
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 are significant differences between the two. Whereas Paul explains various doctrines in-depth, Peter merely makes a brief reference to them and quickly moves the argument along. But even more convincing is the ample evidence, which 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 very sensitive topics 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 subjects 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. The word of God never changes; and seemingly, neither does the erroneous ways of mankind, which keeps repeating the same erroneous behavior from one generation to the next.

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 1:1-2¹

^{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. The 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 a fluid construct, partly rooted in the past and partly determined by current popular use; 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 use of “bad” in certain pop cultures, in which it means “extremely good”. So that, “Look at your bad self”, would be interpreted as praise for one’s accomplishments. So it is that the

¹ Unless otherwise stated, we are quoting the KJV 2000.

historical use of NT Greek terms must be understood before we can go about translating or making doctrine.

The term apostle, as used in the early Christian culture, is such a term. The common term came to assume a specific meaning within Christendom. 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 (Lu 6:13, 9:1).

Although the term apostle continued to reference others doing missionary work, such as Barnabas (1Co 9:5ff; Ac 14:4), when used of the twelve whom Jesus specifically appointed, it spoke of their office as well as their purpose. So it is in John's description of the Holy City Jerusalem, "*And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*" (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, who subsequently is accepted by the other apostles and becomes the primary theologian of the Church (Ac 22:6ff; 1Co 1:1; 15; Gal 2:8; 2Co 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 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” (1Pe 2:6). What then is Jesus speaking of when he calls Peter the rock upon which the Church would be built, and the one to whom the keys of the kingdom would be given?

The answer is found in Peter’s evangelical efforts. Peter was the first to preach the gospel to the Jews (Ac 4); the first to preach to the Samaritans (Ac 8:25); and finally, the first to preach to the Gentiles (Ac 10:1). 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. Jesus said as much when later he told the group of disciples,

Verily I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mt 18:18)

To the strangers

Although his message is ultimately designed for universal consumption, much of the early Church consisted of Jewish converts. As such, in this letter Peter is specifically addressing those Jewish believers who lived in the five provinces of Asia Minor. They were remnants of the dispersion (διασπορά, diasporá), here translated as ***scattered***. These five churches had been founded by Paul, who, like John, had also written letters to some of them.

These converts were descendants of some of the many thousands of Jews who had been taken captive by various invaders.

- Several Assyrian campaigns against Israel start about 860 BC
- Ten Tribes captive by Assyria (722 BC)
- 10,000 Babylonian captivities about 597 BC
- Jew return from Babylon about 516 BC
- Alexander the Great captured Jerusalem, & Ptolemy I inherited it (332 BC)
- Antiochus III the Great of Syria (about 204 BC) resettled

about 2,000 families

- 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 Judea 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 many OT prophecies. While the dispersion (in its several stages) was the result of disobedience and their ultimate rejection of Messiah, their return to the Promised Land is in preparation for the return of Messiah. Although rejected by his own, Jesus 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.

For you are a holy people unto the LORD your God: the LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; (De 7:6-94)

Here are a few verses foretelling Israel's dispersion and their return in the last days.

Therefore say, Thus says the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the nations, and although I have scattered

them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus says the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, 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)

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

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there. (Jer 31:8)

And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isa 11:12)

In 1917, nearly two thousand years after Titus ran the Jews from Judea, British Field Marshal Edmund Allenby won the ancient Holy Land 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 led by Menachem Begin attempted to force the British troops from the region. Then, in 1948, the United Nations proposed, and the Jews accepted, the division of the region 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 trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth are gathered together against it. (Zec 12:2-3)

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 and for the world at large. 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. Nevertheless, the current efforts and the global obsession for peace in the Middle East are not without meaning; 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, 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 God saves them from the invasion of several nations (*Eze 38-39*)], will reject this false messiah. The next 3½ years will culminate in a 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*). Two-thirds of God’s chosen people and many 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)

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, They are my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. (Zec 13:9)

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 (Ro 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1Th 1:4; 1Pe 1:2; 2Pe 1:10). In the Romans chapter 9, 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 (*Ac 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 (*Ps 139; 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; to him, a day is as a thousand years. We might say 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 experience of time and space, and therefore understanding 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 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. (2Pe 3:10)

What then is the eternal reality?

As for our current reality, i.e. this physical universe; studies in quantum physics have determined 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 in their purely material universe.

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 bound 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 the Creator 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; our own 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 for 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 achieve or 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, and makes it very clear that sanctification is not of works.

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. (2Th 2:13-14)

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)

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 has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (Ro 3:25)

That being said, I would like to make a couple distinctions between Judeo-Christian theology and every other theology and philosophy in

the world. Let's start with a riddle. What do atheists, world religions, and the prevailing modern scientific culture all have in common?

The answer is the biblical 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 does good, no, not one. (Ps 14:2-3)

None of them can tolerate the idea of total depravity; the doctrine that mankind cannot fix itself, cannot save itself. This is offensive and cuts deep into their pride. Each of their theologies or philosophies adheres to the belief that mankind is able to reach its full potential: Be it spiritual, intellectual, or physical. Therefore, they also deny the authority of Scripture, the deity and resurrection of Christ and even the notion that mankind's need of a savior.² The thought of humbling themselves before the almighty Creator, to admit helplessness, to ask for mercy, offends their prideful hearts.

This common feature (the rejection of total depravity) is so integral to each, that when expedient, they have no problem banding together even in the face of their glaring differences to spew hatred and false charges against the Judeo-Christian world; they exemplify the old adage, "the enemy of my enemy is many friend".

Although mankind does possess goodness (in that we are created in the image of God), at the same time (due to the sinful nature, which our race acquired from father Adam) we are inherently evil.

The doctrine of total depravity enlightens Judeo-Christian theology to the reality that salvation and sanctification come only from God and by the grace of God. Yet every world religion, without exception, believes 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. But the spirituality the seek can never be realized for Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me, . . . he who hates me, hates my Father also*" (Jn 14:6;

² Although Israel rejected Jesus, they do confirm the deity of Messiah and soon they will realize and accept that Jesus is Messiah.

15:23). Every one of the world's religions is a purveyor of false doctrines and false gods.

Father . . . Spirit . . . Jesus

Although Scripture does not use the term Trinity, Peter definitely 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 unique 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 (*De 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; Ro 8:11; Rev 1:8, 11, 21:6*). Divinity, godhood, is clearly attributed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So it is that Jesus commanded the apostles to “*Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” (*Mt 28:19*)

These three persons constitute the Godhead, they and they alone share one 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 sealed container and remove all air pressure so as to create a vacuum, the boiling point of the water decreases as does the temperature of the water. As the water temperature reaches zero degrees Celsius an amazing thing occurs. The water is simultaneously present in its three forms: liquid, solid ice crystals, 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 and it only last for a short period of time. But it does help us to better understand, if only slightly, that our God is three distinct persons all of whom share the same nature, they are the one true God. So it is that the one true God can use the plural

noun for God (אֱלֹהִים 'elohiym) as say, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Gen 1:26); and yet also reveal that God is singular: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD*” (De 6:4).

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. (1Ti 3:16)

Verses 1:3-5

^{1:3}Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according with 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’ existence is eternal. Long before the virgin birth, long before the creation of our physical Universe. Jesus is God, the second person of the eternal triune Godhead.

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, the eternal second person of the Godhead, and creator of all things, entered his creation as the only begotten of the Father; he was not created by the Father. He is the only begotten (μονογενής, monogenes, (Jn 1:14, 18, 3:16, 3:18), meaning there is none other in existence. 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 the lengthy conversation between Jesus and the rebellious Jewish leaders in which Jesus clearly claims to be their God, the same "I AM" that spoke with Abraham and Moses.

Then said Jesus again unto them, "I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: where I go, you cannot come."

Then said the Jews, "Will he kill himself?" because he said, "Where I go, you cannot come."

And he said unto them, "You are from beneath; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I AM [he]³, you shall die in your sins."

Then said they unto him, Who are you?

And Jesus said unto them, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." They understood not that

³ Literally "if you believe not that I am", the pronoun, he, is placed there by the translators.

he spoke to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I AM [he]"⁴, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." As he spoke these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and were never in bondage to any man: how say you, You shall be made free?"

Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's descendant; but you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father."

They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said unto them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father."

Then said they to him, "We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God."

Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father, you would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do you not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in

⁴ Literally "if you believe not that I am", the pronoun, he, is placed there by the translators.

the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

And because I tell you the truth, you believe me not. Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God hears God's words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God."

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, "Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and have a demon?"

Jesus answered, "I have not a demon; but I honor my Father, and you do dishonor me. And I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death."

Then said the Jews unto him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and you say, If a man keeps my saying, he shall never taste of death. Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom make you yourself?"

Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honors me; of whom you say, that he is your God: Yet you have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

Then said the Jews unto him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM."

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (Jn 8:21-59)

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 the temporal physical consequences of pain and death, he would be spared the ultimate punishment of spiritual death and eternal separation from God.

As foreordained, even before creation, via the second person of the Godhead (the only begotten Son of God), the Creator himself would take upon himself the requisite punishment which justice demanded. Although his creation—these beings created in God's own image—deserved death; he would enter their world, he would become like them, he would become human 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." (1Co 15:45)

This then is the gospel; it is our hope and our glory. And it is made possible only by God's abundant mercy.

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 attempting to blame God for our pain, we should be praising him for his mercy and cry out for even more.

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 to offer a living and eternal hope for every believer, an inheritance as sons of God; ***begotten again*** via the Spirit of God, believer's spirits are now alive unto God.

It should be noted that the term used for *begotten* (αναγεννησας, anagennēsas) is slightly different from the term *the only begotten* (μονογενης, monogenēs) 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; likewise, 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" cult⁵ rejects the deity of Christ and his victorious death

⁵ Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, even certain modern day major denominations, which no longer support the deity and vicarious death and resurrection of Christ, but place their hope in their own goodness and their perceived sense of God's since of fairness irrespective of Scripture, which they have also rejected as inerrant.

and resurrection. For Satan knows 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 evil deeds and his denial that God even exists. 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 (*Ro 5:15, 6:23; Jn 3:16*). Being a moral person, a good husband, father, employee, citizen, or giving donations, going to church, pursuing 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 every believer; but such actions are not the avenue to secure a relationship with God. It is only after placing one's trust in Jesus and the spiritual rebirth is experienced that the Holy Spirit begins to work within the believer; thereby leading him/her into righteousness, goodness, morality, etc.

Indeed, 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 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 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. (1Co 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 made clear by Jesus,⁶ but that disobedience can, at times, be the cause of our troubles. Paul and John both discuss possible results of believer's sin.

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 judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (1Co 11:28-30)

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. (1Jn 5:16)

Peter himself alludes to this later in this letter.

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: Let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. (1Pe 3:10-11)

Solomon wrote:

My son, forget not my law; but let your heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you: bind them about your neck; write them upon the table of your heart: So shall you find favor and good understanding in the

⁶ John 9:1-3 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Teacher, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths. (Pr 3:1-6)

Yet it is also true that much of our suffering is simply due to the fact that we are human beings, cursed with physical death and all the troubles precipitating this finality. Then too, there are the troubles we face due to persecution.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. (2Tim 3:12-13)

While we might not be able to escape troubles in this life, which might arise from various sources, it is possible to avoid at least one of those possible sources—harboring sin in our lives.

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 is saying: *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 broke out in Rome, which destroyed about 71% of the city, 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 made 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 were on the rise.

We see this already happening years earlier when Demetrius the silversmith stirred up the crowd against Paul for making converts and disrupting the economy and their culture.

So that not only this our craft is in danger to be discredited; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater. (Ac 19:29)

Now, about 5 or 10 years later, sporadic outbreaks against Christians were on the rise. The Empire brought six charges against Christians. To justify their persecution, the charges were based on a wholesale distortion of Christian doctrines. They charged them with:

- *Cannibalism*, because the sacrament of communion referenced the body and blood of Christ.
- *Orgies of lust*, because the common meal was called the love feast.
- *Tampering with family relationships*, because conversions often caused families to split.

- *Atheism*, because they would not worship the images of the various gods.
- *Politically unpatriotic*, because they would not say Caesar was lord.
- *Incendiaries*, because they foretold the end of the world in flames.

The historian, Suetonius, called Christians a malefic and superstition class.

Nothing has changed

As Solomon observed, there is *“The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecc 1:9).*

Happy to live in spiritual darkness, the world hates the light of truth shining upon it, exposing its evil deeds and convicting its conscience. For the last two thousand years Christians in various countries have suffered government sanctioned persecutions. For the last several centuries most of the Western world has had the good fortune to enjoy freedom of worship. However, in recent years, this freedom has been systematically eroding. Due to the heightened allure of darkness, hedonism, immorality, and the lust of narcissism in these last days, Christianity is swiftly becoming a great offense to the general populace. As the return of Christ grows ever closer we must expect the intensity of their disgust and hatred to strengthen and spread exponentially, even among the once so-called Christian nations.

Even a few decades ago, who would have believed the Bible would be viewed as a book of hate and intolerance, or that modern Christians would experience false charges similar to Rome’s indictment of the early Church? Yet it is so, increasing numbers now view Christians as haters, as evil people who despise women, as rebels against the government, and as those who disregard science.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasures more

than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2Ti 3:1-5)

Describing these perilous times of the last days before his return, among other things, Jesus warned,

They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. (Lu 21:12)

Some of our Christian brothers attempt to deal with the world's disgust toward them via legislation, but they are misguided. Did not Jesus make it clear we would be hated by the world just as it hated him?

The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (Jn 15:20-21)

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 (v 22), no amount of legislation can ever make an unregenerate society ever passively accept and live peacefully with the purveyors of righteousness. “*And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not*” (Jn 1:5). The term shines, (φαίνει, phaínei), is in the present tense meaning it is still shining and the darkness continues not to understand (κατέλαβεν, katélaben) or grasp it with the mind. Due to their darkened hearts and minds, they are simply unable to comprehend the concept of righteousness.

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. (2Co 4:3-6)

To the natural man and woman, the things of the Spirit, the gospel of Christ, is foolishness (*1Co 2:14*). 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 we impose upon everyone with whom we share the gospel. God winks upon the innocent, but the knowledgeable are held responsible (*Ac 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? (2Co 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.

Abraham and Job are excellent examples of faith and responding to God with the little knowledge they possessed. We are not certain of Job's time in ancient history, but it's very likely he had a rather limited knowledge of God, possibly no more than the testimony of creation and the ancient stories passed down from generation to generation after the flood. Yet when Satan tested him to the extreme, he 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 become a great nation and be given a homeland. And through him would come forth the one who would bring redemption and blessing to the families of the earth. Shem (a survivor of the great flood) was Abraham's 8x great-grandfather and lived till Isaac was 50 years old; so it is possible that Shem served as mentor to both Abraham and Isaac.

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. (Ro 1:18-20)

Speaking of the antediluvians, whose circumstance we are told will be replicated in the last days (Lu 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. (Ro 1:21-32)

How much more severe will the judgment be in these last days, for those 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 (2Co 2:15-16). It would have been better for them had they never heard the gospel; for once they hear it they're 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 encouraged the readers to be of good cheer and to remain steadfast in the faith; for although they suffer it ***might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.***

It’s natural for children to love and honor their parents. Is there anything children want more than the praise and respect of their parents? What a sad and terrible deed is 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 effect conversion, to provide us the strength to flee from sinful desires and behaviors, to improve our character, our motives, our actions; but he does it with love, not condescension. And he does expect such conversion. While he accepts us into the fold as the sinners we are, he also demands our conversion. We are to die to the old life, the old man, the old nature, and pursue righteousness. Fortunately, he stands beside us and his Spirit dwells within to strengthen character and to guide our steps.

