to AD 32 (minus 1 for year 0) is 173,880 days.

⁶ Matthew Henry's *Whole Commentary on the Bible*.

⁷ An Apology and Unification Theory for the Reconciliation of Physical Matter and Metaphysical Cognizance. *Answers Research Journal* 1; www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/bios (accessed Mar 10, 2017).