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PREFACE

The First Epistle of Peter has a divinely-inspired message for faithful believers of every time and place. I suppose we could say that of all Biblical writings, but 1Peter's simplicity not only increases its appeal, it strikes directly at our hearts. It is very difficult to avoid Peter's message or to say that it is irrelevant to our generation.

Its main themes are particularly relevant to the present day. While our present environment, with its astonishing technological achievements and powerful materialism, draws us into worldliness, 1Peter brings us into a spiritual outlook with its long-term implications. It reminds us that we are strangers and pilgrims; that this world's selfishness and sinfulness are not characteristic of the true saint. Rather, in pursuing God's holiness, we must be prepared to suffer for righteousness' sake.

Peter's main purpose in writing was to testify and to exhort; to confirm his readers in the truth they had received, and to comfort them in their persecutions by encouragement, founded on the hope and privileges they had in their divine calling, and on the example and effect of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The main message of Peter's First Epistle is, "Endure, submit, for you are heirs of salvation." The pivot of this epistle is the incomparable example of endurance and submission provided by the Lord Jesus Christ coupled with his subsequent exultation. It is an epistle which encourages, comforts and challenges. The challenge is to live a life of Christ, not just a life in Christ.

In preparing this commentary, I was impressed by the simplicity and clarity of 1Peter. It is an epistle which is not given over to deep theological discourse or debate, nor is it written to right serious aberrations from the gospel. Peter is essentially pleased with the conduct of his readers and is preparing them for the problems that would inevitably confront them. The epistle is nowhere near as daunting as some of those of Paul: "in which are some things hard to be understood" (2Pet 3:16). 1Peter is meant to be read as a whole and with understanding.

Therefore, this commentary has, with a few exceptions, followed a verse-by-verse approach. While this could mean that it will lack the precision of phrase-by-phrase notes and that it will not summarise as easily for Bible marking purposes, it hopefully will be able to maintain the continuity that characterises this brilliant little epistle.

I sincerely hope that this commentary may be used to stimulate some to find help in what God Himself says in the First Epistle of Peter, and that we cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us (1Pet 5:7).

David Baird

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CITATIONS

A comprehensive bibliography is included in this commentary for two very good reasons:-

- i) To demonstrate that I was dependent, in many instances, on the writings of others, and
- ii) To encourage others to read and study 1Peter for themselves and to not rely entirely on this publication.

However, a note of warning needs to be sounded. It is important that when using the writings of men we treat them with a certain amount of caution as the writers' attitudes, theological biases and personalities will have influenced them. This unfortunately occurs in Christadelphian writings and especially so in non-Christadelphian commentaries. "Christian" commentaries need to be handled with care although it would be foolish to declare that they are devoid of any value.

In preparing these notes three "Christian" commentators were constantly used. Selwyn provided insightful information, particularly on Peter's use of Greek, Barclay proved valuable when examining the environment and culture of the times, and Stibbs/Walls presented relatively sound, conservative interpretations of the content of 1Peter. But, and not surprisingly, all advocate Christ as a substitute for sinners and as part of the Trinity.

Of the Christadelphian authors consulted, Brother H P Mansfield's phrase-by-phrase notes were extremely valuable, as were the prolific writings of Brother John Carter. It is a great pity Brother Carter never had a book published on 1Peter. Brother Thomas never ceases to amaze with the quality, depth and freshness of his material even though it was written over a hundred years ago without the assistance of the "modern study aids" that are currently available.

Numerous Bible versions have been cited but my preference lies with the AV and NKJV. The legacy of the RV has, I believe, hampered rather than helped the science of Bible translation. All the deletions promoted by the RV and post-RV translations have not been automatically accepted and details are provided in the commentary when a deletion is considered authentic. However, many modern translations do assist in the general understanding of a passage under review because of the familiarity of the English used.

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TRENCH	<i>Synonyms of the New Testament</i> , 8th Edition, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company, 1915
VINE	<i>Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> , McDonald Publishing Company
WALLS	<i>1 Peter</i> , in <i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i> , IVP/Eerdmans, 1983
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Bible Versions Cited

AV	<i>Authorised (King James) Version</i>
DIAGLOTT or DIAG	<i>The Emphatic Diaglott</i>
DOUAY	<i>The Holy Bible, Douay Version</i>
GREEN	J Green, <i>The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek/English Bible</i>
JB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i>

KNOX	R A Knox, <i>The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ</i> , Australian Edition
LXX	<i>see</i> SEPTUAGINT
MARSHALL	<i>The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament</i>
MOFF	<i>The Moffatt Translation of the Bible</i> , Final Edition
NEB	<i>The New English Bible</i>
NESTLE	<i>The Nestle Greek Text</i> , 21st Edition
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NKJV	<i>The New King James Version</i>
ROTH	J B Rotherham, <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>
RSV	<i>The Revised Standard Version</i>
RV	<i>The Revised Version</i>
SEPTUAGINT	<i>The Septuagint Version (Greek-English) of the Old Testament</i>
WEY	R F Weymouth, <i>The New Testament in Modern Speech</i> , 1903 Edition
YLIT	<i>Young's Literal Translation of the Bible</i>

INTRODUCTION

Time and Place of Writing

The time and place of writing are best considered concomitantly as each depends on the other for the answer. The difficulties in determining the solution are compounded by the lack of information about Peter after his contribution at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:7-11). Except for a few scant, though significant, references in Paul's epistles (1Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:7-14) Peter simply drops from view. The Acts of the Apostles is given over to the work of Paul and the majority of "post-Acts" writings are those of Paul's epistles.

1Peter 5:13 states that the epistle is addressed from Babylon. There were two places of that name in Peter's day. The first was the well-known Mesopotamian city which, according to Josephus¹, was a thriving Jewish centre where Jews gathered in great numbers. There was also a Roman frontier post on the Nile called Babylon due to its reputed origination by Babylonian rebels. Additional to this is the metaphorical term "Babylon" given to Rome, particularly as noted in the Book of Revelation (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21). Peter wrote from one of these three places.

It would seem highly improbable that Peter wrote from Babylon on the Nile. It was but a little more than a fortress and there seems no likely reason why Peter should make a base there. There is no scriptural confirmation, nor do the traditions of the early ecclesia shed any substantial evidence for this possibility. Instead we are left with the seemingly unresolved controversy over Mesopotamian Babylon and ancient Rome.

The majority of Christian commentators, notably twentieth-century commentators, come down firmly on the side of ancient Rome being the place where Peter wrote from. Selwyn², Walls³ and Barclay⁴ all confidently assert such. Farrar⁵ provides an abundance of data to enforce this point of view.

The evidence for Rome is as follows:-

- i) Peter definitely died a martyr in Rome no later than AD68. To place him in Babylon is to place him at an extreme end of the empire. Church tradition is very strong. Bruce is convinced when he writes, "That Peter and Paul were the most eminent of many Christians who suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero is certain."⁶

¹ JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XV, Chapter II, para 2

² SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, p60, 303-305. Selwyn is not as strident as others who support the Rome hypothesis. PLUMPTRE, *The Bible Educator*, Vol 4, p130, THOMPSON, *Life Work of Peter the Apostle*, p250, and certainly ALFORD, *Alford's Greek Testament*, Vol 4, p128-131 confidently assert the alternative viewpoint.