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 us 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 through the voyage of life.

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 without 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

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. Today, with the Lord's first coming behind us and now being so close to his second coming, we have a more complete picture so that the details of coming events seem much clearer. 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. (1Ti 3:16)

Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall split in two, toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. (Zec 14:3-4)

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, (Ro 16:23)

Even Satan was not privy to this 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. (1Co 2:7-8)

The princes of the world, of whom Paul speaks, would have been the Jewish and Roman leaders at the time, and 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 outside of his glorious plan (Ro 13:1ff; 2Co 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 bride. 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. This topic has spiked their interest and they are desperately seeking to understand it.

It seems to me that what puzzles the angels and what they are desperately seeking to comprehend is the familial love that prompted Jesus to be robed in humanity and to sacrifice himself even to the point of being forsaken by the God as he became sin for us. The strength and driving force of this love must be a foreign concept to them who cannot procreate. Being individual creations, angels can have no 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 them, 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 Therefore 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; 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But 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.

It's important to realize exactly what the ***Therefore*** is connected to; for it tells us why it is that we should be watchful and prepared.

“*Therefore*” echoes back to vv 3-9; specifically to the phrases

“Begotten us again to a living hope . . . unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: . . . Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” therefore, be watchful and prepare yourselves.

Gird up the loins

The idea behind the phrase ***gird up the loins*** 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.

Jesus used this expression when he said, “Let your waists be girded about, and your lamps burning” (Lu 12:35). When Elijah ran before the chariot from Carmel to Jezreel “he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab” (1 Kg 18:46). And the Lord’s rebuked Job, “*Gird up now your loins like a man*” (Job 38:3) seems to imply yet another connotation, that of pulling it together, taking charge of your self and performing your duty”. Each of these ideas fit Peter’s passage. Pull yourself together, prepare for action, and be vigilant at all times.

Loins of your mind

Here, Peter used the term *diánoia* διάνοια for mind. It’s different than *noûs* νοῦς, which sometimes is also translated as mind or understanding. But *diánoia* speaks to more than mere intellectual faculties. It speaks of that which guides and directs our conduct, our deepest innermost thoughts. It’s used thirteen times in NT: translated nine times as mind, such as in, “*love God with all your mind*” Mt 22:37”; one time as imagination, “*he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*” (Lu 1:51); and three times as understanding, as in the following passage where Paul employs both terms.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind (knowledge, intellect, noûs), having the understanding (deep thoughts, diánoia) darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ; If so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the

truth is in Jesus: That you put off concerning the former way of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind (knowledge, intellect, nous); And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph 4:17-24)

Be sober

While the term sober (νήφω *nēphō*) certainly speaks to the avoidance of drunkenness, its use is metaphorical all seven times it appears in the NT, so that it has something of a deeper meaning. It's translated twice as watch and five times as sober. By extension, in its figurative form, it speaks of being discreet, alert, on watch, vigilant. Here, as a present active participle (νήφοντες *nēphontes*), it means being in the state of alertness; thus, "being sober" with the literal idea of having self control, having clarity of mind.

*But the end of all things is at hand: be therefore sober minded (σωφρονέω *sōphronēō*), and watch (νήφοντες) unto prayer. (1Pe 4:7)*

*But you watch (νήφοντες *nēphontes*) in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fully carry out your ministry. (2Ti 4:5)*

*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober (νήφοντες *nēphontes*), and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (1Pe 1:13)*

*Be sober (νήψατε *nēpsate*), be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: (1Pe 5:8)*

The idea is similar to Paul's illustrious image of a soldier prepared and dressed for battle (Eph 6:11-18).

By implication, as we are commanded to "be holy in all manner of conduct" (1Pe 1:15), we are to be sober-minded in all of life's opinions and practices; even concerning our own self image; such as

Moses, the most humble servant of the Lord; to not think more of ourselves than we ought. Although using a different term (which we also translate as sober) Paul expressed this very thought.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly (σωφρονέω sōphronéō, sound mind, sane), according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Ro 12:3)

In the final passage where this term is used Paul's is discussing the last days, the rapture of the saints, and the terrible Day of the Lord that will follow. He is warning them to be on guard, be awake and vigilant and to understand the signs of the time. Like never before, this warning has application for our current generation.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch (γρηγορεύω grēgoreúō) and be sober (νήφοντες nēphontes). For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober (νήφωμεν nēphomen), putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, (1Th 5:6-9)

Hope to the end

Here, Peter is commanding his readers to hope (ἐλπιστατε elpisate) using an active, aorist, imperative. Peter is saying you must set your sights on the grace that will be received at Christ's appearance.

Yet another term worthy of mention is the adverb end (τελειως teleios). It has the idea of completely, perfectly, without wavering. In this context it could modify either hope or sober. Connected to hope we have "hope perfectly" or "hope completely", such as hope without doubting; connected to sober we have "perfectly sober" or "completely sober", such as "utterly vigilant". Due to Peter's writing style of commonly placing the verb before the adverb, most modern translators believe it is connected to sober; however, grammatically and theologically, either is correct.

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***. The term for "to be brought" is a present passive participle, which is picturing the process, "being brought". It's a reference to the revelation, "*the appearing of Jesus Christ*" (v 7). At first, the idea of the grace being brought to us

might seem strange; but then we realize the terms of grace and gift stem from the same root word (χαριτος, charitos). 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*” (Ro 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?" (1Co 15:51-55)

This grace is the gift Jesus brings with him: the manifestation of eternal life and our transformation into celestial beings. This promise is the hope 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. (1Th 4:14-18)

Not fashioning yourselves cording to the former lusts

The phrase “*fashioning yourselves*” (συσχηματίζομενοι syschēmatízomenoi) a present middle or passive participle of *to form together, to conform*. If read as a middle voice, it’s “*do not fashion yourselves*”; if read as a passive voice, it’s “*do not allow yourselves to be fashioned*”. Either way, it’s basically another command, and it is

rare; actually on appearing one other time in the NT.

And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Ro 12:2)

Former lusts

Created in the image of God, we possess the attribute of freewill; 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 each us: one good and one not good. 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. (Ro 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 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 toddler 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)

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

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 to make us purely good; nor is there any degree of goodness that can please our Creator so as to persuade him to overlook our filthiness. It's 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?*" (Ro 7:24).

Then, after crying out in despair over his wretched condition the apostle gives us the answer to his dilemma and to ours. 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. (Ro 7:25-8:2)

Because of the vicarious death and resurrection of Christ the Spirit of God 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 not to conform ourselves according to the former lusts we pursued in our ignorance; but we are to pursue holiness and to fashion ourselves after Christ. This is conversion, and it is not an option. God accepts us as the sinners we are, but then he demands conversion. He demands that we put away the fleshly lusts that war against the soul (1Pe 2:11).

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 soon as the last days rapidly approach, they will be converted. They are God's chosen people and he has not forgotten his promise (Zec 12:9-10).

Be ye holy

Yet another command when Peter wrote *be* (γενήθητε genethete) *holy*. This passive imperative is a command directed to you in which you are not the active doer, but rather the co-operator and recipient of someone else's doing, and yet you still retain responsibility. A classic instance is Paul's command to be transformed.

And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Ro 12:2)

Paul's present imperative middle/passive command, "be not conformed" or "do not conform yourselves", can only be achieved via the power of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Peter's command to be holy can only be achieved in the same manner. So that it is God who both requires and provides the means for nonconformity and holiness; but at the same time the believer is responsible for denying the old man and submitting to the Spirit and accessing the power he provides.

That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph 4:22-24)

The term holy (ἅγιος hágios) means to cut off, to be separate. The concept of God as holy speaks to his being separate from creation. When applied to man the idea is to be set aside, separate from the world of sin. To be a saint: sacred, pure, morally blameless, consecrated, chaste, and innocent. The ceremonial Mosaic Law was given to reinforce this idea of sacredness and separation from the world: e.g. priest's clothing, actions, rituals, feast and Sabbath days. But once Christ appeared and fulfilled these Mosaic typologies that foreshadowed him; he fulfilled the covenant he made with Abraham that "*in your descendants shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;*" (Ge 22:18). Therefore, he established a new covenant.

Who also has made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. (2Co 3:6)

In this new covenant, unlike Israel who was to keep themselves separate from the nations around them, believers are to go forth into the nations and spread the gospel of redemption. Yet, believers are to remain spiritually holy; in the world as a pilgrim, spiritually separated from its ways and customs, separated from the old manner of life: *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1Jn 2:16).*

Of course, we cannot be holy completely until we finally unite with our Lord and exchange this terrestrial body—to which our sinful nature is securely fastened—for our celestial body. 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 see him and receive our celestial bodies;
- 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 man by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is practical holiness to which Peter is speaking. As believers, born again and the Holy Spirit dwelling within, our spirits are alive unto God, 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.

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 misquoted 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, taking up our cross

daily and following Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Alternate Translation

In my desire to show how verses 13-15 connect to verses 4-9) and to highlight the three commands Peter has in this passage, I've provided an alternative translation, which is a mixture of both the literal word for word and the dynamic equivalence approach.

¹³Therefore (because you are begotten to an eternal inheritance and that the trials of your faith might find praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ vv 4-9) having girded up the loins of your innermost thoughts, being perfectly vigilant, you must set your hope in the grace being brought to you upon the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves (or allowing yourselves to be fashioned) according to the former desires in your ignorance: ¹⁵But as he who has called you is holy, you must become holy in all manner of life; ¹⁶because it has been written, you shall become holy; for I am holy.

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 your 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 several different judgments mentioned in Scripture; each has a specific purpose; the judgment of:

- The world's sins at the cross (Jn 12:31; 1Jn 2:2).
- The nations at the return of Christ (Mt 25:32).
- Israel at the return of Christ (Eze 20:37).

- Angels after Christ's 1000 years reign (Jude 1:6).
- Great White Throne (Rev 20:11ff).
- Ourselves by ourselves (1Co 11:31).
- Believers by believers by moral law (5:11-13).
 - Beware; we are not to judge fellow believers outside of moral law (Jas 4:11-12).
 - Beware; we are not to judge unbelievers by moral law (Ro 7:1-2).
- Believers' works punished in this life (Heb 10:30-31; 1Jn 5:15-17).

It is this last judgment to which Peter is speaking. It's often called the bema seat of Christ, wherein all believers will be rewarded for their works and Peter reasons that we should consider this awesome event with fear.

Although rewards will be won and lost at this judgment (2Co 5:9-11), Peter seems to have something more somber in mind. The appeal is not based so much on the potential lost rewards that might be suffered (which thought almost seems interjected as a sidebar), 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 victory over those sins that our fallen nature we holds so dearly.

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 God's favorites. When Miriam and Aaron complained that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman and attempted to place themselves on the same level and authority as Moses because the Lord had also spoken with them, the Lord's rebuke was swift and severe.

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)

Then Miriam was stricken with leprous, but Moses pleaded with the Lord and she was cured after seven days.

Moses was clearly one of God's favorites. However, our text is speaking of judgment and God's righteousness will not allow his favoritism to interfere. He is ***without respect of persons***. As such, even Moses, God's favored servant, gets no respect when it comes to judgment. After freeing Israel from Egypt and leading them through the desert for forty year, receiving the Law, performing numerous miracles, and even speaking face to face with the Lord, Moses was not allowed to cross into the Promised Land because of his one disobedience sparked by his anger.

God told Moses to gather the people and to speak to the rock so that water would come forth. But once he assembled the throng, in his anger toward their rebellion, he struck the rock a couple time with his staff to make the water flow. At first it might seem trifle to us; but then we must assume 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 to expose a natural spring).

God does not hold favorites when it comes to passing judgment. Moses, David, and Israel all suffered the consequences of the disobedience. So too we shall we. Although we have salvation in Christ we often suffer the consequences of our sinful actions in this life. Paul warned the Corinthians that some of them were sick because of their sin and John warned that some actually died early

because of their sin.

For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (1Co 11:29-30)

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. (1Jn 5:16)

After this life, everyone will stand in judgment. The godly grandmother, the rich tycoon, the apostle, the Sunday school teacher, the murderer, the deacon, Moses and David, everyone must appear before Christ to give an answer for themselves. Christians will stand at the bema seat of Christ receiving or losing rewards. However, unbelievers will stand in condemnation at the Great White Throne, wherein none shall escape 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, greedy 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 station in life (*Jude 14-16*). This is the man who looks down at women as if they were not his equal, the racist who believes he is superior to other ethnic groups, the socialite who sees herself as a cut above the average population, the wealthy who envision themselves as something more worthy than the poor. These are all self deceived narcissists harboring the self destructive sin of respecter of persons. Thus, the Lord commanded the Judges of Israel,

You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; (De 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. (Pr 14:20-21, 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 selfish motives, and 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. He mentions it four times in this letter (1:17, 2:17, 3:2, 15). As King Solomon stated, the fear of God has major implications in our personal lives.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding (Pr 9:10).

But it is much more than this. Solomon knew this answered what is likely the most asked question in the history of humanity: What is the meaning of life? The answer: Fear God and obey his commands.

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)

When we fear God and keep his commands, the empty void deep within our hearts that searches for meaning, that feeling of being somehow incomplete, is satiated.

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.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. . . . And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Ro 3:10-18)

Paul is not complaining that unbelievers do not conform to biblical ethics and morality; and he is not even preaching against sin, per se;

rather, he is merely observing the human condition, and arguing apart from trusting in the grace of God for the propitiation of our sins by the blood of Jesus, we are no different, for we are them.

What then? are we better than they? No, in no way: . . . As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (Ro 3:9-10)

Earlier, in a similar passage after a detailed portrayal of man's vile fallen nature in Chapter 1, Paul reminded his readers that but for the grace of God, they are no different.

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judge: for in what you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge do the same things. . . . Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. (Ro 2:1-4)

Because only the righteous truly fear God, only the righteous find the answers to life's meaning and true happiness. Of course the only righteousness anyone has is that which God has graciously imputed to them; the righteousness that is imputed to all believers—all who are chosen, called to salvation. It is a very humbling reality, to be among the chosen, for which we shall forever praise the Lord.

For even to this were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously: Who his own self bore 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. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1Pe 2:21-25)

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)

Solomon also gave us the answer to what is likely the second most asked question in the history of humanity: How do I find

happiness? The answer: Be content and enjoy the blessings God has provided, however meager they might be.

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. (Ecc 2:24)

Men and women literally spend their lifetimes pursuing happiness. Each does it in their own way. Some seek it in the excess adrenaline flowing through their veins in the face of some risky activity such as mountain climbing, skydiving, driving race cars, etc.; some seek happiness by pursuing one relationship after another; some think they'll find it in riches, and spend every waking moment working to increase their bank account; yet others take the opposite tact and devoid themselves of earthly goods to pursue a presumed spiritual journey woefully devoid of Christ and thereby devoid of the real spiritual fulfillment they seek.

Whatever one pursues in their search for happiness, as Solomon (who had done it all) realized, they must fail, for the temporary pleasures fade as quickly as they came: *"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and like grasping the wind"* (Ecc 1:14). Paul spoke to this issue of happiness and contentment as well when giving advise to his disciple Timothy.

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 clothing let us be with these things content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into 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. (1Ti 6:6-10)

Happiness can never be achieved if we do not, firstly, fear God and keep his commandments, and secondly, simply appreciate the blessing he has provided. When we do this, God fills our heart with meaning and joy and happiness. To this regard Peter began this letter by addressing the unspeakable joy his readers experienced even in the midst of persecution (1Pe 1:3-9).

Some foolish individuals prefer to think of God as someone or something like a fuzzy teddy bear to be cuddled so as to inspire feelings of pleasure and contentment. They don't believe anyone so kind and loving should be feared. But such an image of God is found nowhere 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 loving and kind, but it does negate the warped concept that some individuals have about God and love.

Love, as depicted in Scripture, is selflessness (1Co 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.

These six things does the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren. (Pr 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.

One final thought concerning the fear of the Lord. Setting aside love as an emotion (for true love is something more than emotion, it is also devotion and sacrifice); fear is the strongest emotion mankind has. In the presence of fear all other emotions stand down; there is no room for them 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. Although the redeemed truly stand in awe and fear of God as the ultimate power and authority over all creation, at the same time (due to his mercy), God is the greatest calm, comfort, and safety for the redeemed.

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

The precious blood of Christ . . . Foreordained

God's 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 sacrifice 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).

Jesus' self-sacrifice was more than mere physical death; more than the intense and cruel pain he suffered. God 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 (1Jn 2:2). To achieve this, Jesus took upon himself the thing that is the very antithesis of his 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*” (2Co 5:21). This mystery confuses the angels, and even the redeemed scarcely understand or appreciate its significance. The second person of the triune godhead took upon himself the sins of the world as the Father and the Holy Spirit turn away. 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)?

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

1:22Seeing 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: **23**Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. **24**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: **25**But 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 (ἡγνικότες hēgnikotes) carries the same connotation as holy; it is from the same root word (ἁγνός hagnós). What must be observed 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: 1) Positional holiness, wherein God sets us aside for himself; 2) Practical holiness, wherein we are active agents working in concert with the Holy Spirit; and 3) Future holiness, when we shall be in possession of our new celestial bodies and forever without sin.

Here Peter seems to reference both the moment of positional holiness and the ongoing aspect of practical holiness. The perfect active participle (ἡγνικότες *hēgnikotes*) 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 different Greek terms; however, in the Greek different words highlight particular nuances of this mysterious and special relationship we hold between each other and which springs from an inexplicable source harbored deep within our hearts. Here, Peter uses two very prominent terms in conjunction, so as one is to encourage the other: (φιλαδελφίαν *philadelphian*) which speaks to a strong fraternal affection, dearly love, a brotherly love, friendship and kindness; and (ἀγαπήσατε *agapēsate*) denoting a social or moral sense, a sacrificial love. But Peter goes a step further than merely using these terms; he sees fit to modify them.

He argues that love (*philadelphian*) is to be “*unfeigned*” (ἀνυπόκριτος *anypókritos*); that is, sincere, without hypocrisy; and that love (*agapēsate*) is to be 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 these two terms in juxtaposition is very interesting. He seems to be passing along a lesson he learned from Jesus after the resurrection. After a long and unproductive night of fishing, Jesus appeared on the seashore and told the disciples where to cast net.

After they dined, Jesus asked Peter “Do you love me more than

these?” using the term agapas (ἀγαπᾷς).

Peter answered, “*Yes Lord, you know I love you.*”; using the term philo (φιλῶ).

Then Jesus asked Peter a second time “do you love me”? Again using the term agapas,

Peter answered, again using the term philo: “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”

Then Jesus asked Peter the third time, “*Do you love me?*”, but this time he used the same term Peter has used, phileis (φιλεῖς).

Immediately Peter was grieved because the third time Jesus said “do you love (phileis) me? It must have seemed to Peter that Jesus was questioning his affectionate, his beloved devotion, his philo. But Peter was firm, “*Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (philo) you*”

Then Jesus proceeded foretold of Peter’s eventual martyrdom, essentially telling him: Yes, you will demonstrate your beloved affection (*philo*) with your life in (agapao) love (Jn 21:15ff). Earlier Jesus had told his disciples, “*Greater love (ἀγάπην agapēn) has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (φίλων philōn). You are my friends (φίλοι philoi), if you do whatever I command you*” (Jn 15:13-14).

Born again

The unbelieving world scoffs at the Christian’s use of the term, “born again”. Yet, if we temporarily 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 “born again” is a prime example of something 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 reality beyond even our physical universe; for, as Scripture 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. And “*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (Ro 8:16).*

All flesh is as grass

Imploring us to get our priorities straight, Peter 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 so as to deceive herself into believing she has recapture her fleeting youth. It's just as sad to see an old man driving a little sports car (into which his big belly can hardly 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 the beloved hymn composer; Fanny Crosby, when she testifying before Congress on behalf of the blind, "*What cannot be cured must be endured*".

We are much happier when we learn to accept that which cannot be changed. Life is short and then we die. To this regard 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 various comforts; but these spoils are temporary and they die with us. However, when we build upon the foundation 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. (1Co 3:12-15)

If I were to paraphrase and expand upon the thoughts in verses 1:17-25, it would be as follows:

“If you are going to pray, you must do it in all reverence, humility and fear, for we will all face judgment. And now that you have purified your soul by your commitment to Christ and your new birth, and you are sincerely being kind and friendly to each other, go a step further. With pure motives, be persistent in making concessions and personal sacrifices for each other as well. Don't do it as respecters of persons to gain an advantage or some temporal profit, or to look important; but be motivated by Jesus' sacrifice, by the spilling of his blood (which was foreordained before creation) and by the word of God. Keep in mind that this life is temporal, and it is short, but the word of God endures for ever.”

Verses 2:1-3

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

That you may grow

Anytime we have a conjunction such as **Therefore**, it behooves us to understand to what, exactly, the therefore 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 believers are born again by the eternal, incorruptible word of God, they are expected to grow and mature. This is accomplished by forsaking all that is the antithesis of holiness, such as **malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking**; and to feast on the incorruptible and eternal word of God, as babies feast on mother's milk.

It's not expected that every believer should be a biblical scholar or even a teacher of Scripture; this is a spiritual gift given to some

while others possess different gifts. However, every believer is expected to learn the dogmatics, the rudiments of biblical theology. Therein, faith grows and false doctrines are avoided. For this reason, Paul instructed Pastor Timothy to teach his flock: “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1Ti 4:12).

“Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the ruin of the hearers. Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2Ti 2:14-15)

A primary issue in the book of Hebrews was the readers to whom the book was address had failed to grow spiritually. They had failed to pursue the esoteric profound things of the spirit, such as an intimate relationship with Christ, personal spiritual sacrifice, and practical sanctification. As a result the apostle couldn’t even begin to teach them these deeper things of Christology.

Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to explain, seeing you are dull of hearing. 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 5:10-14)

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? (1Co 3:1-3).

Although the author of Hebrews used the allegory of continued milk consumption in a negative way, as did Paul in First Corinthians, in that by now their readers should be eating solid food and not sucking

milk like helpless babes; we need not imagine this to be the case with Peter's readers. We have no evidence of his readers being dull of hearing as were the Hebrews, or of them bickering with each other, harboring sin, and falling prey to false teachings, as were the Corinthians. In fact, Peter has already commended his readers for their growth in brotherly love and their ability to suffer for the Lord. Rather, in this context, he uses the allegory of milk in a positive light, "*as newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.*" He is acknowledging their growth and encouraging their hunger for truth, even as he warns them not to be distracted by the temporal trials besetting them.

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 is built. Isaiah had told of this stone:

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not be in haste (Isa 28:16).

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, was 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 timeframe in the Jewish calendar. Each week consists of seven years; thus a week of years. At the end of every 7 weeks is the 50th year, the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:10-12). At this time, in Mosaic Law, 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 Zechariah predicted 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. (Zec 9:9)

A few days later they killed him. About 100 years before

Zechariah's prophecy, Isaiah foretold of this lamb as well.

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. (Isa 53:7-9)

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 that he knew of the devastation that was to befall them for their rejection.

And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, that your enemies shall cast a bank about you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, And shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation. (Lu 19:41-44)

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! (Mt 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 (Ro

8:28, 11:36). 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 the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa 53:10-11)

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 mere ten generations and little more than 400 years after the flood mankind had once again pursued disobedience and evil, rather than God. Most of the population followed Nimrod; refusing to leave the Valley of Shinar, and to go forth and multiply as God commanded (Gen 10). Similar to how God chose Noah, a righteous man in the midst of an evil and rebellious world, so too he chose Abraham.

However, this time, rather than destroying the world, God made a covenant with Abraham, which he confirmed with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—whom God renamed Israel. Israel's descendants would become a great nation to whom God would give the Law, the prophets, and the Promised Land; through them the redeemer would be born, who would bless the families of the world.

From Abraham until Christ, God virtually left the Gentiles to themselves, to reap what they had sown, to serve their idols in spiritual darkness and confusion. As it is written, "*the god of this world has blinded the minds of them who believe not*" (2Co 4:4).

From time to time, when necessary to advance his plan for the ages, God engaged Gentile affairs as he did with Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Sometimes he even called Gentiles to repentance as in the case of Ruth and Rahab. But his focus was on Israel and the coming redeemer. While the Gentile world wandered in spiritual darkness, from Israel God demanded holiness. After Israel's rejection of the Messiah, God reengaged the Gentiles, sharing the gospel with them as well; so that the Church, a new nation, a new

people of God was formed (1Pe 2:10).

But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he says, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and contrary people. Ro 10:19-21)

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)

Although the majority of Peter's readers were Jewish descendants of the dispersion, the Church is a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. It is this scenario, to which Peter refers when he writes,

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1Pe 2:9-10)

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, ⁸And 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 even executes those who disagree with their theology. 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 realize that Jesus is the Messiah.

Having a great desire to escape Roman rule, ancient Israel overlooked the prophecies of the suffering Messiah and looked for the Messiah coming as a conquering king to deliver them from oppression. So when the Messiah came as the sacrificial lamb to cover their sin, they rejected him. But God has not forgotten Israel. Their 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.

As prophesied, because they rejected the Messiah, the Jews were scattered around the world where they would be despised and downtrodden until the last days when God would bring them home to the Holy Land. But they would be hated by the world and eventually a confederacy of several nations would attack. Identified by their ancient names (Gog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, Persia, etc.) this confederacy of is comprised of territories in modern day Russia, Iran, Germany, Ethiopia, and others.⁷ When they attack, God will immediately destroy all but a sixth part of their armies. At this point the scales will be lifted from the eyes of Israel and the Jews will know that Jesus is Messiah (Eze 38-39).

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, which was discussed earlier:

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 53:2-3)

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 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-

⁷ See Appendix

Christian theology, because their message is that man needs the Messiah. But Messiah and his teachings expose their wickedness. As such, by extension, the following passage has application to both Israel and the Church. Two separate bodies, yet both are God's chosen. Although he is speaking to his disciples, at this point in his ministry Jesus is still reaching out to Israel, who has not yet officially rejected him, and the ensuing Church had 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, a 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.***

But you are a chosen generation

Here, Peter returns to a theme he has already mentioned three times; this is the 4th time he uses chosen or elect (ἐκλεκτός eklektós): twice of believers (1:2; 2:9), and twice of Christ (2:4, 6). Earlier we discussed how the doctrines of omnipotence, foreknowledge, election, and predestination are related to each other; yet and although these doctrines are mentioned many times in Scripture, those who hold an anthropocentric worldview refuse to accept the reality of election and predestination. They think it would be unfair of God to elect some and to neglect others. But who are we to questions God's behavior?

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa 55:8-9)

Paul's writings on the topic of election and predestination are often maligned by the naysayers; but here, Peter is in complete agreement with Paul. Peter not only tells us believers are elected, he tells us non-believers are appointed as well.

A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient: to which also they were appointed. But you are a chosen generation (1Pe 2:8-9)

The term appointed (ἐτέθησαν *etethēsan*) is the aorist indicative passive of τίθημι *tithēmi*; it's used to convey the idea of to place, lay, set, put, fix, establish. Furthermore, the aorist indicative passive verb indicates the disobedient non believers were the recipients of the action, *the appointment*, which originated with someone else.

The entire chapter of Romans 9 is given over to a lengthy explanation of this issue; and it explains how God is actually glorified in the process—how God is glorified by allowing evil to proliferate for a while, and by the gracious election of some and not others.

After explaining that not all of Abraham's children were the children of promise—the children of God, but only Isaac, the son of Sarah; as was Jacob the younger twin of Esau. And that even before the twins were born, neither having done good or evil, God loved Jacob and hated Esau. Then Paul asked: "*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?*" To which he immediately responded,

God forbid. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens.

You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he says also in Hosea, I will call them my people, who were not my people; and her beloved, who was not beloved. (Ro 9:6-25)

There it is, God allowed evil for a time that he might show his wrath and his power, as well as his long suffering, and the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy, which he had predestined to glory. Of course, as mentioned earlier, many other attributes of God were unveiled as well. Again, his thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways are not our ways (Isa 55:8).

An holy nation

In each historical and future dispensation God has a cohort of chosen people, called to fulfill a particular purpose in his plan for the ages. The pure bloodline that produced Noah in the antediluvian world; in the postdiluvian world Abraham was chosen to father a chosen nation; and in our present time, we have the Church; each chosen by God and each fulfilling his specific purpose.

Adam's disobedience thrust himself and all his descendants into sin; thus, "*the whole world lies in wickedness*" (1Jn 5:19). 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 (2Co 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).

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy

This 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 Jacob, were deemed 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 Jesus is 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 make Christianity Christianity. So it is that Jesus asked rhetorically: “*when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*” (Lu 18:8). In the book of Revelation, we see the final period of Church history, represented by the church of the Laodiceans, is completely apostate; rich, and increased with goods, having need of nothing, including Jesus who is outside knocking on the door seeking entry. (Rev 3:17).

Obtained mercy

Although Lucifer has power over the world, his power is finite and 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 revealed such attributes as God’s holiness, goodness, righteousness, and justice, as opposed to the 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 even more attributes such as God’s mercy, longsuffering, grace, and love. In this way, God is glorified even by evil, for it is the presence of evil that reveals these attributes and prompts their execution. So it is that all things work toward God’s purpose; even the evils we experience—for which, by the way, man, not God, is the responsible agent (Col 1:16; Ro 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 Mosaic Law, the high priest entered the holy temple once a year to offer sacrifice. The entire scenario served as a type, a foreshadowing of that which was to come. The application of this metaphor takes on several meanings.

- Jesus is both the high priest and the sacrifice.

- The community of believers is both the temple and the priesthood.
- The high priest of old 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 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*” (1Pe 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 spiritual sacrifice would include thanksgiving, prayer, worship, and praise; Self-ward spiritual sacrifice would include holy speech, and dying daily to the old man; Man-ward spiritual sacrifice would include service, doing good and love for others (*Ps 50:14, 141:2; Hos 14:2; Jn 4:23-24; Heb 13:15-16; Ro 12:1-2; Eph 5:2ff*).

Peter is about to discuss the practical application of spiritual sacrifice in a rather detailed fashion. Some, especially the man-ward variety, are absolutely contrary to our pride and our intrinsic desire to rebel. His words do not sit well with us; our natural man rebels against it. We construct all sorts of scenarios and logical anthropocentric arguments to justify our failure 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 (2:9)*.

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 types 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 seem to come naturally once we accept Christ: Praising God, being thankful, and humbling our ego before our Creator, we are happy to do. The self-ward spiritual sacrifices are intellectually pleasing but may seem a little more difficult due to our desire to cling to the old man. But our conscience and the Spirit of God convict us and we convert; learning to rely on the Spirit we cease following the selfish desires of the old and follow the path of righteousness. But the man-ward spiritual sacrifices (as we shall see) are a different breed. These often forsake something most precious to us—i.e. our pride and our intrinsic need to rebel.

More than any of the others, the man-ward spiritual sacrifices have confounded the Church. Whole movements within Christendom, even entire countries, have been founded on the back Christians refusing to apply these man-ward spiritual sacrifices.