³ WALLS, *1 Peter*, p64-66

⁴ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p165

⁵ FARRAR, *The Early Days of Christianity*, p66, 594-596

⁶ BRUCE, *New Testament History*, p410. F.F.Bruce is also dogmatic in saying "that they (Peter and Paul) were claimed as co-founders of the Roman church ... is likewise certain". I do not believe that it is certain. Believers were already in Rome prior to Paul's arrival and could easily have established their ecclesia or ecclesias in households after hearing the gospel proclaimed at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Peter's arrival in Rome

- ii) The connection with the symbolic title used in Revelation.
- iii) Peter not only died in Rome, he worked there.
- iv) Mark, mentioned in 1Peter 5:13, was in Rome, with Paul, during Paul's first imprisonment (Col 4:10; Phile :24) and was summoned by Paul during his second imprisonment (2Tim 4:11). This means that he was with Paul between AD61-63 and probably rejoined him just prior to AD67 or 68.
- v) It is considered unlikely that Peter, Silas and Mark would all be situated in Babylon many kilometres from Jerusalem and Christian centres further westward.
- vi) There is not the faintest tradition for Peter visiting Babylon.
- vii) "An early Christian would have seen nothing either allegorical or enigmatic in the matter. He would at once have understood the meaning, and have known the reasons, alike mystic and political, for avoiding the name of Rome."⁷

After considering the above evidence and its supporting documentation, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Peter died in Rome. However, that does not mean that he spent a lengthy period of time in Rome prior to his death.

The Romish Church viewpoint that he was in Rome for twenty years before his execution is not, in any way, corroborated by Scripture nor by the early Church fathers. Rather, it would be contradicted by Scripture.

Despite the solid statements to support Rome as 1Peter's place of origin, strong evidence can also be forwarded to present literal Babylon as Peter's domicile when writing his first epistle. Consider the following:-

- i) "Babylon" is used in Revelation as the title for apostate Rome, not for Rome in general. Rome, at this time, was pagan and not representative of, or the focal point of, apostate Christianity (as it later became).
- ii) It is difficult to think that Peter was in Rome when Paul wrote his epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon, as well as a later epistle (2Timothy), without a mention of Peter's name or a sending of Peter's greetings.
- iii) 1Peter could have easily been written prior to AD61 giving Mark time to travel to Rome to be at Paul's side. Brother Mansfield⁸ and the Companion Bible suggest a date no later than AD60 for the writing of the epistle.

may not have occurred until after Paul's death. It is a strong possibility that neither were founders, certainly on-site founders, of the ecclesia of Rome. Paul's epistle to the Romans was written before he had even set foot in Rome (Rom 15:22-26; see also *Companion Bible*: Appendix 180).

⁷ FARRAR, *The Early Days of Christianity*, p596

⁸ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p95

- iv) If Peter was living in Rome prior to Paul's arrival it is inconceivable that neither Luke in the Acts nor Paul in his epistle to the Romans makes not the slightest mention of him.
- v) As late as AD57, Peter was travelling as a missionary with his wife (1Cor 9:5), thus taking his work outside of the exclusive domain of Rome.
- vi) As already noted, there was a large Jewish community in Babylon and conceivably a strong group of believers whose origin can be traced to the speech Peter gave on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Peter, along with Silas and Mark, were present in Babylon yet always cognisant of the troubles confronting the brethren in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1Pet 1:1).
- vii) There does not seem to be any need for Peter to use "Babylon" as a pseudonym for the city of Rome, particularly if it was well-known to the ecclesias that Peter lived and worked in Rome.

After weighing the information considered, I believe that Peter wrote his first epistle from Babylon in Mesopotamia no later than AD60. While other conclusions are well within the realm of possibility, the issue is not resolving the controversy as to where he wrote from; it is the observation of the ecclesial environment to which Peter wrote. It would not be a profitable exercise to explore the "Babylon" question in any further detail. Interesting, yes; profitable, not so.

The Setting Of The Epistle

i) The Recipients

1Peter 1:1 is quite clear. The epistle was sent to "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (NIV). If we take the strict boundaries of those provinces (at that time Bithynia and Pontus were combined as one province) all of Asia Minor, north of the Taurus mountains, would be included. This is a large area, so much so, that some choose to ignore the boundaries and declare 1Peter to be a general epistle.

I believe it would be more appropriate to consider the areas prescribed in a limited sense. Parts of Asia were effectively converted through the work of Paul, especially during his lengthy stay at Ephesus (Acts 19:10) and received the writings of Paul in the form of the circular letter known as the epistle to the Ephesians as well as the letter to the Colossians not long after Peter wrote his first epistle. We must also remember that Paul really only had physical presence in the coastal areas of Asia. There is no record of an inland journey, even to the ecclesias (except Ephesus) which are prominent in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:11).

Paul's work with the Galatian ecclesias was in the southern part of that large province. He had not even gone close to the capital of the province, Ancyra, and had, from the record of Acts, commenced no preaching work in the larger northern section of Galatia.

Paul did not, according to Scripture, preach in Bithynia, Pontus or Cappadocia.

What does this all mean? It is likely that Peter was writing to those areas which had not received the great preaching work of Paul. It can also be conjectured that Peter was the founder of many of the ecclesias or, at least, the catalyst for the conversion of many in those areas. Perhaps the following suggestions, albeit tentatively advanced, can give some support to these propositions.

- a) Peter's speech to the crowd on the day of Pentecost had effect on Jews from Cappadocia and Pontus, as well as those of Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia (Acts 2:9-10). This may have helped to establish an affinity between Peter and those areas, as it may also have done with Mesopotamia (Babylon - 1Peter 5:13) and Rome (the place where Peter, in all likelihood, died).
- b) Paul was prevented by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-7). Why was this so? It could be possible that Peter was active in those areas at that time. Therefore it was more useful for Paul to break new ground in Macedonia. Even though the Holy Spirit was responsible for Paul's change in direction, Paul would not have entered Bithynia if he knew that Peter was preaching there. Paul's policy was normally that of preaching in untrodden areas, that is "not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom 15:20).
- c) Even though Paul did not preach in Bithynia somebody must have performed a mighty work in that area. Not long after Paul's death, Pliny the proconsul of Bithynia complained that the pagan temples were neglected and sacrificial victims could scarcely find a purchaser. This was because "the number of culprits (i.e. Christians) is so great as to call for serious consultation."⁹ Perhaps this mighty work was that of the Apostle Peter's.
- d) Peter did perform missionary work in areas outside of Judaea and, at least, as far east as Greece. Paul alludes to this when he writes in 1Corinthians 9:5, "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas" (NKJV). This was written some five years after Paul was forbidden to enter Bithynia. Complementing this is the fact that a Cephas division had sprung up in Corinth (1Cor 1:12) - an indicator that Peter could possibly have visited Corinth.

The recipients of 1Peter could have been the brethren and sisters of Asia Minor who had not been won over by Paul. On the other hand, they could have been evangelised by Peter. This is mirrored in the affinity and affection he has for them and the very personal way he writes to them.

⁹ Excerpt from the letter (No. 96) of Pliny to Trajan. Reproduced in THOMAS, *Eureka*, Vol 1 p216-217

ii) The Historical Setting

As we have already surmised, 1Peter was written around AD60. In reaching that conclusion, we have placed the epistle before the persecution by the Emperor Nero. This poses a not insurmountable problem. What are the references to trials in 1Peter all about if there was no authorised persecution until four years later?