Verses 2:11-12

^{2:11}*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*
¹²*Having 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 fleshly 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 abstinence from these lusts is a hard thing, indeed an impossible thing to achieve 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).

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul

Of course, our fallen nature does not prevent us from attempting to achieve holiness on our own. The fact is, the old nature as well as Satan encourages our attempts at self-righteousness. The histories of Judaism and Christianity are replete with movements, entire societies, and denominations focused upon this pursuit of manufactured holiness; we call it legalism. It was/is the way of life for many:

- The Pharisees and Sadducees.
- The early Christian hermits and the numerous monasteries that exist to this day.
- Simeon Stylites (390-459) who spent 37 years on a small platform atop a small pillar; and sadly, he had followers.
- Certain secluded Christian communities that seem to overlook choice activities and behaviors as long as a particular outward appearance is maintained.
- The now defunct 1980's Moral Majority movement that essentially attempted to force, by legislation, biblical morality upon the unregenerate; and the numerous pastors

who to this day cannot refrain from dipping the toes into politics attempting to accomplish the same. Yet, to what end? Forcing the unregenerate to live by biblical morality

will accomplish one of three things: 1) Fill them with self-righteousness so as to believe they do not need a savior; 2) Cause them to rebel and further close their minds to the gospel with which we hope to reach them; or 3) They will seemingly and outwardly comply, while secretly practicing their old ways. As the proverb says:

The dog has turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.
(2Pe2:22)

➤ Various Christian denominations that once championed the faith but now reject Scripture as the inerrant word of God. Yet they speak of Christ and support certain of his teaching while rejecting others. Outwardly they present themselves as Christian, yet their doctrine rejects Christianity.

➤ Countless legalistic professing Christians, even within Bible-believing churches, who keep up publicly respectable lives while their private lives are riddled with sin. As Paul warned Timothy, “*Some men's sins are evident beforehand, going before them to judgment; and some men they follow after*” (1Ti 5:24).

We can fool our neighbor with our legalistic behavior; we might even fool ourselves, but try as we might we cannot fool our Lord. 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). Abstaining from aberrant fleshly appetites is *spiritual sacrifice*.

Your conversation honest

Maintaining an honest and chaste behavior is also spiritual sacrifice. But once again, it is only via the Spirit-filled life that our behavior (ἀναστροφή *anastrophé*, here translated conversation), remains honest

among the non-believers. By this spiritual sacrifice, God is glorified. We may rest assured that not only does the world see through the pseudo holiness manufactured by legalism, but it uses it as an excuse to reject the message we hope to bring. Furthermore, the manufactured holiness of legalism does not bring glory to the

Father; and 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

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

Here they are—the man-ward spiritual sacrifices that go against every fiber of our being, our pride and our intrinsic need to rebel. Some (like the pious young rich ruler) delay coming to Christ because they don't want to give up their comfortable lifestyle; others, because they don't want to give up their favorite sins and guilty pleasures. They calculate in due time, after they have sown their oats, they will follow Jesus as their mothers implored, and as they learned in Sunday school. Similarly, this duty of living a life of spiritual sacrifice (v 5ff), is something I believe many Christians would prefer to put off, 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're contrary to our inherent rebellious nature, our pride, and our soiled sense of fairness. Yet, is this not why it is called sacrifice?

Peter concludes this passage with four imperatives: honor, love, dear, honor. Thus he is commanding: *"You must honor all men. You must love the brotherhood. You must fear God. You must honor the king.*

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man

As I warned, Peter is hitting a topic that really hurts; something especially painful to those of us born and bred in rebellious modern western cultures, in which we prize our individualism and freedom. In the United States of America, it is a constitutional right established in our Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

From the anthropocentric point of view, these self-evident truths are logical, fair, just, and necessary; but from the biblically oriented theocentric view, not so much. Indeed, as far as being human rights, all three (life, liberty, happiness) are contrary to Scripture.

The sentence of death is passed upon each of us and the only reason any of us have life at all is by the mercy of God, who for his own reasons has allowed us this experience.

As for liberty, Scripture is very clear that those who happen to be in bondage are to obey their masters.

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. (1Ti 6:1)

Not that this justifies slavery; on the contrary, slave trading is condemned in the same breath as the unholy, the profane, fornication, homosexuality, lying, perjury, murder, and even those who murder their own parents (1Ti 1:10). At the same time God can use such bondage for his purpose and to his glory. The bondage of ancient Israel in Egypt served as a form of discipline and growth, during which time they became a great nation that would learn to rely upon the Lord. Contrariwise, about 800 later, due to their disobedience, God allowed their bondage in Babylon as a form of

punishment and as a corrective measure. In Mosaic Law bondage could take place due to financial obligations. Other times, bondage occurs as spiritual persecution. Sometimes bondage occurs merely due to poverty, or the inability to mount a defense. Whatever the case, Scripture does not support rebellion, but instructs servant to be obedient to their masters. And always, though we may not understand it as the time, God will use it for his glory and purpose and for ours as well.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Ro 8:28)

As for the pursuit of happiness; Scripture and human experience are very clear that true happiness is only found in knowing and engaging the mean of life. In his lifelong search, with the whole world at his fingertips, Solomon discovered happiness is found in the Lord:

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)

He determined all other pursuits for happiness were in vain, like chasing the wind.

I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this severe burden has God given to the sons of man to be afflicted with. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and like grasping the wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is lacking cannot be numbered. I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I have come to greatness, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I set my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is like grasping the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow. (Ecc 1:12-18)

At last Solomon realized that happiness is achieved by

recognizing God's mercy and being thankful and content with the simple things of daily life:

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. (Ecc 2:24)

In our text, Peter tells us to submit ourselves to the government's authority. This man-ward spiritual sacrifice is quite different from God-ward spiritual sacrifices. Setting aside personal time to be with our Lord can be 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's hard for us to see the pleasure in these man-ward spiritual sacrifices in which we give up our freedom, even to the point, if need be, of forsaking our basic survival instinct. Yet Peter is not merely suggesting obedience, he is commanding it.

Submit (ὑποτάγητε hypotagēte) is an aorist passive imperative, "You must submit" or "You must obey". It speaks to subordination, to willingly yield to authority, such as the submission of a soldier to his officers. The term **ordinance** is not the same as the term for regulation or principle (νόμος *nómos*), as used by Paul for the "*law of sin*" (Ro 7:23). Nor is it the same as the term for decree (δόγμα, *dogma*), as used when Caesar Augustus sent "*out a decree*" to tax everyone in the kingdom (Lu 2:1). Ordinance (κτίσει, *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 bodies such as school boards, zoning commissions, city, county, and state governments, all the way up to the king or other superior governing bodies.

In America, we have a somewhat unique situation, which 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; to not undermine or speak ill of those in power. What

then shall we do?

We can rationalize nearly any action, but we must ask: What would Jesus do? What did he do in the various situations of conflict between himself and the government under which he lived? The government, which ultimately crucified him merely to please the crowd. A simple look at his sacrificial life provides the answer. He told the Jews to give unto Caesar that which was Caesar's. When dragged before the court he was respectful; and when led to the cross he went as a lamb led to the slaughter. Even on the cross, he asked the Father to forgive them in their ignorance.

Such actions didn't seem right to the disciples. When Jesus began to tell them of his soon suffering, Peter objected; but Jesus immediately and harshly stopped him.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get you behind me, Satan: you are an offense unto me: for you consider not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Mt 16:21-23)

Even after this sharp rebuke Peter had trouble accepting the reality, as we see at Gethsemane. Unwilling to let the crowd take Jesus, one of the disciples said, "*shall we smite with the sword?*" To which, Peter pulled his sword for battle, and, in the ensuing skirmish, cut off the ear of one of Caiaphas' servants. Jesus interceded, "*No more of this!*" and told Peter to put his sword away; then Jesus touched the man's ear and healed it. (Mt 26:51ff; Lu 22:47ff).

In what would be his last exhortation to his disciples (at least until after the resurrection) Jesus explained,

Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (Mt 26:51-56)

Seemingly, the disciples were still not convinced of his actions, and they all "*forsook him, and fled*".

As the Psalmist said, *“There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Pr 16:25). In

this case, what seemed right to the disciples, that is, to protect Jesus, was wrong. Jesus had to die that we might live. If Peter and the others, in their zeal and ignorance, had their way, all of humanity would still suffer the judgment of spiritual death. I repeat, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD”* (Isa 55:8).

Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever staged an insurrection against Rome; not even a peaceful protest. Yet Rome was riddled with immorality and social injustices. He and the apostles (once they came to understand) knew they were pilgrims traveling through a foreign country on their way home to glory. And as pilgrims, they made no effort to establish a new and improved government in this foreign land.

Although we are grateful for Jesus’ humble sacrifice on the cross, we bristle at the idea of applying these sojourner’s principles to our daily lives. They seem unfair, counter intuitive to human rights, offensive to humanity. Yet, here it is, Peter is commanding this very thing. ***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.***

What we must keep in mind is that God is ultimately in control; and he has allowed the various governments in order to achieve a specific purpose. From our perspective, often the governments are opposed to our personal interests, and seemingly, certainly diametrically opposed to what we perceive God’s interests to be. Yet, is it not our charge to trust him; to place our perceived interests aside in favour of his declared Word? I say perceived because when such conflicts occur, that is exactly what it is, our perception. And an incorrect perception at that, for God’s interests are our interests; even if we fail to understand it at the time. Like a toddler scolded or deprived of some desired object for its own protection, likewise our Lord 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. (Ro 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 it 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 had long been under the oppression of the Roman State, which was a brutal society with some very harsh laws, and at the time of these letters many Christians were already being persecuted.

But rather than instructing Christians to correct these social injustices they were told to abide by the laws of Empire. Not that Christians should be free to partake in immoral laws such as the Roman practice of *patria potestas*, by which the eldest male head of the family had absolute the power over every member of the household, even the right to sentence them to death if so desired; for the Christian served a higher power. But at the same time he, the Christian does not have the biblical standing 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 moral law and the commandments of God. But this is a narrow window and we would do well not to be overly generous in our application to justify civil disobedience. Yet we see it demonstrated when Daniel, Shadrach and Abednego refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol.

Similarly, a Christian soldier would have been justified, under the rule of Hitler during WWII, to refuse to take part in the ethnic cleansing program by which millions of Jews were exterminated.

And we could argue a physician employed by the state, which refuses to provide state sanctioned abortions, is justified. But it would be erroneous to defy the government and to hold Bible studies or prayer meeting in government building if it had been prohibited by the government. Likewise, it would be erroneous to refuse to pay taxes because you do not like how the government spends the money. And it would be erroneous to drive without a proper driver's license, or to refuse to abide by state law and purchase car insurance, etc. Short of disobeying the moral 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 or 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 propriety and obedience to our Lord. The only power they have is granted to them by God; we must trust him to correct or punish them as he will.

David knew these and refused to attack or even speak ill of Saul, though Saul sought to kill him. Paul knew it as well when after Ananias commanded the man standing next to him to slap him, Paul said, *"God shall smite you, you whited wall: for do you sit to judge me after the law, and command me to be smitten contrary to the law?"* But when Paul was informed that Ananias was the high priest, he 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 23:2-5)"*

Punishment . . . and . . . praise

The governments of the world have a 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 turned to pure chaos and bedlam after his disposal, as various factions terrorized the country. This does not justify his atrocities, but it does shed light on the fact that there is a bigger picture in play.

Rome allowed the Jewish leaders to crucify Christ without cause; yet in so doing Jesus became the savior of the world. For centuries, Rome then waged one persecution after another against the Church; but the more the Church was persecuted the greater it grew; as it is said, "the blood of martyrs is seed". In like fashion, God will use 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 history. God is not doing evil; on the contrary, he is turning the evil perpetrated by man into an event from which good will arise, and which will assist in the completion of 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.

What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory, (Ro 9:22-23)

Silence the ignorance of foolish men

Peter provides a couple of 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 standing 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 spiritual freedom as a pretense 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 the term from which 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.

This is a rather serious change by the apostle; equating the refusal to comply with the government with 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 is to bring glory to God.

Honor all men

Of course, the command to ***Honor all men*** speaks to all humanity, both men and women. This is not the same as being a respecter of persons, which was addressed earlier. Whereas being a respecter of persons springs from the selfish motives of narcissism in which one attempts to gain some personal advantage, to honor (τιμάω, timáō) is to value or revere. This honor seems to have a twofold purpose: 1) All are created in the image of God and are therefore worthy of the honor and respect this garners; and 2) Jesus loves all of humanity and gave his life for them. To this regard, Scriptures closes with this final plea to all of humanity, “*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 use the term love to translate different Greek words, it’s helpful to identify which term is used in the text. Here, it is (ἀγαπάτε agapáte), a sacrificial type of love, one that puts others before himself. And it is a present active imperative. Which means it’s a command, “You must love the brotherhood”. This is the second time Peter has told his readers to love the brethren. This first time (ἀγαπήσατε agapēsate) an aorist active imperative, was a command as well. In that passage, he exhorted them to be certain their love flowed fervently from a pure heart.

Honor the king

All that was said above about respect for all others also holds true for the king or president, as is the case in many modern countries. But honor for governing authorities has other factors to consider, because of which an additional degree of honor is expected. This special honor is warranted due to the grave responsibilities governing authorities must face on a daily basis.

There’s truth in former president Harry Truman’s famously quoted tag line, “The buck stops here!” With authority comes a double caution: The more authority one is granted, the more difficult are his decisions; and he carries a greater responsibility (to the citizens, to

his own conscience, and to God) for those decisions. Governing authorities are tasked with protecting their citizens, maintaining order, and leading their society into prosperity. Yet not everyone can be pleased, especially in times of trouble, and often very complicated choices must be made that must weight heavily on their hearts. It's not a station most people would even desire. Thus, we are to honor them as a soldier is to honor an officer. The individual might be a rather flawed creature, even a poor leader; but the soldier, nevertheless, is expected to honor the uniform, the office. Paul agreed,

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 judgment. 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 you 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, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience's sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Ro 13:1-7)

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 the honor their charge is due. Even if we do not agree with the governing authorities policies: the way they spend the money, the wars in which they engage.

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”* (Ac 23:3-5). Moses said, *“You shall not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of your people”* (Ex 22:28).

Being raised in a culture in which we freely criticize our governing authorities this can be a particularly difficult behavior for many to resist. Not only are the policies of governing authorities open to insult, but so too are their entire lives; so that their 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 in the last days people many complainers will invade the Church who will disrespect and despise authority. They will follow their own sensual desires and be respecters of persons for their own gain. They will go the way of Cain—proud, corrupt, disobedient, and attempt to approach God on their own terms. They will be like Balaam—attempting to advance what they fashion to be the cause of God by advocating an unholy alliance with the world. And they will go the way of Cora—stirring up strife and rebellion against authorities as Cora disputed the authority of Moses and Aaron (Jude).

Such grandiose, rebellious behavior is not to be taken lightly, and 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. All in the name of God and Christianity some promote very liberal ideas while others very conservative ideas; but all are using God and the Church as a cloak for their misguided anthropocentric worldview. While some are clearly, mischievously seeking financial gain, others are placing social reform above the gospel even as they join forces with cults and unbelievers in their pious, yet flesh-driven, attempt to change society.

We've often heard 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 crucifixion of Christ to impute righteousness to the believers, but certainly this evil was not something in which the righteous participated. Likewise, God used the Rome's persecution of the early Christians to spread the gospel and to grow the Church; but that does not justify Rome's actions. All these events merely show God uses man's mistakes and evil deeds for the good.