Persecution is alluded to four times in the book. In 1:6-7 they are grieving in manifold trials (*pirasmos*) that the trial (*dokimion*) of their faith might be found unto praise and glory. In 3:13-17 they are likely to be falsely accused as evil doers. In 4:12 they are being prepared for a fiery trial (*purosos*) that will try (*pirasmos*) them. In 5:8-9 they are warned to be vigilant against the devil, being aware that others will undergo the same afflictions (*patheema*).

What appears certain is that, in these references, we are not reading of the same persecutions. The trial of 4:12 is a prophecy and thus had not yet occurred. Although the word *pirasmos* is repeated from 1:6, indicating a similarity in the nature and objective of the trial, the term *purosos* denotes a sharp increase in the intensity of the afflictions to come upon the believers.

When Peter wrote there was not much to fear from the Roman government. In fact one only has to scan the pages of Acts to realise that, in many instances, Roman magistrates, soldiers and officials saved Paul from the fury of Jews and pagans alike. It simply was not Government policy to automatically attack the believers. 1Peter 3:13 would almost indicate that, in the everyday administration of justice, Christ's disciples had nothing to fear.

All we find stated when Peter wrote is that the brethren were undergoing trials of numerous and diverse sorts. These trials, in all probability, were local and petty. The Jews who dogged the steps of Paul and the pagans were not slow in antagonising the authorities to act against the brethren nor were they backward in executing their own form of justice. This behaviour did not have the sanction of the government in Rome. But, the seeds were sown.

The slanders against the brethren were making an impression. They accused the disciples of being cannibals, because they ate Christ's body and drank his blood (shades of transubstantiation) during their secret ceremonies; of being given over to orgies of unbridled lust as their meeting was behind closed doors and was called the *agape* or love-feast; of being incendiaries because they spoke of the coming day when the earth would dissolve in flames (could this be where Nero got his idea to accuse the brethren?); of tampering with family relationships because this new religion had the unpopular side-effect of dividing families; of damaging trade (Acts 19:21-41); of disloyalty to Caesar for no true brother would worship the Emperor's godhead.

We can add to these slanders the anti-semitism of the pagans which was directed at the brethren as they were deemed a Jewish sect. If that was not enough, the Jewish faith which had appealed to women because of its exemplary moral standards, turned many women against the ecclesia and they, in turn, influenced their husbands to respond similarly. Acts 13:50 presents a clear example of such an incident.

Although the ecclesia was not bearing the brunt of a ferocious emperor-driven persecution, life was by no means easy. The trials they underwent were true tests of their allegiance to Christ, but a greater trial was to come.

1Peter 4:12 predicts an exacerbation of all that went before. Nero's persecution was the first emperor-approved persecution. Most of us would be aware of the horror stories of the terrible time which began with the great fire that gutted Rome on 19 July, 64. Nero was placed under great suspicion so a diversion, a scapegoat, had to be found. The brethren in Rome became the scapegoat. Tacitus writes in *Annals* 15:44 -

“Neither human assistance in the shape of imperial gifts, nor attempts to appease the gods, could remove the sinister report that the fire was due to Nero's own orders. And, so, in the hope of dissipating the rumour he falsely diverted the charge on a set of people to whom the vulgar gave the name of Christians, and who were detested for the abominations they perpetrated.”

Tacitus, a historian contemporary with Nero and the growth of Christianity, reflects the results of the successful slander hurled at the believers. What this history-making incident also did was:

- a) provide official recognition of the Christians as a distinct entity and not an offshoot of Judaism; and
- b) provide the first imperial decree against Christianity.

These outcomes are important, because it permitted local governors to persecute the ecclesia if they so desired. Remember, Nero's cruelties only occurred in the district of Rome. Cappadocia, Asia etc did not have to copy what Nero was doing in Rome. However, the local authorities could now, if they chose to do so, act unrestrained. This is obvious in Revelation 2:8-11 in the letter to Smyrna. The Smyrnan ecclesia was more persecuted than the other six ecclesias addressed in Revelation 2-3. This was because Smyrna the city, of all the cities of Asia, was the most loyal to Rome. Therefore, the authorities were more likely to imitate the current trends being demonstrated in Rome, including the persecution of Christians.

From the time of Nero the ecclesia could no longer rely on government protection or judicial fair-play. They were susceptible to the whim of whatever person became the local governor or was perched on the imperial throne in Rome. Clearly, the fiery trial did come upon them and continued for many, many years. Our earlier reference to the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan is further proof of the injustices they underwent and were to undergo.

Therefore, we may conclude that 1Peter relates to brethren suffering as faithful early believers invariably did. As in Acts, their trials came from unofficial or official sources acting without imperial sanction. However, this situation took a serious turn for the worse not long after they had received Peter's epistle. As time went on, particularly as membership increased, they were regarded as a menace to order and society. They were hated of all men - for the sake of the name.

What, in human terms, are astonishing are Peter's instructions to them. Instructions given in the knowledge of impending peril. His concern was that the ecclesia should be, in the eyes of all, blameless. Suffering mattered not, especially if it was undeserved. Dare we grumble in the face of the petty trials we face? “For hereunto were ye called: because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

The Writer of the Epistle¹⁰

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, had a life that is probably well-known to most readers. We know his foibles, strengths and emotions as we have experienced the Gospel records and later his labours in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

The early life of Peter need not be re-written; merely summarised so that we can observe the development of this most approachable of human beings. His failings followed by the care of his master should encourage us in the service of our Lord. As Brother Norris writes, "Peter stands out as a shining example of a man of faith. He starts quietly, quickly realises with whom he has to deal and adjusts himself to an attitude of obedience and reverence, acknowledges his failures with a humility and an understanding which take away every vestige of self excusing from us, and rises ultimately to heights which compel our admiration. Peter is no excuse for us: he is a challenge and an incentive."¹¹

During his early life as a hardworked fisherman of the Lake of Galilee, we first find Simon as probably a disciple of John the Baptist. He was brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew and given the name of Peter (*Cephas*: A stone) by the Lord. Christ called Peter three times. Firstly, as a disciple (John 1:41-42), secondly, as a companion and fellow-worker (Matt 4:19) and finally, as an apostle (Mark 3:14-16; Luke 6:13-14).

In watching Peter, we can see how he abandoned earthly ties after the miraculous draught of fishes. We can recognise the impetuosity of his character; the vigour that placed him at the forefront of the disciples, but which also led to the mistakes we can so easily frown upon.

The narratives of the Gospels have brought to our attention his attempt to walk to his Lord upon the water; his first public acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God; the magnificent promise he received followed by a presumption which his Lord so sternly rebuked; the many eager questions; the incident of the Temple contribution; the refusal and then the ardour to be washed by Christ; the warning addressed to him; the inability to watch one hour; the dramatic blow struck at Malchus; his threefold denial of the Christ; his bitter repentance; his visit to the sepulchre; the exquisite scene at morning, on the shores of the Lake, when Jesus appeared once more to seven of the disciples, and when, having once more tested the love of his generous but unstable apostle, he gave him his last special instructions to tend his sheep and feed his lambs, and foretold his earthly end.