As for being submissive to authority, if we set aside our personal bias and anthropocentric worldview, it seems clear that Quakers were on the right side of history. Christians should not have participated in the American Revolution. Not that the injustices and tyrannical actions of King George III were justifiable or even a good thing. But submission the king followed the biblical command; and it coincides with the biblical teaching as to the mission of the Church—spiritual evangelism, which is something very different than seeking to correct the ills of government.

All governments (other than theocratic ancient Israel) 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. America is (or was) a nation with many Christians, blessed by God, and which God has used to promote the gospel throughout the world; but it is not (as be becomes ever more clear each day) 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 in their day, under the Roman government, people suffered far worse conditions than we scarcely imagine.

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 eldest male, called the “paterfamilias”, as head of the family 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 a family member’s property as his own, or even sell his family members 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 theocentric worldview rather than a worldly anthropocentric worldview: Motivated by their sense of duty to the mission, and their spiritual sacrifice, which placed God’s word above their personal desires.

It was Jesus’ duty (which he ordered for himself) to lay down his life 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 and to teach sound biblical doctrine. The Christian’s 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 in 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 (as Christ did) even as they suffered under the king's tyranny; 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; but as noted above, this does not excuse the evil deed; and I suspect 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 harsh. ¹⁹For this is commendable, if a man for conscience toward God endures 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 commendable with God. ²¹For even to this 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 bore 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

Slavery is one of the more difficult issues to deal with in Scripture. On the one hand it's condemned very harshly, even placed alongside homosexuality, perjury, and those who murder their own parents.

But we know that the law is good, if a man uses it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and

murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For fornicators, for homosexuals, for slave traders, for liars, for perjurers, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; (1Ti 1:8-10)

On the other hand, servitude was permitted under Mosaic Law, and both Peter and Paul told servants to obey their masters. Paul even instructed those Christians who had servants on how to treat them.

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 does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, you masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. (Eph 6:5-9)

In Mosaic Law, except for the seven nations that were to be utterly destroyed, the Jews were permitted to have Gentile slaves. They were not, however, permitted to make forced slaves of fellow Hebrews. If a fellow Hebrew was sold as a servant due to being impoverished, or having to pay a debt, or having to make restitution for theft, he/she was to be treated as a valued employee. (Lev 25:39ff; De 7).

But the issue does not sit well with us in our modern world; not even with Christians and much less so with nonbelievers. It is so repulsive to our modern culture that many nonbelievers employ the issue as an argument against the holiness of Scripture and even against God himself. The argument is that God and Scripture are 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. While this is true, the difficulty with this argument is the implication that God and morality are capricious, changing with time to meet man's circumstances. By implication it implies God is somehow different and less merciful in the OT than in the NT. But God never

changes, and he is the ultimate moral authority abounding with mercy throughout Scripture. 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 rule over another.

Be advised, there is an answer to this dilemma but it requires a lengthy explanation, which begins with the creation of man and the fall of Adam. It is in Adam, that all of man's troubles originate. Here, we must establish that man, not God, is the responsible agent for all pain, suffering, wrongdoing, woes, and death (Ge 2:16-17; Ps 14:2-3).

The second thing of note concerning this answer is most of those who hold to an anthropocentric worldview (i.e., virtually all nonbelievers) are not likely to accept the answer. They don't believe in the veracity of Scripture or its portrayal of God, and neither are they going to accept the biblical, theocentric answer to this issue; for it will not satisfy their myopic anthropocentric sense of fairness (Isa 53:1; 55:7-8; Pr 2:5-9). That, nevertheless, does not make it any less true.

The third thing to understand is servitude as defined in Mosaic Law is far different than the cruel slavery employed by either historic or modern Gentile societies. Yet these Gentiles forms of slavery are the only forms of slavery with which we are familiar.

This was the type of slavery the Hebrews suffered in Egypt. These cruel Gentiles forms of slavery were and are immoral; whether it be forced labor camps, 18th Century plantations, or modern day sex trafficking, all are immoral and all are far different than servitude under Mosaic Law.

The final point to make before we begin our lengthy investigation is once we understand the biblical, theocentric worldview, we'll understand that servitude of one Hebrew to another was a legal transaction by which one earned a living or paid a debt; and that

Israel's enslavement of Gentiles was actually an act of mercy. God Created man in his own image for his own glory, seemingly for fellowship with those who shared similar attributes as he. These are the attributes that define us as human: self awareness, intellect,

emotions, morality, personality, etc. While other creatures from animals to angels may possess certain attributes such as freewill or emotions, only mankind possess the whole package, only mankind is created in God's image. It is for this reason that even before creation God provided a path to redemption for Adam but not for Lucifer and the angels who followed him.

When Lucifer rebelled against God, the conceptual potential of evil became a reality. At that point, the distinction of good also came to light. So too did God's attribute of justice, which demanded the punishment of evil. But it wasn't until Adam disobeyed that many other heretofore unveiled characteristics of God would come to light. Although God's good creation was spoiled, at the same time God's attributes of mercy, longsuffering, grace, forgiveness, and even love in its sacrificial sense would now come to light. Herein, as Scriptures teaches, God is glorified, for all things are for his glory, even the reality of evil reveals God's splendor and holiness.

With foreknowledge of Adam's fall, God had planned even before creation to provide redemption for multitudes of individuals whom he elected to salvation. Because they would be born over hundreds of generations and over thousands of years, he allowed humanity to continue in its fallen state.

In less than 1,700 years after creation, spiritual darkness and evil had become so pervasive God destroyed the world with the great flood, saving only Noah and his family. But little more than 400 years after the flood, most of the population had once again rejected him, groping in spiritual darkness and pursuing their selfish, evil desires.

Still desirous of a relationship with humanity, and according to his plan for man's redemption; rather than destroying the world and starting over again, God made a covenant with Abraham, a righteous man who feared the Lord. Through Abraham (via Isaac and Jacob—whom God renamed Israel) God would grow a great nation, a holy nation to be spiritually alive, separate from all other nations—the spiritually dead, whom he deemed Gentiles.

As mentioned earlier, from time to time, when necessary to advance his plan for the ages, God would engage Gentile affairs as he did with Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Sometimes he even called Gentiles to repentance as in the case of Ruth and Rahab. But for all practical purposes, God left the spiritually dead Gentiles to

themselves; to wallow in the squalor they had created and to stumble about in spiritual darkness until they died alone, without him, and without hope for the coming redeemer.

When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is shameful, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting. 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 proper; 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 who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Ro 1:21-32)

That God allowed them to live rather than simply eliminating them as he had the antediluvians in itself was an act of mercy. Nevertheless, for the spiritually dead who die without seeking God's forgiveness, from the eternal perspective their length of life on earth as well as their trial and tribulation have little meaning other than the degree of judgment incurred when meeting face to face with the Creator whom they had rejected. Indeed, we might conclude the

longer the spiritually dead live, the greater their degree of punishment; for they have more sins for which they are accountable. On the other hand, those who die young before they know good and evil are believed to be spared judgment and covered by the blood of Christ.

But in his mercy, God's plan for the ages included the eventual redemption of many Gentile descendants. Therefore, he let them live; but a little more than four centuries later, when Israel entered the Promised Land, the evil and idolatry in several of these nations had become so perverse God ordered their execution.

When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land to which you go to possess it, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you; And when the LORD your God shall deliver them over to you; you shall strike them, and utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shall you make marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give unto his son, nor his daughter shall you take unto your son. For they will turn away your son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy you suddenly. But thus shall you deal with them; you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their idol poles, and burn their graven images with fire. For you are a holy people unto the LORD your God: the LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repays them that hate him to their face, to

destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face. (De 7:1-10)

Being spiritually dead to God, in their darkness many cultures sought to fill the spiritual void by the worship of idols; some merely turned to hedonism. Others secluded themselves in primitive tribal cultures, frightened and closed off to outsiders, and warring with all who were not of their clan. No doubt there was the occasional exception, the individual who reasoned that the stone or wooden idol, or even the sun, was not sufficient or worthy of worship, and thereby looked to the heavens and called out to the unknown Creator. But this was not the norm.

As evidenced by world history and persists to this day, every Gentile culture in the world devolved into various degrees of ungodliness until they were introduced to and largely accepted Christianity. Those cultures that were introduced to Christianity and yet primarily rejected it remain the troubled cultures they have always been.

Speaking to the Gentile church in Ephesus, Paul reminded them of their previous condition in which, as Gentiles they had no standing with God and were virtually dead to him.

Therefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:11-13)

The reality that God had left the Gentile world to themselves was highlighted when the Samaritan woman approached the disciples to ask Jesus to cast a demon out of her daughter. When the disciples mentioned this to Jesus he said, *"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* Even after the woman fell down and worshiped him, Jesus refused, saying *"It is not right to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."* But she persisted, *"True, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* To which Jesus relented, *"O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole"*

from that very hour.” (Mt 15:21-28)

From the anthropocentric viewpoint we think “This is not fair! That God would treat some people differently than others.” Yet from the theocentric viewpoint we understand man is the responsible agent for his condition. His spiritual death and separation from God is of his own making. And God is free to show mercy to whomever he pleases; it is his creation.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he says also in Hosea, I will call them my people, who were not my people; and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. (Ro 9:14-26)

So then, with this background in mind let's delve into the issue of slavery. The first thing to know is both the OT Hebrew term (עֶבֶד, `ebhedh) and the NT Greek term (δοῦλος, doulos) for servant or bondservant, speak to a system well defined by Mosaic Law is something very different from the cruel systems of slavery employed by Gentile nations throughout history.

Because Mosaic servitude slipped into history along with Israel's dispersion, so that it's no longer practiced, the only perception we have of slavery in these modern times is that of the cruel Gentile systems as currently practiced in various countries. Slave traders, plantation owners,⁸ and the current system of human sex trafficking are all forms of these cruel Gentile systems of slavery. None of them represent the Hebrew system as outlined in the OT. So that to compare one to the other is not unlike the old adage of comparing apples to oranges.

Because the difference is so vast, in that the only thing they have in common is the service of one individual to another, it must be understood that we speak solely of the Mosaic system. While there is no moral justification for the cruel Gentile systems of slavery (the cruelty of which is the direct product of man's fallen nature); on the other hand, from the theocentric worldview, there is moral justification for the benevolent system of servitude in ancient Judaism. But to understand it we must banish from our thoughts any attempt to equate the cruel Gentile systems with that of the ancient Mosaic system. Failing to do so is not being true to the text, or to history. Furthermore, and key to understanding the issue, we must keep in mind the previously explained difference between God's chosen people, Israel, and the spiritually dead Gentiles, those living in spiritual darkness, without God and without hope for redemption.

Before the Mosaic Law, the Jews themselves had suffered under the Gentile system of slavery for hundreds of years. They were well aware of its cruelty. But the servant under Mosaic Law was to be treated with respect and benevolence regardless of why or how he/she came to be a servant. The Mosaic system was humane; so that, in essence the servant was viewed as a valued employee rather than a subhuman tool to be worked to exhaustion, as characterized by cruel Gentile slavery.

Various circumstances could result in a Hebrew becoming a servant: poverty, retribution for thievery, indentured servitude to work off a

⁸ Although many early American slave owners claimed Christianity, the form of slavery practiced was not that of Mosaic Law but that of the cruel Gentile systems. We do not know their hearts, if they were truly Christian or merely false professors of Christianity; however, they will have to answer to God for their participation in that decidedly immoral system.

financial debt, or even a voluntary commitment to a beloved master. Sometimes a servant would 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, the master and servant would go before the judges where the servant would receive an earring signifying that he/she desired to serve the master for life.

Furthermore, Hebrew servants were released at the end of every seventh year. If the servant had a relative who could pay their bill, he could redeem them at any time. If a master mistreated his servant so as to cause injury, the servant was to be set free; and in the year of Jubilee, all servants were set free with a generous severance package. So it is, as mentioned earlier, that servitude among Hebrews was a matter of legal contract.

Now for the aspect of slavery that is more challenging for those with the anthropocentric worldview to accept; i.e., concerning those taken in captivity. Yet, as mentioned earlier, captive servants in Israel were an act of mercy. To understand this we must rehearse the history once again.

As we recall, the antediluvian world had become so extremely wicked God destroyed all but eight souls. Yet, shortly after Noah and his God-fearing family resumed repopulation, once again man's fallen nature came to the forefront. In the short span of ten generations and a few hundred years the majority of the population had already turned from God. Rather than destroying the world again, God left the spiritually dead to wander about in their darkness down the path to their own destruction. But in Abraham, God saw a righteous man with a heart for God, and with him he made a covenant.

The striking thing as mentioned earlier, is that Shem (Abraham's 8x great-grandfather and a survivor of the great flood) was still alive. Yet, even with Shem still living amongst them (one who had firsthand experience of God's power and glory), still, man would not be persuaded to follow their Creator.

Shem lived until Isaac was fifty 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 its bondage. By him, the families of the world (even descendants of the Gentiles) would be blessed.

Occasionally, after the Abrahamic covenant, when necessary to fulfill his plan for the ages, God would engage Gentile affairs, even calling some to repentance; but largely, until after Jesus' death and resurrection, the spiritually dead Gentiles were virtually dead to him as his focus was on Israel and the coming redeemer. But centuries later, when Israel rejected Christ (for they looked for the warrior rather than the sacrificial lamb) God opened the door of redemption to the descendants of these rebellious Gentiles whom he had allowed to live during the time of Abraham; again, an act of mercy.

Not that Gentiles could not seek God during that period if they so chose; but by in large, God was no longer seeking them. Rather, he allowed these stubborn, rebellious peoples to stumble about as desired in their spiritual darkness. Similar to the antediluvians, once God commissioned Noah to build the ark, they were virtually the walking dead without hope, and doomed to eternal judgment. However, unlike the antediluvians, one day God would have mercy on many of their descendants; so that, from their lineages God would save a vast remnant of Gentiles.

When Israel entered the Promised Land to claim their inheritance about 430 years after Abraham, they encountered these pagan Gentiles civilizations. Some of the nations were so corrupt that God passed the death sentence on them and instructed Joshua to utterly destroy them. Some nations were even infested with giants, as were the antediluvians (Gen 6:4; Num 13:33; De 2:11, 20, 3:11-13, 7:1ff; Jos 12:4, 13:12, 15:8, 17:15, 18:16).

Even before entering the Promised Land God told Moses to exterminate the Midianites for attempting to corrupt Israel (Nu 31:7-35). However, after defeating the army the Israeli warriors brought the women and children home with them, for which Moses reprimanded them. But in an act of mercy, rather than execute them he allowed the young, virgin females to live as servants. However, this would backfire; proving God's judgment of the death penalty

correct in the first place, for ironically, it was pagan captives such as these responsible for introducing the corruption that ultimately lead to Israel's moral decay and apostasy, which eventually resulted in their own captivity in Babylon.

A few things are to be noted concerning Israel's captive servants. 1) These spiritually dead civilizations had long since stopped seeking God and were virtually the walking dead and hell would be receiving them shortly. 2) When they attempted to corrupt Israel with idol worship and hedonism, God ordered the death penalty. 3) In mercy, Moses allowed slavery for some as a substitute for death. 4) Unlike Gentile practices, Mosaic Law was benevolent toward servants. 5) Although many Gentile servants introduced corruption, others converted and followed the Lord.

No doubt, many (especially those with a passionate anthropocentric worldview) will refuse to distinguish between the humane system of the Hebrews versus the corrupt and cruel systems of Gentile slavery; nevertheless, the difference exists and it is vast. While God allowed servitude as a means to care for the poor, to repay debts, as retribution, and even as a means of salvation via making the occasional convert, the Gentile system takes advantage, turning slavery into a savage, narcissistic enterprise. Indeed, the only reason slavery or any of man's troubles even exist is due to man's sinful nature; so that it is man, not God, who is the responsible agent for slavery and for all that man suffers.

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 a qualification is foolish. Who are we to question God's ways? He will have mercy on whom he will; for which all recipients will be eternally grateful.

***Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear;
not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward***

Here, the term for servant (οικεῖται, oiketai) speaks of a household or domestic servant, but the principle should extend to all other types of service. In our culture we could 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 and authority goes, there really is no difference: there is the Officer and the Soldier, the Chief and the Warrior, the Boss and the Employee.

The term harsh (σκολιός skoliós) or forward in the original KJV conveys the idea of being crooked, bent, perverse, wicked, unjust, or peevish. It's as if Peter anticipated his readers to rationalize their particular situation, to make exceptions and construct arguments as to why they were exempt.

Many Christians in the early Church were under the yoke of slavery; yet, rather than encourage rebellion and the breaking of their yokes, the apostle instructed them to endure their situation. Paul agreed,

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ. But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons.
(Col 3:22-25)

Peter not only tells servants to be in submission to their masters but to do it in fear. At first, the phrase **with all fear** seems rather curious, for it seemingly applies to the gentle or well as the harsh master. We might understand fear of the harsh master but why fear the gentle? And we read elsewhere, “*The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*” And “*Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure with trouble.*” (Heb 13:5-6; Proverbs 15:16); which leads us to understand it is not the terrestrial master who is to be feared, but the Lord himself. It's a powerful statement; especially when we consider this fear is modified, intensified, as **all fear**: all, being everything, the entirety.

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.

So then, we face yet another dilemma. First, we had to deal with the reality of God allowing Israel to practice slavery; now we have an even more difficult pill to swallow. The expectation of obedience to one's master, whether he be good or evil. Furthermore, submitting to one's master is one of the spiritual sacrifices Peter has been addressing. Just as he admonished to "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*" (2:13), submission to one master or boss is also "*for the Lord's sake*".

As much as we loath this reality, it's 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. Other than the denial to partake in unholy behavior, there simply is no justification for rebellion against authority.

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 does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. (Eph 6:5-8)

Let every man abide in the same calling in which 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 the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, however he is called, therein abide with God. (1Co 7:20-24)

The argument is basically: We are to be content in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, for there is a higher calling, a higher purpose to be considered; which is, we are the bondservants of Christ. We are sojourners in this world, ambassadors of heaven; and

our mission is to show forth his grace. 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 level of 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.

Sadly, in modern times this message has been ignored by many popular would be preachers of the gospel who have forsaken their charge teach the gospel to pursue the very thing Scripture warns against—the rebellious advancement of perceived human rights over servitude to our Lord in the same fashion in which he served.

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 participate in rebellious acts against slavery when it is sanctioned by their government. Asking this question must not be construed to appear as a justification for slavery; for indeed, as noted, Gentile slavery as practiced throughout the world in many cultures, and as was practiced in early America, is and was a cruel and evil system that dehumanizes its victims. Eventually, it brings havoc to any nation that practices it. It's not been practiced in America for more than 150 years and we are still feeling its effect.

Certainly ending this cruel institution is desirable, even admirable; but the issue at hand, the issue discussed by the apostles, is the act of rebellion. Even the reality that God might make use of a rebellion, as he did with the American Revolution, is also not the issue. God also made use of Adam's rebellion, but it did not justify his disobedience. God made use of Jesus' crucifixion, but it does not justify those who crucified him. The ends do not justify the means.

To answer this question, as to the whether the Christian is justified to rebel against his/her captivity; we must put emotion aside to see the entire picture. We must discard our anthropocentric worldview to assume the theocentric worldview. It's an issue of obedience to Scripture, an issue of spiritual sacrifice in which a wrong being perpetrated is patiently suffered without revolt, without rebellion.

Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your

masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. (1Pe 2:18-23 NIV)

Before someone cries racism, we must understand this issue transcends race. Many people throughout the ages have been and are being enslaved by their own race. The issue transcends our recent history which still hits a sore nerve; it even transcends slavery itself. Putting the issue of corrupt and cruel Gentile slavery aside for a moment to discuss evil in general, we must consider the mission of the Church. Is the mission of the Church to correct society's ills? If so, where do we find this command and how is it accomplished? Was it Jesus' mission correct society's ills? If it were, he failed.

Of course this not the mission of the Church nor was it Jesus' mission. As understood when Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, if only he would bow down and worship him; the kingdoms of this world are ruled by the god of this age who has blinded their minds to the gospel (2Co 4:4). We are pilgrims in a foreign land who are charged with promoting the gospel of salvation, the gospel of our King and his kingdom. We are to seek those who would escape this wicked land and journey with us to our homeland. It is not our duty to attempt changing their wicked world, for it will remain wicked until Jesus brings it to an end.

The issue, the real question above and beyond slavery, is: Are

Christians justified to rebel against the governments under which God has placed them, in an endeavor to rid the world of evil practices?

As a note of clarification; it's important to notice the emphasis on "rebellion" and "illegal" in the argument. So that as free Americans, to whom the government by the people and for the people has given

a voice to the people in civic affairs, it is completely justified, even expected for all citizens, even Christians, to raise their voices in a legal manner against all wrong; just as many did in their efforts to end plantation slavery. But to object by rebellion and breaking the law, as John Brown did with his armed insurrection against the government, is not 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 provides guidelines that we might learn to cope as strangers in a strange land, as emissaries of the heavenly land, to abide by the laws of this strange land and yet retain testimony for our homeland and for our King, the Lord Jesus.

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 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's 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***.

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, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. (Ro 12:17-21)

The world celebrates Jesus birthday and his resurrection, yet they couldn't 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 disrespect Jesus by using him as an instrument for holiday and yet despise all that he is and all he has done for them are heaping coals of fire upon their own heads. *"It would have been better for them not to have known the way of*

righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.” (2Pe 2:21 NIV)

By whose stripes you were healed

Peter has referenced one of the most detailed OT passages concerning the Messiah (Isa 53:1-12). It tells the entire gospel message; and every element of the prophecy, which was written some 700 years earlier, came to pass.

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” (2Pe 2:24)*. Though we were among the walking dead, as it were, now we walk among the living.

Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls

The use of both *“shepherd and bishop”* is interesting. The terms are: ποιμήν, poimēn, shepherd or pastor, a term of tenderness and protection, and ἐπίσκοπος, episkopos, an overseer, superintendent, bishop, a term denoting administrative oversight. Whereas we were as lost sheep wandering about the countryside without direction, without orientation, with no one to lead us to water or the grazing fields; and most importunately, without a protector; thereby being exposed to various dangers and predators, now we have been rescued and taken into the flock of Christ, the great shepherd. With him as our pastor and overseer, we have nothing to fear. We are now secure in his pastoral arms, wherein we have purpose and direction as he makes 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 conduct of the wives; While they behold your chaste behavior coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But 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. For after this

manner in former times the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any terror.

Wives, be in subjection

Peter's politically incorrect teachings continue. Our stubborn, rebellious nature does not receive his words graciously. Indeed, for many his thoughts are simply offensive. 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. Sadly, this is truly the case in much of western Christendom as many nominal Christians have rejected these ancient, conservative teachings as being out of touch with the new and progressive world now enlightened to the uniformity of all; and to do so they have rejected Scripture as the inerrant word of God.

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 personally, individually, 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 recognized their equality: "*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*". Without delay, he realized the intimate connection: "*she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*" (Gen 2:23).

But even more than being equals, they are a unit; each different from the other, both physically and metaphysically. Metaphysically, each highlights particular qualities endemic to their gender; so that together they work better, are more effective, and make better choices; the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Physically, they are different as well. Among the many anatomical

differences is the reality that each needs the other 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” (1Co 11:7)*. We might say she is the crown jewel of creation. He then addresses the undeniable, indivisible oneness of the unit, pointing out either ceases to exist without the other: *“as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman” (1Co 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 union of marriage, this unity exists, the basic essential pairing of men and women. 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.

This union is so important to humanity it’s no wonder Satan and his minions attacks it as often as they can. In recent years, this unit has suffered attack like never before, as Satan has convinced much of popular culture that marriage need not be restricted to the pairing of men and women. Not only would Satan have everyone accept men with men and women with women, but he has convinced much of western culture there is no difference between the genders. This insanity has become so pervasive that even medical schools are teaching medical students that gender is a choice; that women can become men and men can become women, and these obviously intelligent students accept it as gospel; thereby demonstrating Paul’s explanation as to how moral corruption infects the intellect.

*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 proper; Being filled with all unrighteousness,
fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of
envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, 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 who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Ro 1:28-32)

Peter warned, in the last days scoffers would be willingly ignorant of reality.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: By which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2Pe 3:5-7)

Although he specifically spoke of these scoffers as being willing ignorant of creation and the great flood (i.e. proponents of the big bang and evolution), this willing ignorance necessarily bleeds into other truths; so that, these scoffers are willingly ignorant of God and Scripture and free (so they think) to accept any hypotheses that free them for the Creator and morality.

Back to the paradigm of leadership: This model of man being the leader exists for six specific reasons. God has ordained this order because: 1) Adam was created first; 2) Eve was created from Adam; 3) Woman was made for man; 4) Eve was deceived, not Adam; 5) Men are physically stronger than women; and 6) It is a type of the Christ and the Church.

Reasons 1, 2 and 3:

For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. . . . (1Co 11:8-9)

But, lest he be misunderstood, we must notice Paul is quick to point

out their equality, so that he is speaking of function to value:

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 are of God. (1Co 11:11-12).

Reasons 1 and 4:

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (1Ti 2:12-14)

Reason 5:

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. (1Pe 3:7)

Reason 6:

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. (Eph 5:23)

The first issue is the order of creation. “*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him*” (Gen 2:18). The root of the term, *help meet* (עֲזָרָה, *azar*), means to surround—so as to protect, to aid, to help or succor. It’s a profound statement signifying the inseparable unity and fellowship between the man and the woman. The idea is not that of a helper as a mere underling 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*” (1Cor 11:7).

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 and it is the perversion endemic to virtually all Gentile cultures. Unfortunately, many Gentiles converts brought this ungodly practice with them when they attempted to assimilate to Christendom, but they did not learn it from Scripture.

The male was created first, but the woman stands side by side as an equal partner, 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 respond to his leadership, even as Jesus followed the Father; but this does not equate to servitude or even a diminished status. Qualitatively, being of the same essence, even as the Son is equal to the Father the woman is equal to the man.

Then there is the matter or 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've played the guitar for several decades, 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 vice 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's 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, thereby keeping the rhythm (something you can do with your foot), 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 isn't, it's the less dominant hand that masters the more difficult task.

This is not unlike a traditional marriage (which popular culture has come to despise) in which the woman generally takes charge of the domestic details, the finer and more intimate aspects of the family, while the man confronts and forges their way through the world. Certainly this model doesn't work for everyone, but the concept is the same, the two are a unit, each possessing different and valuable skills that complement the other. Together, they are better than either is alone.

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. 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*” (1Co 11:7). The term (δοξα, 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 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

There is also the issue of deception and one’s worldview: “*Adam was not deceived, but the woman*” (1Ti 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 physical maturing.

The interesting thing is 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. Some studies have shown women are much better at multitasking than men; and we are all aware of man's great 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. 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's ubiquitous, true for every Gentile society in history; for it is an issue of total depravity—the fallen sinful nature 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 women as men'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 women in an inequitable status with men.

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. Regardless of how pious it may present itself, any society or religious philosophy that devalues the female is a society or religion that does not follow biblical principles. 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 behavior 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 behaviour

The term *conversation* in the original KJV (ἀναστροφή, anastrophḗ) is more precisely, in today's language, speaking of behavior. Peter issues yet another present active imperative ***let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But 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.*** This is a command, "It must not be that outward adorning . . ."

The Book of Enoch tells us it was the fallen angel Azazel who taught antediluvian women to adorn themselves with jewellery and makeup, which then led them astray into fornication and ungodliness. Modern studies show women who wear makeup may do it for various reasons: to cover perceived imperfections, to feel more attractive, or to conform to social pressures in which this is viewed as more attractive or powerful. By using the same women with three different profiles one study showed that when wearing no makeup she got friendly attention. When minimal makeup, she got flirtatious attention; and with full glam makeup she received sexual and promiscuous advances.

So it is, for a woman to enhance her outward beauty with makeup and hairdos and jewelry and seductive clothes might have its place if she's seeking to attract attention to herself so as to bed a sexual partner within our hedonistic, sexually oriented culture; but it does nothing as far as getting her husband to see Christ within her, indeed it necessarily works against this objective.

The false mask of makeup and ***outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel*** is nothing more than pretence; it is the godly and temperate life within through which her character and God's love shines forth. 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, chaste life from the heart, even as Sarah and other renowned maternal patriarchs. So the question remains, does the woman dress to please and attract men or does she dress to please God.

Speaking of Sarah, 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 were physical 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 said "Abraham is our father"; but he rebuked them, "You are of your father the devil" (*Jn 8:38-45*). Yes, they were the physical descendants of Abraham, but Jesus spoke of their hearts of iniquity and their lack of faith.

It may seem confusing that first he says ***your chaste conversation coupled with fear***, and then he says ***not afraid with any terror***, 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 *terror*, *amazement* in the original KJV (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; as Young translates it, "*not fearing any terror*". We must keep in mind Peter has already shown concern for some of these women seemingly married to unbelievers. In which case we can understand 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 position and equality: ***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. Therefore, give her the honor she deserves as a child of God and a co-recipient of God's grace.

Nowhere in Scripture will we ever find it supporting the idea of women being qualitatively inferior to men. This distortion is propagated by Satan and practiced by heathen cultures. The husband is to **honor** his wife; the term (τιμῇ, timḗ) 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 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 further examination, we shall see this is no less a spiritual sacrifice than that of submission. And furthermore, it is a responsibility for which the husband will be held accountable to the Lord.

The inference of **according to knowledge** speaks to 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, self-denying love for his wife. When this reality exists, the wife's submissive role to his leadership 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. The same love 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 had a choice to make: be separated from Eve or be separated from God, his creator. He knowingly and willfully disobeyed the Lord that he might remain with Eve. We might say his eyes were wide open. He chose Eve, this woman whom he loved more than life itself, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; together, they were humanity.

Adam had no way of knowing God would have forgive him; for up to this point the attributes of God's mercy and longsuffering had never been demonstrated. But upon God's first encounter with the couple after the transgression, he 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 provide for mankind'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. (1Ti 2:14-15)

And so it was, from the loins of woman came forth our Savior, the Lord Jesus. Born of a virgin, the second person of the Godhead entered creation as a man—a perfect man without sin, without inheriting Adam's sin, nor his death. Yet, Jesus willingly gave his life as a sacrifice to satiate the penalty justice demanded. He died for Adam, and for Eve, and for all their descendants who will simply accept his gift.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa 7:14; 9:6).

Lastly, the Lord dealt with Adam, condemning him to a life of hard labor to be 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's no hint of bitterness. No resentment for the sacrifice he made or the punishment he received. He had nothing but love and respect for her. 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 regrets, no bitterness, only love and admiration. Earlier, he had confirmed her equality with himself by acknowledging 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, we see the fallout for the man who does not love and hold his wife 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 all of one mind, having compassion one with another, love as brethren, be tender hearted, be courteous:
⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but on the contrary blessing; knowing that you are unto this 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 everyone in the company understands what they are attempting to accomplish. The idea behind *be all of one mind* is just that; 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: *having compassion one with another, love as brethren, be tender hearted, be courteous.*

The transliteration of the term for *compassion* (συμπαθής, sympathēs) needs no translation; it is the idea of bearing each other's burdens, maybe better understood 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; that Jesus had for Lazarus and for John; and which insisted he Peter had for Jesus (*1Sam 18:1; Jn 11:36, 20:2, 15:13-14*).