What an amazing man we find in the Peter that walked with the Lord Jesus Christ. Impetuous is the common description. Impulsive, in him being the first to confess Jesus as the Son of God, yet equally forthright in attempting to dissuade Jesus from his divinely-appointed path of suffering. He was courageous in testifying Christ, yet vehement in his cowardly denial of association with him. He was so obviously a man of spiritual insight yet, at other times, Christ despairs at his mental sluggishness. His training in the very footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, culminating with Christ's statement of confidence in him, produced a man who combined wisdom, consistency and strength with his natural leadership and energy.

¹⁰ The majority of this section is taken from MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p89-91, and FARRAR, *The Early Days of Christianity*, p60-62f

¹¹ NORRIS, *Peter: Fisher of Men*, p8

Look at him in those early days after Christ's departure. His initiative in the appointment of Matthias; his speech on the day of Pentecost; his miracles; the decisive judgment of Ananias and Sapphira; his journey to Samaria and the discomfiture of Simon the Sorcerer; his kindness to Paul; the vision at Joppa that led to the baptism of Cornelius; his bold precedent in eating with Gentile brethren; the fearlessness with which he faced the anger of the Jews in Jerusalem, even after the death of the apostle James; his imprisonment and deliverance and, of course, the brave opinions at the Jerusalem Conference when he unhesitatingly declared himself a supporter of Paul. Peter was a changing man. His egregious leadership laid the foundation of the ecclesia; not just in Jerusalem but world-wide.

That is not to say he was now perfected in the work of the gospel. As we may be aware, Paul upbraided Peter at Antioch because, through fear of the Jewish brethren, he was retreating from what he had earlier championed. Despite this, Peter was a different man from the Gospel narratives. However, after Acts 15, Peter disappears from the record. His work as a leader was diminished, possibly complete. James, the brother of Christ, dominated in Jerusalem and Paul was the great apostle to the Gentiles.

What happened to Peter? From the scant information available, Peter became a shepherd of the flock. We find that his name is linked to centres outside of Jerusalem: Antioch, Corinth, Babylon and finally, if tradition is reliable, Rome. His work was now that of feeding the flock in response to Christ's injunction (John 21:15-17). Although a revered and respected apostle he no longer pushed himself to the forefront. His humility, his great love for the brethren, the uncomplicated, even serene, nature of his writings contrast vividly to the Peter of the Gospels and, to a lesser degree, the Peter of the Acts. As Brother Mansfield writes, "Each phase of Peter's life gives testimony to the transforming power of Christ's example (see Acts 4v13)."¹²

Peter's writings are the words of a man whose experience was unsurpassed among the disciples of Christ. His words strengthen, instruct, warn and comfort.

¹² MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p91

First Peter and Peter's Life with Christ¹³

It will be obvious from the numerous parallels quoted below that Peter's first epistle is replete with recollections of the life and words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter was a witness of the sufferings of Christ (5:1). Not only does he bring to mind the words of Christ but also his special relationship with his Lord. Some of those reminiscences would have been painful to Peter. Imagine his desolation as he exhorts his readers to answer with meekness and fear yet he had once responded to a questioner with swearing and cursing.

You may think that some of the allusions are a little dubious and you will probably detect others that should have been included. Anyway, here goes:-

1:3	Begotten us again	John 3:3,5
1:4	Inheritance ... reserved in heaven	Matt 6:20
1:6	Sorrow ... greatly rejoice	Matt 5:4,12
1:7	Trial of your faith	Mark 13:13; Luke 22:31
1:8	Now ye see him not, yet believing	John 20:29
1:10	The prophets have enquired and searched diligently	Matt 13:17
1:11	Testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow	Luke 24:26,46
1:12	Preached before the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit	John 14:26; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8
1:13	Gird up the loins	Luke 12:35; 21:34 John 21:18
1:14,17	As obedient children ... call on the Father	Matt 6:9
1:19	A lamb without blemish	John 1:29
1:20	Before the foundation of the world	John 17:24
1:22	Love one another	John 13:34; 15:12
1:23	Being born again ... By the word of God	John 3:3,5 John 1:13
2:4	Chosen of God	Luke 23:45
2:4-7	A living stone ... chief corner stone	Matt 16:16-18; 21:42
2:8	Offence	Matt 16:23; 26:33
2:9	Out of darkness into his marvellous light	John 1:5; Matt 5:14-16; Luke 11:35-36; 16:8
2:12	By your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God	Matt 5:16
2:13	Submit yourself to every ordinance of man	Matt 17:27; 22:21
2:19	This is thankworthy	Matt 5:39-42; Luke 6:32-35
2:20	Buffeted	Matt 26:67; Mark 14:65

¹³ Largely taken from NORRIS, *Peter: Fisher of Men*, p181-184 with some additional information from WALLS, *1 Peter*, p35, and SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, p28-31, 376-378, 442-449.

2:21	Leaving us an example ... Follow in his steps	John 13:15 Mark 8:34; 10:38; John 13:36
2:23	Committed himself to him that judgeth righteously	Luke 22:42; 23:46
2:24	By whose stripes ye were healed	Mark 10:45; 14:24
2:25	The shepherd	Mark 14:27; John 10:11
3:9	But contrariwise blessing	Matt 5:39-42; Luke 6:28
3:13	Who is he that will harm you	John 10:29
3:14	Suffer for righteousness' sake	Matt 5:10
3:15	Answer ... with meekness and fear	Mark 14:71
3:16	They speak evil of you	Matt 5:11,44; Luke 6:28
3:20	The days of Noah	Matt 24:37
3:22	On the right hand of God ... Powers being made subject to him	Matt 26:64 Matt 28:18
4:3	When we walked	Luke 21:34
4:5	Shall give account	Matt 12:36
4:7	Watch unto prayer	Matt 25:13; Luke 21:36 Mark 13:33-37
4:10	Good stewards	Luke 12:42-48
4:12	Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial	Matt 10:22-25
4:13	Partakers of Christ's sufferings	Luke 22:28
4:14	If ye be reproached for the name of Christ	Matt.5:11
4:18	Where shall the worldly and sinner appear	Luke 18:7
4:19	Commit the keeping of their lives to God	Luke 23:56
5:1	A witness of the suffering of Christ ... A partaker of the glory	Luke 22:54-62; 24:48 Luke 24:46; John 13:36
5:2	Feed the flock of God	John 21:15-17
5:3	Neither as being lords	Matt 20:25; Mark 10:42-44
5:5	Be clothed with humility	John 13:3-10
5:6	Humble ... may exult you	Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14
5:7	Casting all your care upon him	Matt 6:30-34
5:8	Be vigilant	Matt 25:13; 26:40-41; Mark 14:37-38
5:10	Stablish	Luke 22:32
5:14	Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity ... Peace	Mark 14:44-45; Luke 7:45 Luke 24:36; John 20:19,21,26

First Peter and Peter's Speeches in Acts¹⁴

While it is blatant that Peter drew much from a life in the very shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can also discern that the basic ideas of the speeches of the early ecclesia in Jerusalem, most of which Peter uttered, and the message of 1Peter are precisely the same. This is no great revelation, although it does seem to surprise a number of modern-day Christian commentators, as we know that throughout Scripture the gospel truth is both clear and consistent.

What is important is the fact that Peter is intent on reinforcing the basics and their application to the lives of the true believers. It is possible that some to whom Peter was writing had been present at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9) and that Peter may have actually taught in the areas of 1Peter 1:1 prior to writing this epistle. They had probably heard it all before. This demonstrates the need for all of us to keep the basics of the truth uncluttered by human logic and to hold fast to them. It is man, not God, who has complicated the Scriptures of truth.

Below, for your interest, are lists of parallels between 1Peter and Peter's speeches in the Acts of the Apostles.

SPEECH 1 - Acts 2:14-40 - To the Crowd at Pentecost

v14-16	The outpouring of the Spirit as foretold,	1Peter 1:10-12
v23	Christ's death was by God's foreknowledge	1Peter 1:20
v31	Christ not left in the grave	1Peter 3:18
v32	We are witnesses	1Peter 5:1
vv32-36	Christ's exultation and glory	1Peter 1:21; 3:22
vv38-39	Repent and be baptised	1Peter 3:21
	... Christ's name	1Peter 4:14
	... Remission of sins	1Peter 2:10
v40	Save yourself from this untoward generation	1Peter 3:20-21

SPEECH 2 - Acts 3:11-26 - In Solomon's Porch

v15	We are witnesses	1Peter 5:1
vv15-16	Faith and hope in God	1Peter 1:21
v17	Ignorance	1Peter 1:14
v18	Christ's suffering in line with prophecy	1Peter 1:11,20
v20	Christ's second coming	1Peter 1:7,13
v23	Rejection of unbelievers	1Peter 2:8
v26	Forgiveness for repentant	1Peter 2:10

¹⁴ Largely taken from SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, p33-36 with some additional material from FARRAR, *The Early Days of Christianity*, p71

SPEECH 3 - Acts 4:8-12 - Before the Sanhedrin

v10	God raised Jesus	1Peter 1:21
v11	Citation from Psalm 118:22	1Peter 2:7

SPEECH 4 - Acts 5:29-32 - Before the Sanhedrin

v30	Hanged on a tree	1Peter 2:24
v32	Witness to Christ	1Peter 5:1
	... Witness of the Holy Spirit	1Peter 1:12

SPEECH 5 - Acts 10:34-43 - To Cornelius

v34	No respecter of persons	1Peter 1:17
v39	Hanged on a tree	1Peter 2:24
v42	Judge of the quick and dead	1Peter 4:5
v43	Prophetic witness	1Peter 1:10

SPEECH 6 - Acts 15:7-11 - At the Jerusalem Conference

v7	Gentiles chosen by God	1Peter 1:1-2; 2:9
v9	Purified by faith	1Peter 1:22

Analysis of the Epistle

1:1-2	OPENING SALUTATION
1:3-12	THE BELIEVER'S HOPE AND SALVATION 1:3-5 <i>Praise to God for what He has done for believers</i> 1:6-9 <i>Joy despite suffering</i> 1:10-12 <i>The hope of the prophets</i>
1:13-2:3	A CALL TO HOLY LIVING 1:13-16 <i>The holiness of their calling</i> 1:17-21 <i>The ground of their calling</i> 1:22-2:3 <i>Their new life</i>
2:4-10	THE CHOSEN STONE AND HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE 2:4-5 <i>The new spiritual house</i> 2:6-8 <i>The chief cornerstone</i> 2:9-10 <i>The people of God</i>
2:11-3:12	THE PILGRIM LIFE IN RELATION TO OTHERS 2:11-12 <i>The example of self-discipline</i> 2:13-17 <i>Towards secular authority</i> 2:18-20 <i>Towards masters</i> 2:21-25 <i>Christ our example</i> 3:1-6 <i>The duty of wives</i> 3:7 <i>The duty of husbands</i> 3:8-12 <i>Principles of a life in Christ</i>
3:13-22	CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND OURS 3:13-17 <i>Suffering for righteousness' sake</i> 3:18-22 <i>Christ's suffering and its consequences</i>
4:1-11	LIVING TO GOD 4:1-6 <i>A further call to holy living</i> 4:7-11 <i>Being good stewards of God's grace</i>
4:12-5:11	THE FIERY TRIAL AND HOW TO BEAR IT 4:12-19 <i>As partakers of Christ's suffering</i> 5:1-4 <i>As elders providing an example</i> 5:5-11 <i>As the flock in humility</i>
5:12-14	CONCLUDING GREETINGS

A COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Opening Salutation

1 Peter 1:1-2

1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ”

Such is the straightforward and authoritative designation which Peter adopts. He does not need to add any of the amplifications or conditioning adjectives that Paul, on occasion, finds necessary to do (Rom 1:1; 1Cor 1:1; 2Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Col 1:1). Peter’s apostolic authority and qualifications were not under question. Nor does Peter need to adopt Paul’s practice of referring to his companions when commencing an epistle (1Cor 1:1; 2Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1Thess 1:1; 2Thess 1:1; Phile :1), although both Mark and Silas, so well known to the ecclesia of Asia Minor, were with him at this time. Peter, as an apostle, was unquestioned and was renowned among the brethren he was writing to.

What is also interesting and certainly significant is the use of the name that Christ gave him. He uses the Greek version “Peter” as opposed to the Aramaic “Cephas.” This provides a valuable insight into who Peter was writing to. Brother Carter asserts that Peter “wrote his letter to Jewish Christians.”¹ However, I find it difficult to agree with this conclusion. If Peter was writing exclusively to Jews he would have used “Simeon”, as adopted by James at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:14) or “Cephas” as used by the Jews of Corinth and Galatia. “Peter” is overwhelmingly used in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul uses it only twice (Gal 2:7,8)², whereas “Cephas” is used some eight times, all in Galatians and 1 Corinthians. Other reasons why Peter was not writing exclusively to Jews will be advanced later in our consideration of this verse.

“Peter” was also Simon’s distinctive name given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter would have considered it a great privilege to write under this honoured name, with all its associations with the foundation of the ecclesia (Matt 16:18), to brethren who were fruits of his labour.

“to the strangers scattered throughout”

This phrase is better rendered by incorporating the word “elect” of 1:2. Examples include:-

“to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion of” (Marshall)

“To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout” (NIV)

“Unto the chosen pilgrims of the dispersion, throughout” (Roth).

The word *diaspora* (here rendered “scattered”) was the name for the Jews scattered in exile in all countries outside the borders of Israel (see John 7:35). Peter uses it to describe the brethren and to suggest that in this world they are not only scattered but, as the word *parapidemos* (“strangers”) infers, sojourners in this present generation. Paul describes such as “strangers and pilgrims in the earth” (Heb 11:13) and with “no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb 13:14).

¹ CARTER, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, p5

² “Peter” is also used in the AV in Gal 1:18; 2:11,14. According to most other versions and Greek texts including Nestle, Rotherham, Companion Bible, Alford and the Diaglott, this should be “Cephas.”

Parapidemos is a word which emphasises both alien nationality and temporary residency. It is used in the Septuagint of Abraham in Canaan (Gen 23:4) and of man's sojourn on earth (Psa 39:12). Peter is declaring quite clearly their position in the world. Peter is challenging them to consider themselves not as citizens of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia but as strangers, pilgrims, sojourners like the despised Jewish diaspora and the great men of faith such as Abraham and Moses. He reinforces this in 2:11 when he describes them as strangers (*paroikos* - Acts 7:6,29) and pilgrims (*parapidemos*). How do we perceive our place in today's society?