The idea of *tender hearted* (εὐσπλαγχνος, eúsplachnos) is that of compassion; to be touched by or to ache over the distress and affliction of another. And *courteous* (φιλόφρων, philóphrōn) is more than a formal civil platitude, it is a truly sweet and gentle disposition with regard and respect for all.

Not rendering evil for evil

Keep in mind Peter is still speaking of spiritual sacrifice. So 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*** (ἵνα, hina), signifies the purpose of the calling.

Perhaps the passages from 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. (Ro 12:9-20)

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 the warning speaks to something more serious than the actual words that are spoken. It does not promise everyone who abides by this ethic will have a long life, but it does warn those believers who do not abide by this ethic are very likely to have their lives cut short. Because such believers are a hindrance to the gospel message, God is likely to bench them, take them out of play as it were.

This takes us to the second point, that something more serious than the words being spoken is in view. The use of such words speaks directly to one's spiritual life. 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. (Jas 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. Yet the only way thoughts and intents are controlled is by a renewal of the mind, which is only accomplished by the renewal of the spirit, which comes only by the Spirit of God. So that, a believer whose thoughts are not controlled so as to ***eschew evil, and do good*** 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 of a believer is due to an individual's sin. God has other reasons for taking his children home beyond the mere punitive. Sometimes God uses the early death of a believer to further the gospel message by highlighting that person's service and holiness in the eyes of others so to facilitate their calling upon the Lord. Sometimes God even calls his children home 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? ¹⁴But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; ¹⁵But 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 believers will never suffer harm when he asked: ***who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of***

that which is good? For even in the next breath, he said ***if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you.*** Throughout the letter he has addressed the suffering his readers had already incurred. Furthermore, this letter is written at the beginning of ten successive Roman emperors who will rain two centuries of persecution upon the Church. What Peter 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"* (2Co 12:9). Herein he realized God had something better in store and 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 Jesus addressed in the book of the Revelation (Rev 2:8). His martyrdom occurred in 155 AD. An early account of the event reveals 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 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. 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. (Mt 10:28)

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 you their threats, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread*” (Isa 8:12-13). 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 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 attributes of humanity (consciousness, morality, reason, etc.) which are in the image of God, and the glorious universe.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed 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 deity; so that they are without excuse: Because, when they

knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Ro 1:19-21)

Secondly, believers have yet another reason to substantiate faith, which is beyond the wonders of humanity and the universe. Believers have the esoteric reality of the spirit being alive and in communion with the Holy Spirit. 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 the acceptance of 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 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 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, modern 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 modern science. Even without direct observation, science believes in many concepts and systems at the subatomic, super-galactic, 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 based upon 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 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 (Ro 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 the believer's response is to disclose a particular demeanour, 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 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 condition upon which one's answer concerning faith is predicated, continues: meekness, fear, and ***having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, . . .*** The conjunction ***that*** (ἵνα, hina), speaks to the outcome of a good conscience ***that they may be ashamed***; 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, hótì), 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*** (ἵνα, hina), 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 even so much 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*" (Ro 2:23-24). Yet, if our behavior is holy, on 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*" (Ro 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 obtained 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 suffering that some greater good may come of it, it is better to suffer in innocence than

for something for which punishment is deserved. Furthermore, if suffering is without cause, the testimony of a good conscience will speak in defence and 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; it's more than a waste of time it's 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 especially 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. (1Co 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 claim to follow Jesus but at the same time reject him. They pray to God, quote parts of the Bible, teach morals and ethics, and even speak of Jesus; but they deny the deity of Christ and 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

¹⁹By whom also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; ²⁰Who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, by which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water.

²¹The like figure unto which 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.

He went and 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 tend to make it.

When viewed in light of other passages it coincides with the ancient understanding of Hades or Sheol—the temporary residence of the unseen dead, both the righteous in paradise and the unrighteous in darkness. Such is the depiction in the book of Enoch. The dark and foreboding, prepared for the unrighteous, and the fallen angels; and the bright and joyous, the dwelling of the righteous (En 21-22). This is also the depiction Jesus presented when he told of the rich man in hell and Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. Although many mistakenly

think of Lazarus and the rich man to be a parable, there is no such indication. Jesus said, “*There was a certain man . . .*” (Lu 16:19-31). He seemed to speak of it again when he told the thief on the cross, “*Today shall you be with me in paradise*” (Lu 23:43). This is also what the Psalmist prophesied and Peter confirmed after the resurrection on the day of Pentecost.

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. (Ac 2:31)

Although many often think of Hades as being synonymous with Hell as a place of torment, this is only half true. More precisely, it is Gehenna (γεέννα geenna) the everlasting lake of fire that is the eternal abode of torment. Hades is the place of the unseen dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous although it is separate abodes. The righteous in Hades are resurrected to life; but the remaining residence of Hades, the unrighteous, will stand for judgment at the Great White Throne only to be cast into Gehenna, the lake of fire (Rev 20:14).

The term for **went** (πορευθεῖς poreutheis) is the same term use in verse 22 to say Jesus is “gone into heaven”. It only seems reasonable that if he is gone (poreutheis) into heaven he had also gone (poreutheis) to the prison (i.e. Hades) where the dead resided. Paul also said,

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)

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 (2Co 5:6-8; Rev 6:9-11, 7:9)

The term **preached** in this context (ἐκήρυξεν ekēryxen) is not the same as evangelize (εὐαγγελίζω euangelizō). While ekēryxen has the meaning of proclamation it's not necessarily the preaching of the

gospel as is euangelizō; but neither does it preclude it. For example, as we see in 2Ti 4:2, the gospel is to be proclaimed (ekēryxen) “Preach the word”. The significance here is we can not say Jesus evangelized so as to make converts of these spirits who were already separated from their dead bodies. What we can say is he made a proclamation. He revealed his sacrifice and his coming resurrection so as to prepare the way for the judgment of the doomed, and to assure the righteous of their coming resurrection.

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead. 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. (1Pe 4:5-6)

Such is the usual interpretation of this passage: Peter is speaking of Jesus' experience between his death and resurrection. Though his body was dead, his spirit was alive, and he descended into Hades or Sheol (the abode of the unseen dead) to proclaim his victory of sin and death; to prepare the unrighteous for judgment and to assure the righteous of life.

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.

Days of Noah

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

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 provides further 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. They 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 diverse 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 jewelry, and how to abort babies. They also taught mysteries about astrology and how to practice sorcery and incantations (Enoch 7-8).

The Nephilim practiced cannibalism and vampirism. The extent of evil the Watchers and their offspring, the Nephilim, taught to men 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 the passage says, "*There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, . . .*" (Gen 6:4) The Nephilim corrupted humanity once again after the flood. But this time God prevented the hybrid population from multiplying exponentially as it did before the flood when it grew to infect nearly every bloodline.

Many of the civilizations God told Israel to destroy when they entered the Promised Land were populations infested with 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. Although God had commanded Israel to exterminate these hybrid races, they failed to complete the task.

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 baptism is not the means of salvation: ***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 where ***angels and authorities and powers*** are subject to 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 Since therefore 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 to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life will suffice us to have done the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, excess of wine, reveling, carousing, and abominable idolatries: In which they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of dissipation, speaking evil of you:

Since therefore . . . arm yourselves

The participle *since therefore* (οὖν, οὖν), is also translated forasmuch, wherefore, accordingly; thus signifying the reasoning for the argument. Here the argument is: Since Christ has willingly suffered for us in the flesh and returned to his position of supreme authority over all of creation, we therefore are to assume the same frame of mind and to die to the old man, the flesh, the Adamic nature, and to live unto God.

The term *arm yourselves* (ἐπλίσασθε, *hoplisasthe*), is 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 must arm yourselves!*” It’s a picture of a warrior getting ready for battle.

The thing of interest is 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 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 armour, donning the armour is still an action we must take. God will not dress us as it were. The armour is the same armour Paul speaks of when he said:

Therefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girded 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, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 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 thus with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Eph 6:13-18)

Suffered for us in the flesh

Peter used the term flesh (σάρξ, sárx) in the concrete-literal sense to speak of Christ's suffering; then in the next breath, he used it in the figurative-literal sense to speak of our fallen human nature. Thus, ***Since therefore 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 to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.***

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, please bare with me as I define the meaning of literal, historical, grammatical, and contextual and address the importance of a sound hermeneutic. I promise it will lead back to our text.

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 we're 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*" (Jas 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. He clearly used both terms in the figurative-literal sense. But we must take 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, the expression of thoughts flowing from our sinful nature has destructive power. It is what Jesus meant when he said "*Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.*" (Mt 15:11)

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's 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, sometimes even the geography is of importance. But 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 flesh (σάρξ, *sárx*), 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, "*Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in self-imposed worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any value to 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" (Mt 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" (Ro 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.

The will of the Gentiles

Peter argued, *For the time past of our life will suffice us to have done the will of the Gentiles*, which is the awkward way the translation 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 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 used to describe the former life is interesting: *licentiousness, lusts, excess of wine, reveling, carousing, 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 (ἀσελγεία, 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 eidōlolatρεία), 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 these Jewish converts in Asia Minor, to whom the letter is addressed, were famed hedonist. There’s no historical data to substantiate such a claim, and furthermore, Peter includes himself among this cohort. Rather, it seems clear 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*” (Ro 5:7 WEB).

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already time for you to awaken out of sleep, for salvation is now nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far gone, and the day is near. Let's therefore throw off the works of darkness, and let's put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day; not in reveling and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and lustful acts, and not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, for its lusts.
(Ro 13:11-14 WEB)

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 dissipation, 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 in the pleasures of the flesh. To this day, nothing about this has changed. Christianity is a source of entertainment to the world; the object of their jokes. Scarcely will you find a comedian today who does not get mileage out of making fun of Christianity. But Jesus warned, “*Woe to you who laugh now! For you will mourn and weep*” (Lu 6:25).

Although Christianity a source of mockery and entertainment to the world, in reality it's very offensive to them, 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 Jesus is

“unto them which be disobedient, . . . a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (1Pe 2:7-8). And Jesus explained;

If the world hates you, you know that it 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, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (Jn 15:18-19)

As such, Christians should not be offended when the world mocks or even attacks: be it the entertainment world, the government, local school boards, colleges, or any of the sundry movements with ungodly agendas. In fact, scorn and hatred are to be expected, so that Christians should begin to worry when the world is pleased with them, for they 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” (Lu 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.

End of all things is at hand . . . be sober, and watch

This 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. (2Pe 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. (Jas 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 armour of light. (Ro 13:12)

Here, Peter paints the picture of one having a sound mind and a prayerful demeanour ever watching for the Lord's return. The term sober (σωφρονήσατε, sōphronēsate) is the aorist active imperative. It's a command, and the idea is something more than simply not being a drunkard; it speaks to being sane, sensible, sober-minded, and rational. It flies in the face of some rather outrageous antics many professing Christian's employ, 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 ***have fervent charity*** (ἔχοντες ἐκτενῇ ἀγάπῃ, ēchontes ektenē agapē) is more accurately rendered "*having unending love*": ēchontes is a present active participle, thus "*having*", and the meaning of ektenē is without ceasing, unending; thus, "*having unending love*" or "*having love without ceasing*".

As mentioned earlier, agápē speaks to a certain kind of sacrificial benevolence rather than the warm friendly love (φιλέω, philēō), used when Jesus weep at Lazarus sepulchre and the Jews said, "*Behold how he loved him*" (Jn 11:36). And it is far different than the passionate love (ἠράσθη, ērasthē) as used in LXX for "*the king loved Esther above all the women*" (Es 2:17). The root of ἠράσθη is ἐρως, eros; which is also the name of the Greek god of sexual attraction and is where we derive the term erotic.

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 this love is self-sacrifice; it's the opposite of selfishness and narcissism. John tells us "*God is love*" (1Jn 4:16). This statement has very important implications. Since God is love and man is created in the image of God, man too, in a similar manner in his original state, is love. But of course, Adam's disobedience corrupted man's image and thus corrupted the attribute of man that is love. The result is a strange union between the divine like and malevolence; so that the perfection of sacrificial love is distorted by the darkness of

selfishness and even narcissism, and the two are constantly at war with each other.

For this reason, 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 selfish or even narcissistic tendencies to a lesser degree than others, all are infected. No one is void of this disease. However, because many hold the attribute of love in greater esteem than selfishness, it seems prudent to offer a note of practical advice to young lovers. It behoves those seeking a partner to steer far away from anyone who wears their narcissism on their sleeve; for they will never truly love you.

It is only when the human spirit is reborn by the Spirit of God that one has the ability to love without corruption. Although this new birth does not do away with the old corrupt nature, 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*” (1Jn 4:16).

So then, how do we define love, this agápē love about which we have been speaking? No one has ever defined it better than the Apostle Paul, wherein the KJV has translated agápē as charity. Paul makes use of several adjectives and scenarios and yet we will notice 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. (1Co 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*” (Jo 15:13). Can there be any greater display of selflessness?

Shall 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*” (Ro 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 the other’s fault, these faults (which we all have) are overlooked so as to dwell only on their goodness. It’s the idea behind Paul’s comment that love “*bears all things*”: (στέγει, stégei) to cover with silence, to endure patiently (1Co 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 overlooking faults and forgiving the offences. It has a direct effect upon our own sinful behaviour, 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).

Living such a life of love has yet another benefit; as our Lord said, “*Forgive, and you shall be forgiven*” (Lu 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 on 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. Paul demonstrated this

with the Corinthians and Jesus confronted the Sadducees and Pharisees. This issue is 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}*Practice hospitality one to another without grudging.* ¹⁰ *As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* ¹¹ *If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man ministers, 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 forever 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 sat at Jesus' feet listening and learning while Martha was left to serve everyone by herself. Martha complained that she was doing everything while Mary just sat there. Then when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with ointment, Judas complained 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 (Lu 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 office holders.

The KJV has *the gift*, however the Greek is without an article and more precisely *a gift*. When gift (χάρισμα, charisma) is used without the article (as it is here) *As every man has received a gift*, it speaks to any kind of gift. So in this context a gift is any endowment in one's possession that might be used for the welfare of others. Whatever it is a gift or favour or 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 each servant with talents 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 infuriating 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 Christian. True believers who fail to use their gifts are not cast out of the kingdom, but they do suffer the loss of rewards (1Co 3:15). Nevertheless, the idea of using one's gifts and talents 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 term, *oracles* (λόγια logia) means something spoken or uttered and is found three more times in the NT.

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 (Ro 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)

This is that Moses, who said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear. This is he, that was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the living oracles to give unto us: (Ac 7:37-38)

Peter is not suggesting everything a person utters should be from Scripture, but he is saying if someone is going to set about so as to teach and explain God's word, he has the responsibility to teach doctrines and truths in accordance with that which has been revealed in Scripture, which was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 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."* (Mt 7:15)

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

For I know this, that 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 everyone night and day with tears. (Ac 20:29-31)

To the Church in Rome, Paul warned:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the innocent. (Ro 16:17-18)

To Timothy he warned:

Neither give heed to myths and endless genealogies, which cause questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: ... From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talk (1Ti 1:4-7).

The closer we get to Jesus' return we are to expect an increased number of false teachers. As the time draws near, Satan will be working ever harder to deceive as many as possible.