Peter has stressed their position in the world and he also affirms their status before God - "elect" (*eklektos*). He expands this theme in 1:2, by describing how they were "chosen by God" (Thayer), and throughout chapter 2 as he declares them to be *eklektos* of God (2:4), associated with Christ "a chief cornerstone, *eklektos*, precious" (2:6) and how they are an "eklektos generation" (2:9). They may be scattered, they may be sojourners, but what security and joy they had in being *eklektos*.

"Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia"

See the section entitled "The Setting of the Epistle." While some would suggest that Peter only wrote to Gentiles, and others that his message was to Jews, it is safer to adopt a conservative approach and say that Peter wrote to believers, both Jew and Gentile. The evidence that suggests Peter wrote to Gentiles as well as Jews includes:-

- i) The use of "Peter" instead of the Aramaic "Cephas";
- ii) Direct allusion to their background in the epistle (4:3 and possibly 1:14,18; 2:10); and
- iii) There is no mention of any question of the Law; a question which always arose when there was a strong Jewish representation.

1:2

As mentioned in our commentary of 1:1, "elect" is better placed before the word "strangers" in that verse. What we have now, after an introduction which captures their position in the world and before God, is the means and design of their election in relation to the present.

They were chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." It is as if Peter is recapitulating the sentiments he and James expressed at the Jerusalem Conference. God used Peter as the vehicle to commence the great work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:17). God set them apart, "gave them witness", by giving them the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8) so that God might take out a people for His name (Acts 15:14).

Brother Thomas writes, "God elects saints for His kingdom, not by foregone conclusions which are irreversible; but men are 'elect through sanctification of spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ'. This reveals to us the means and design of the election in relation to the present name. 'Sanctification of spirit' is the means; 'obedience and sprinkling of Christ's blood', the end. How this is brought about is explained in these words - 'Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit'. The manner in

which men are brought to obedience and purification by the sprinkled blood, through the spirit is practically explained in the use of the keys by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and at the house of Cornelius. The spirit, through the apostle, ‘convinced men of sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come’; and confirmed his words by the signs which accompanied them. They believed and obeyed the truth; and in obeying it were purified from all past sins by faith in the blood of sprinkling. Thus they were ‘washed, sanctified, and justified by the name of the Lord, and by the spirit of God’; and after this manner elected according to His foreknowledge and predetermination. No man need flatter himself that he is one of God’s elect, unless he believes the gospel of the kingdom and obeys it and walks in the steps of the faith of Abraham.”³ It is not as if God says, “I elect you from all eternity to be saved: Do what you may.”

Brother Thomas has beautifully linked together the phrases of 1:2 to present the panorama. When we attach that to the terms of Acts 15 we are provided with a three-dimensional model of what it means to be a member of God’s elect.

Peter’s readers were chosen by the foreknowledge of God. God had chosen that generation to receive the gospel. As it was to those to whom Peter wrote, our election has nothing to do with the will of man. It is God that showeth mercy. As Brother Thomas explains, “Had things been left to the apostles they would not have extended the invitation to men of other nations to become with them the heirs of the kingdom of Canaan, and of the dominion of the world. They were running to and fro among their own nation, calling upon them to become the children of the promise who are counted for the seed; but it was not of their will, but contrary to it, that ‘the word’ was spread to the Gentiles, opening the kingdom to them.”⁴

So step one - their calling was part of God’s plan.

Next we have the sanctification of the spirit. Their hearts and minds were sanctified, consecrated to God through the power of the Spirit. In other words, it refers to a separation from the world through the spirit-word (John 6:63) which Peter taught and authenticated with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4,43). The equation of “spirit” equals “word” is confirmed by Paul (Eph 6:17) and John (1John 5:6). However, that does not preclude the other thought that the brethren of Peter’s generation did have their election confirmed and their sanctification accentuated by their personal receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8).

Step two - their calling was via the power of the spirit-word, which sanctified them, and confirmed by their receipt of the Holy Spirit.

This was done unto or “for obedience” (NKJV) to Jesus Christ. They were not chosen then sanctified only to do as they pleased. What we have presented is the originator of the election - God the Father; the agency by which sanctification is established - the spirit; and now the means whereby the election is perfected - obedience to and cleansing by the Lord Jesus Christ.

This cleansing is particularly attributed to the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The use of this term is obviously intended to take us back to the Mosaic references to the

³ THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p265

⁴ THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p266

sprinkling of blood. This act takes place on three occasions in the Old Testament. Each may have been in the forefront of Peter's thoughts as he wrote this lofty introduction. The three occasions when mentioned are:-

- i) When a leper had been healed he was sprinkled with the blood of a bird (Lev 14:1-7). Thus we have a symbol of cleansing;
- ii) As part of the consecration of Aaron and the priests they were sprinkled with blood (Exod 29:20-22). Sprinkling, in this context, is a sign of setting apart for the service of God; and
- iii) Sprinkling with blood was part of the grand picture when Israel pledged obedience to God (Exod 24:1-8). This sprinkling was a sprinkling for obedience.

All of these significances are critical in the life of a saint. Through Christ they are cleansed, they are set apart for a life in service to God and they pledge obedience to their new master.

Peter's overwhelming message is concluded by what is considered by many a customary greeting - grace and peace. It is a greeting of beauty and power, not of custom. Grace (*charis*) is "favourable regard" (Vine). It means to be in favour with God. It is undeserved and within it is "all the splendour of the undeserved gifts of the wondrous love of God to man" (Barclay). Peace (*eirene*) equates with harmony. It is not merely absence of conflict. It refers to harmony restored between God and man through Christ.

The conclusion is profound. It is God's purpose to call believers. It is through the work of God's spirit - the spirit-word - that they are sanctified to Him. It is by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ that a believer is cleansed of past sin and dedicated in obedience and service to God. God is the originator, the spirit the channel and Christ the means whereby God's favour is extended to mankind and harmony is restored.

The Believer's Hope and Salvation

1 Peter 1:3-12

Praise to God for what He has done for believers

1:3-5

This section has a logical flow that we should summarise at this point. 1:3-9 quite simply states that we have been born again to a great hope, to an inheritance reserved. This is our objective but in the meantime we are to be tried to give proof of our faith.

The result of being born again and having our faith tried is to obtain, as the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls.¹

1:3 “Blessed”

The Greek word (*eulogeetos*) means “well spoken of” (Vine) or simply “praised” (Thayer). While the meaning is not all that startling its usage is most interesting. *Eulogeetos* is only used of God in the New Testament and of God in the majority of uses in the Septuagint. In the New Testament we find the word eight times and in all except Romans 1:25² it is linked with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whereas the Septuagint sees the Israelites praising God as the creator of the world, their redeemer from Egypt and overseer of the throne of David, the followers of Christ bless God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and as the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

“be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

It is disappointing to witness the efforts of commentators to extract the Trinity from 1:2. We read of the “Trinitarian Formula” of 1:2 which is based on the notation of Father, Spirit and Jesus Christ being in close proximity to each other. Hopefully our discussion of that verse, particularly the words of Brother Thomas, has clearly illustrated the relationship between the Father, Spirit and Jesus Christ. An elementary examination of the context declares God as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Father is the God of Jesus as well as the God of all who are sanctified.