Preach the word; be diligent 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 draw to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto myths. (2Ti 4:2-4)

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 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 spiritually deceived 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 a pseudo gospel; so that this sweet dessert is placed alongside the meat of good works and a side dish of God's love, 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 meal might be to the eyes and the palate, these dishes have left out a key ingredient (i.e., conversion), and the sweet intoxicating dessert of promised prosperity is pure poison. 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 (Mt 6:24), that the deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word (Mt 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 clothing let us be with these things content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into 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. (1Ti 6:9-10)

But the Prosperity Gospel is not the only prominent false teaching in these last days. In recent decades, a movement known as the Emerging Church has risen to do significant damage to the true gospel message. Its practitioners focus more on cultural

sensitivities than on Scripture; and when the two collide, culture prevails. For example, homosexuality, indeed the entire alphabet community is gleefully accepted. Yet, in the same breath, Scripture condemns both homosexuality and bestiality.

You shall not lie with a man, as with a woman: it is abomination. Neither shall you lie with any animal to defile yourself with it: neither shall any woman stand before an animal to lie down with it: it is perversion. Defile not you yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomits out its inhabitants. (Lev 18:22-25)

Such immoral behavior has been the path of many ungodly societies, and God has not tolerated it. Neither is God capricious, and he will not tolerate the modern “progressive” societies acceptance of such behavior. He will not be relaxing his moral standards to better suit a darkened, rebellious “progressive” society.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is shameful, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting. 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 proper; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, (Ro 1:22-29)

Woe unto them that teach the doctrine God accepts them as they are and demands no change within. This is a lie. It's true that God meets everyone where they are, in their sin; but once they accept his gracious salvation, being born again by the Holy Spirit they are commanded to convert. They are to forsake the old nature and the sinful lifestyle in which they wallowed.

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1Co 6:9-11 NIV)

At the close of The Revelation there is a special curse pronounced upon those who would alter that text.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll.¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. (Rev 22:18-19)

Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (Rev 22:15 NIV)

Verses 4:12-15

^{4:12}Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, since you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If 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 murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (1Pe 4:12-15)

Think it not strange

As if to reinforce the encouragement he has already offered concerning the believer's persecution and subsequent rewards, once again Peter addresses the suffering his readers are experiencing and shall continue to experience: ***think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test 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, the western world has 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 2023 World Watch List by Open Doors, Christian persecution is on the rise: 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide, 1 in 5 in Africa, and 2 in 5 in Asia. Some 360 million Christians currently experience a high degree of persecution. 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.

After decades of secular humanism being taught throughout the West, Christians are increasingly despised for their beliefs. Prayer has been banned in schools, the IRS has targeted the non-profit status of socially conservative and Christian organizations, and President Biden is attempting to pass a law that would effectively prohibit Christians from being foster parents by deeming them unsafe if they refuse to abide by LGBTQ rules to affirm a child's chosen pronouns and self-identified gender status. Vandalism against churches has markedly increased, while the government does little to nothing to investigate or stop it. In the first quarter of 2023, there were 69 attacks on churches in 29 states, which ranged from vandalism, arson, gun violence, bombs and assault. In recent years, the DOJ and the FBI have started targeting orthodox Catholics and other anti-abortion activists as violent extremists merely for picking and praying outside abortion clinics. In Canada, a government panel for human rights law determined celebrating Christmas and Easter could be seen as a form of religious intolerance. Of course this does not yet rise to the level of outright persecution, but it doesn't take a prophet to see the writing on the wall.

It is the story of Cain and Abel all over again. Cain killed “*Able because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*” (1Jn 3:13). So it is 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 Jesus, they killed Stephen and then James. In the following decades they killed each of the twelve apostles but John, whom they tortured and banished to the Isle of Patmos. This was followed by more than two hundred years of brutal persecution under ten consecutive Roman Emperors—each more savage than the last. But

Satan’s attempt to vanquish Christianity backfired, for the Church grew even stronger; so that the Early Church Father, Tertullian coined the phrase “the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church”.

For a short time, Satan changed his tactics; rather than persecute, he would infiltrate and corrupt from within. Once the Edict of Milan was signed in 313 AD, 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 so they convinced the monarchs to 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 he had his own son cut to pieces, which then triggered an all-out assault on the Church. So offensive is Christ to the unrighteous that similar scenarios occurred in the Netherlands, India, Asia, and other parts of the world as the gospel spread.

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'll ***be glad also with exceeding joy***. So it is James said,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various 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, lacking in nothing. (Jas 1:2-4).

Busybody

It's very interesting that Peter lists being a ***busybody in other men's matters*** alongside murder, theft, and evildoing. Especially since being a busybody is almost a sport for some. A busybody (ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, allotriepískopos), is one who sticks their nose in other people's affairs, a mischief-maker, an agitator, a troublesome meddler.

This specific term is used only here in the NT. Yet there are several other passages speaking 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*" (1Th 4:11). And again in his second letter he warned of idlers walking about getting into other's affairs.

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 (2Th 3:11-12).

He used yet another term (περιπατοῦντας peripatountas) found only once in the NT. It seems to be a play on words: those who work all around, who cause commotion, thus, busybodies. 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.

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having judgment, because they have cast off their first faith. And at the same time they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but gossips also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. (1Ti 5:11-13).

I suspect that which makes the busybody business as offensive as murder and evil-doing is that it springs from a proud and cruel heart, which soothes itself by demeaning others. After meddling in other'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 busybodies 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 for 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. ¹⁷For 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? ¹⁸And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? ¹⁹Wherefore 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 for their belief in the big bang and evolution hypotheses, the academic world attempts to characterize Christians as idiots for accepting the reality of a Creator and his intelligent design. Yet, is it not insanity to believe matter sprang into existence from nothing, and organic life arose from inorganic matter, which then evolved into the metaphysical intellect

and morality, which are such integral features of humanity. 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, hótì), 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 at the Bema Seat of Christ before unbelievers are judged at the Great White Throne, I rather think Peter is speaking of something entirely different. The term **must begin** (ἀρξασθαι, árxasthai) is the present middle imperative, thus indicating this judgment is in the here and now. Because the context is clearly that of suffering and trials, it would appear 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 Peter is referencing these trials, at least in part, to a form of judgment designed to purify the believers. This was definitely the case in Corinth:

Therefore 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 judgment 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. (1Co 11:27-32).

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

Because his readers are Jews of the dispersion, it's very possible Peter is telling them: 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 our sins (who have been forgiven) 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 this 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 art with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me"* (Ps 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 is attention to the elders. The apostolic model of local church government was quite different then than it is today in most churches. The 1st Century local church was led by a select group of men identified by three terms, which seem to have been used interchangeably: pastor (ποιμήν poimén), 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 feeding and leading the flock. Bishop signifies a business-like function, an overseer of church affairs. 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 them from heresy, and provided mature examples of Christian living.

The appointment and training of these leaders were also different then 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.

This is a true saying, If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, not violent, not greedy of money; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all respect; (For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them who are outside; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1Ti 3:1-7).

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 resumes and hire outsiders to tend the flock. For centuries, this practice has resulted in countless church fractures, neglected church members, and generally poor leadership, which has abandoned the concept of discipleship. By and large, the Church is hurting.

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.

Although modern church leaders might refute false doctrine from the pulpit concerning the dogmatics, they often neglect false teachings of practical theology, which are more likely to invade their congregations. And the concept of spending quality time with parishioners to teach biblical doctrine and practical theology is something few pastors 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 two 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 seemed to have revealed an aspect of Western Evangelical Orthodoxy 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 97% of the leading layman regularly prepared and taught Bible classes, and 78% believed they were qualified to provide spiritual counsel; however, 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 when I asked three simple, but pertinent, theological questions. I didn't attempt to stump them by choosing particularly difficult topics. Rather, I chose subjects of special concern to anyone who teaches biblical classes or gives spiritual counsel. Put simply, I chose subjects 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 didn't 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 particular 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 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 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 pastors understood their responsibility to nurture and train would-be leaders so 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 most 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 often littered with theologically incorrect comments.

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 principle is also often offended, especially among the wayward "Christian" cults teaching 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

⁵Likewise, 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. ⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Clothed with humility

Peter has already directed wives to submit to their husbands, servants to their masters, and citizens to their government, now, using yet another passive aorist imperative, he commands the young to submit to ***the elder***. However, lest the "progressive, politically correct" amongst us object to this hierarchy, notice he also adds, ***Yea, all of you be subject one to another***, which he immediately follows with yet another command (an aorist middle imperative), ***and be clothed with humility***. As such, submission and humility are not merely the status between the lesser authority to the greater authority, or even simply between peers; but these are mutual characteristics that flow downward as well, from the greater authority to the lesser authority. So it is we understand his previous exhortation to the elders: ***Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock***. Was this not the lesson Jesus taught the disciples when he washed their feet?

What the prideful “progressive and politically correct” fail to realize is that humility and submission is not a matter of cowardliness or helplessness in the face of another’s power, but a matter of respect. Submission and humanity in general are the order God himself has sanctioned. 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 and kind of leadership 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).

God resists the proud

After issuing these last commands Peter addresses the primary problem with mankind—their unwillingness to humble themselves ***under the mighty hand of God***. It’s 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 one and 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 notion that the universe and humanity are an accident, and there is no intelligent Creator, then 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 (see Ro 1:19-32).

Exalt you in due time

On the other hand, God *gives grace to the humble* and this humility toward God provides the very thing every human being is seeking: security, acceptance, hope, salvation. It is this humility that leads to the freedom and joy 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 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)

Your adversary the devil

I'm struck by three things in Peter's passage about the ever-present spiritual warfare we encounter on a daily basis against our ***adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour***: be alert, believe, and find comforted in the knowledge that you are not alone.

Once again Peter commands his readers to be sober-minded and to watch. Both ***be sober*** and ***be vigilant*** are aorist active imperatives. As discussed earlier, sober (νήψατε *nēpsate*) is something beyond merely not being a drunkard; it speaks of being discreet, alert, on

watch; and vigilant (γρηγορήσατε grēgorēsate) also speaks of being on watch and alert. They are connected 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 in its prey. Peter tells us to expect an attack, but also to trust the Lord and to stay calm, to think clearly and to take appropriate defensive actions. We must remember; "*greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world*" (1Jn 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 whomever they can. So that, being alert, sober, 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 (1Co 10:13)

Verses 5:10-14

¹⁰But 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. ¹¹To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ¹²By 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. ¹³The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, salutes you; and so doth Marcus my son.

¹⁴Greet 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.

Appendix

Gaebelein's Annotated Bible Commentary on Ezekiel

Chapters 38-39. There will be at that time of restoration a great and final invasion of the land of Israel. Gog and Magog will invade the land "that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people." The invaders come "against the mountains of Israel which have always been waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them." In verse 11, the evil purpose of the invader is made known. From all this we learn that the invasion takes place at the time when the Lord has brought back His people and resumed His relationship with the remnant of Israel.

The invasion will happen some time after the beastly empire with its beasthead, the revived Roman empire, in its final ten kingdom form and the clay, with the little horn as leader (Da 7; Re 13:1-10) and the false prophet, the personal Antichrist (Re 13:11, etc.) have been dealt with in judgment (Re 19:19-20). The stone out of heaven has then fallen upon the feet of the great dream image of Nebuchadnezzar; and as far as the western confederated world power is concerned, it is now ended. But other nations gather now for an assault. It is a northern confederacy which sweeps southward to invade the land, as Antiochus Epiphanes did in the past, as well as the Assyrian in the days of Isaiah. These final invading hosts, under the leadership of a powerful king, come like a storm, and like a cloud to cover the land.

But who are they?

The leader is the prince of Rosh (not as the authorized version has it "the chief prince") of Meshech and Tubal. This prince is the head of the confederacy and with him allied are Persia, Cush, Phut, Gomer and Togormah. They come out of the north, or, as it is in Hebrew, "out of the uttermost north" (verse 15). Inasmuch as the Prince of Rosh is addressed in verse 3 as Gog, we take it that Gog is the name given to this prince and leader of these nations. His dwelling place is

in the land of Magog. We know from Ge 10:2, that Magog was the second son of Japheth. Gomer, Tubal and Meshech were also sons of Japheth; Togormah was a grandson of Japheth, being the third son of Gomer. Magog's land was located in what is called today the Caucasus and the adjoining steppes. And the three, Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal were called by the ancients Scythians. They roamed as nomads in the country around and north of the Black and the Caspian Seas, and were known as the wildest barbarians. We learn from this that the invading forces, which fall into Israel's land in the future, when Israel has been regathered, come from a territory north of Palestine which today is in the hands of Russia. And here we call attention to the prince, this northern leader, or king, who is the head of all these nations. He is the prince of Rosh. Careful research has established the fact that the progenitor of Rosh was Tiraz (Ge 10:2), and that Rosh is Russia. All students of prophecy are agreed that this is the correct meaning of Rosh. The prince of Rosh, means, therefore, the prince or king of the Russian empire. But he also is in control of Meshech and Tubal, which are reproduced in the modern Moscow and Tobolsk. Russia, we may well conclude from this, will furnish the man who will lead this confederacy of nations. We write this at a time when Russia is passing through horrors upon horrors. A revolution changed the autocratic government into a democracy, and that gave way to anarchy, produced by satanic powers. From what is written in this chapter, we learn that Russia will ultimately return to the old regime, and will once more become a monarchy to fulfill her final destiny as made known in this sublime prophecy. Well known it is that Russia has been in the past the most pronounced and bitterest enemy of the Jewish people. What she passes through today is but a fulfilment of what the Lord has spoken: "I will curse them that curse thee." Today, the Jews in Russia may have bright hopes of getting their rights and complete emancipation at last. For a time this may come to pass, but ultimately Russia will turn against them; and, as Pharaoh did, when Israel had left his domain, so this coming king of the north, the prince of Rosh, when Israel is back in the land, will turn against them.

With him come the other nations. Persia, which is even now in part occupied by Russia, will finally be a vassal to this prince of Rosh. Ethiopia and Phut are also in this confederacy. There also is Gomer and all its bands. Gomer, says Delitzsch, "is most probably the tribe

of the Cimmerians, who dwell, according to Herodotus, on the Maeotis, in the Taurian Chersonesus, and from whom are descended the Curmi or Cymry in Wales and Britain, whose relation to the Germanic Cimbri is still in obscurity." Valuable information is given in the Talmud; Gomer is there stated to be the Germani, the Germans. That the descendants of the Gomer moved northward and established themselves in parts of Germany seems to be an established fact. All this is of much interest. Germany did not belong to the Roman empire, at least the greater part of Germany was never conquered by Rome. She will therefore not participate in the Western confederacy. Will she then become united to Russia and march under the prince of Rosh into the land of Israel? We cannot be sure about all these things. This, however, we know, that a powerful confederacy of nations, under the leadership of the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, will come up against Immanuel's land, when Israel has been restored and dwells safely.

The judgment and destruction of the invading hosts are vividly pictured in the thirty-fourth to thirty-ninth chapters as well as their burial. Compare verses 17-20 with Re 19:17-18; though the great supper in Revelation and Jehovah's sacrifice here in Ezekiel are not identical, yet both are judgments. The final paragraphs of this chapter (verses 21-29) give the promise of glory.

The last verse contains an important statement. The Lord says that He hides His face no more from them. This in itself shows that all this is not yet here; for still He hides His face from them. The hiding of His face from them will be no more when His Spirit is poured upon them. "I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD." There comes then a time when the house of Israel, the literal descendants of Abraham, will receive an outpouring of the Spirit of God. Such is also the message of Joel, in which restoration and spiritual blessing, through the outpouring of the Spirit are blended together (Joe 2). We call attention to another passage which should be linked with the statement in this chapter. Isa 32:13-18 is a very striking prophecy. There is an announcement made first of all concerning the judgment which is to fall upon Israel's land. "Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city," etc. But this is not to last forever. An "until" follows. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." This is the same future outpouring of

the Spirit of God. Up to now it has not been. The Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost came to form the body of Christ; but this outpouring in connection with Israel has another significance.

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).