Not only is God revealed, His son is described in his totality. We have his relationship to us (our Lord); his person, his mortal witness (Jesus); his divinely appointed office that will soon be displayed on earth (Christ). He is our Lord Jesus Christ - the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5).

God as the Father deserves honour (Mal 1:6) and if Christ be our Lord then we should do the things he says (Luke 6:46).

¹ CRAWFORD, *The Spirit*, p212

² The other seven places are Mark 14:61, Luke 1:68, Rom 9:5, 2Cor 1:3, 2Cor 11:31, Eph 1:3 and 1Pet 1:3.

“which according to his abundant mercy ... from the dead”

This section begins with the idea of rebirth. The Greek word translated “begotten us again” (*anagennao*) is only found here and in 1:23. Selwyn states that *anagennao* is not found in classical Greek or the Septuagint. The term expresses a decisive change of status and prospect, wholly due to the work of Christ for us (2:24; 3:18); a work successfully consummated in Christ’s resurrection and transformation (3:21). In symbol, this occurs with baptism and we can see this concept in Romans 6:5, Titus 3:5 and the teaching of the new birth in our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus (John 3:3-8). While this can be implied, and certainly later Christian writers used *anagennao* in reference to water baptism, the context directs our attention elsewhere.

They were begotten again to “a living hope” (NKJV, Marshall, NIV etc) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The outstanding significance of his resurrection is being emphasised. That is where our hope lies. If there had been no resurrection there would have been no justification and no hope (Rom 4:25). Our faith would be vain and we would be still in our sins (1Cor 15:12-14). But Christ did rise and our hope is with him. It is a hope which, like our risen Lord, is living. We live with him (Rom 6:8). Not only is this hope our expectation (Titus 1:2; 1John 2:25), it is our life. We participate in a new God-given life (1:22-23). The hope which we have through the resurrection should invigorate us and allow us to look, beyond present difficulties, to the future with joy and the conviction that God does care for those that place their trust in Him (Nah 1:7); that declare their association with the first begotten of the dead.

To those in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, Christ’s resurrection had made them God’s elect. They were once strangers to God, without hope (Eph 2:12). Now they were sojourners in an antagonistic world yet wonderfully elevated to be beloved children, fellow citizens with the members of the household of God (Eph 2:18-19).

To Peter the exhilaration of the “living hope”, of being “begotten again” by the resurrection of Christ was very, very real. He witnessed the risen Lord. He felt his breath when he received a greater measure of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) and he experienced, with unique poignancy, the change from misery and despair to hope and new life effected by the resurrection.

This was an act of God. An act whereby our salvation is possible through God’s abundant mercy. As Stibbs declares, “Mercy is a word especially used in the New Testament of God’s kindness in bringing in the outsider and the unworthy, the Gentile and the sinner, to share in His salvation, and in the glories or riches of His Christ (see Rom 11:30-32; 15:9; Eph 2:1-7; Titus 3:5).” In all the euphoria of considering the mercy of God we should never demur the fact that God’s mercy is to those who have nothing merited (Isa 63:7-9). Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

1:4

Additional to 1:3, the believer has entered into a great inheritance.

The Greek for “inheritance” is *kleeronomia* and Thayer states that in 1:4 this word refers to “the eternal blessedness in the consummated kingdom of God which is to be expected after the visible return of Christ.” This *kleeronomia* is the full possession of that which is promised to Abraham and all believers. We are heirs (*kleeronomos*) according to the promise (Gal 3:29) - an inheritance far greater than that which fell to the children of Israel in their possession of Canaan (Deut 15:4; 19:10). To the Jews this was a great inheritance. The Christian inheritance surpasses it. It is incorruptible, undefiled and fades not away. As the NIV translates, “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.”

The inheritance of Canaan was subject to the ravages of war and calamity (Dan 9:25-26). Not so the kingdom. It is incorruptible (*aphthartos*) - a term that not only means “imperishable” but “unravaged by an invading army” (Barclay). Not only will the reward for the righteous be permanent, it will be joyful, safe and serene.

The inheritance of Canaan was polluted and rendered impure by false worship of false gods (Jer 2:7,23; 3:2; Ezek 20:43; Hag 2:13-14). Not so the kingdom. It is undefilable (*amiantos*) - unsoiled. It takes on the very character of Christ who is “holy, harmless and undefiled.”

Even the promised land, in all its glory, could not hide the fading of its beauty. The loveliest flower fades. Time, unkind seasons, the ravages of man wasted the land. The kingdom is unfading (*amarantos*). It is an inheritance of unfading beauty. As 5:4 states, the faithful will “receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (*amarantinos*).” *Amarantos* and *amarantinos* are words unique to these two references and have the exquisite meaning of “composed of amaranth” (Thayer). The amaranth is a mythical flower so-called because it never fades or withers. Hence it is a symbol of perpetuity and immortal beauty. Athletes strove to obtain a corruptible wreath of fading laurel leaves but we an incorruptible (1Cor 9:25). The gift of glory which is eternal life is an unfading wreath; unfading because it derives from God, whose word abides forever.

Behold the glory and grandeur of the inheritance that is reserved in heaven for the redeemed. Incorruptible because it is from God and is nothing less than sonship to God through Christ. Undefiled because the faithful become partakers of the divine nature, of the absolute purity which belongs to God and is made possible to human beings by their being redeemed from sin and death. Unfading because it is like the perfect flower that will never lose its bloom - the flower of divine inheritance. Perpetually beautiful.

Our inheritance is glorious in all respects: it is in substance, incorruptible; in purity, undefiled; in beauty, unfading. Even the Greek construction emphasises the wondrous character of this inheritance. A figure of speech called Homeoteleuton (or Like Endings), where there is a repetition of syllables at the end of successive words, is being employed. The inheritance is described as *aphthartos*, *amiantos*, *amarantos*. As Bullinger states, “We might say, incorruptible, undefilable, indestructible, but this would be at the expense of exact accuracy in translating.”³

³ BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p176

This inheritance is reserved (*teereo*) in heaven. *Teereo* means “to attend to carefully, take care of” (Thayer) and is rendered “keep” in most modern versions. It means more than just “keep.” The context and the overwhelming message would suggest that the inheritance is “preserved” (Diag). It is under watchful care and in safe custody in heaven. *Teereo* is used throughout Acts for the keeping of a prisoner in custody. The inheritance will be manifested on earth when our Lord returns (1:5; Matt 6:20-21; 2Cor 5:2-4; Phil 3:20-21). It is plain that those verses are not speaking of ascending to heaven for reward after death. What they do promise is a present fellowship with the things of heaven, where Christ sits, and a future granting of the blessings of immortality on the earth, when the Lord Jesus, returning from heaven, brings with him the treasure committed to God’s trust and bestows the gracious reward⁴.

What is unnerving is the use of *teereo* in 2nd Peter. It refers to the “angels who sinned” being “reserved (*teereo*) for judgment” (2Pet 2:4), the unjust being reserved (*teereo*) “under punishment for the day of judgment” (2Pet 2:9), false teachers “to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved (*teereo*) for ever” (2Pet 2:17) and, finally in 2Peter 3:7, we read of the present order of things “reserved (*teereo*) for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

We can either be partakers of an inheritance reserved or judgment reserved. As Brother Mansfield records, “God has provided all things necessary through His son to preserve for us the promised inheritance. We can only blame ourselves if we do not measure up to the requirements (see John 14:2; Matt 16:25-27; Col 3:3-4).”⁵

1:5

Not only is this inheritance kept or reserved in heaven, but we, for whom it is divinely intended, are kept by the power of God. We are being continuously guarded (*phroureo*) throughout our earthly sojourn as being part of God’s elect. Our inheritance is kept (*teereo*) and we are kept (*phroureo*). Why the different terms? *Teereo* is more a general word, with a military flavour, which gives the impression of being in safe custody or being watched over. *Phroureo* is more intense. It is definitely a military term and, as Bullinger states, means “to keep or guard with power, rather than with the eye, as *teereo*.”⁶ The reward is held in heaven to be released, with joy, to those who will receive it at Christ’s return. However, God does not stop guarding those who place their trust in Him. God’s attention does not waver.

His power is always overshadowing us via the work of His holy angels (Psa 34:7; Heb 1:14) but its intensity is “through faith.” Without faith we cannot please God (Heb 11:6). With it we can have supreme confidence that God does not lie (Heb 6:18; 2Pet 3:9) and is able to and will perform what He has promised (Rom 4:20-21).

Phroureo means that our life is garrisoned by God; that God stands sentinel over us all our days. That is not to say that God saves us from the traumas and calamities of this mortal life. In fact our faith could bring us into trials, even at the hand of God (Heb 12:6-12). Faith enables us to encounter trials, to bear them, to conquer them and to march on. The

⁴ NORRIS, *The Gospel of Mark*, p95-96

⁵ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p101

⁶ BULLINGER, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, p429

combination of God's power and our humble faith will bring us unto salvation revealed in the last time. That salvation (*soteeria*) may have begun already in the experience of those who believe in Christ (e.g. Luke 19:9) and it may be an experience of earthly discipleship (2Cor 6:2) as we live in the prospect of salvation - we abide in hope of everlasting life. However, true salvation, in its full character and wonder, will be revealed only in the last time. What Christ's people enjoy then will be salvation indeed.

Today, as Brother Thomas writes, "we 'are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' This testimony ought to dwell in us as it dwelt in the Lord Jesus; so that, as with the shield of faith, the fiery assaults of the world may be quenched by a 'thus it is written', and a 'thus saith the Lord'."⁷

Joy Despite Suffering

1:6-9

1:6

With the hope of the inheritance reserved in heaven and salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, Peter exhorts his readers to continue to rejoice greatly, regardless of the diverse kind of trials that were bearing down on them. This exultation or extreme joy (*agalliao*) takes us back to the words of Christ when we read in Matthew 5:12, "Rejoice (*kairo*) and be exceeding glad (*agalliao*): for great is your reward in heaven." In 4:13, Peter exclaims, "But rejoice (*kairo*), inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad (*kairo*) also with exceeding joy (*agalliao*)."

Surprisingly, *agalliao* is not found in Paul's writings but is common in the Septuagint, particularly in the Psalms for expressing the worshipper's exultation in God and His mercy. In the New Testament *agalliao* is only found on the lips of Jesus Christ, Mary his mother and Peter (Acts 2:26). It is a word which speaks of great joy, "to exult, leap for joy", and the sense is well preserved in 1:8; "ye rejoice (*agalliao*) with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Such joy was evident in them at that time. Yet they were not living in idyllic circumstances.

"Now for a little time you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials" (NIV). They were undergoing trials of many kinds, diversified types of trials. It is obvious that their trials, at this time, were not as intense as those prophesied in 4:12 but already life was not as comfortable as it once was. The trials were unpredictable in type and possibly in frequency. Jewish persecution of believers was not uncommon but civil persecution was soon to afflict them or to increase, if it was already prevalent. Peter's strategy for coping with these trials (*pirasmos*) is consistent with James' which is to "count it all joy when you fall into various trials (*pirasmos*) ... Blessed is the man who endures temptation (*pirasmos*) for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised those who love Him" (Jas 1:2,12 NKJV).

Furthermore, this suffering is "for a season" or a little while. The context of this expression would have us interpret it to mean that the short duration of the distresses is relative to the

⁷ THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p77

promised glory. Even if our whole life was one “in heaviness” through trials of many kinds, what does it compare to an eternity of glory (2Cor 4:17). “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18 NIV).

1:7

In 1:6 they were undergoing *pirasmos*. In this verse, the trial (*dokimion* - only here and Jas 1:3: “trying of your faith worketh patience”) of their faith might be found unto praise and honour. Why the change in terms for what is essentially the same thing? Trench⁸ explores the differences in great detail. The sense and underlying objective of *pirasmos* is to break the afflicted people down, to cause them to renounce the hope they have espoused and to satisfy the malicious desires of those who wish to see a conformity with the ways of sin and flesh. The trials that were placed on the believers were a source of great heaviness, of suffering. But the believer was to exult and greatly rejoice because they were but a trifling affair compared to the glory they would enter into.

Dokimion and associated words imply “approval.” In classical Greek it is the technical word for putting money to the proof, by aid of a test. The New Testament usage virtually associates those who are proved with the approved. The trial was made almost in expectation of victory. Ore is thrown into the refining pot so that good metal will ultimately come through the fiery trial. It is as if God puts His servants to the test so that He may be able to accept them. He does not do so in the expectation that He can reject them. Surely, the phrases of 1:7 agree with these observations. *Dokimion* is associated with “faith”, “more precious than gold” and “praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

While the *pirasmos* of the world is designed to spiritually debilitate us, the *dokimion* of our faith is for our spiritual rehabilitation so that we might be one with Christ at his appearing.

It is certain that Peter is basing his analogy of the trial of faith on the ancient practice of refining metals. Just as men use fire to distinguish true gold from counterfeit, so God uses trials to distinguish and reveal genuine faith from superficial profession. Gold is used because it is so highly valued and of such superior status to that of the impurities that need to be discovered by the fiery process. Faith, in God’s sight, is more precious - of inestimable and imperishable value. How much more then should God similarly use fiery processes to reveal true faith; faith that reflects God’s glory and is worthy of His approbation.

In discussing the refiner of metals one author comments that he is “one who refines the precious metals, as silver and gold, by causing them to pass repeatedly through the furnace till their dross is taken away (Zech 13:9; Psa 12:6). It is said that the refiner knows when the process is complete by seeing his image reflected in the precious metal purified. God is compared to a refiner of silver, by which is meant that he casts his people into the furnace of affliction, till they are refined and purified (Mal 3:2,3). Then they clearly reflect his image in their souls.”⁹

⁸ TRENCH, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, p260-263

⁹ DAVIS, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, p683

What a powerful analogy! Trial is placed upon us to eradicate imperfections, the dross of our characters, in order that we may reflect the glory of God and His son. The stronger our faith, the greater the lustre of our refined substance; the more rapidly our dross will be perceived and skimmed away. With the final purging by he who has eyes like unto a flame of fire, the faithful will be perfect reflections of the Lord Jesus Christ (Prov 17:3; 25:4-5; Job 23:10; Lam 4:1-2).

How important it is to understand the position of gold on the divine scale of value. How often we adopt an inverted measure. Faith is more precious than gold which perishes. We “were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish” (1:18-19). In what do we place our confidence? We have faith in our Lord’s redemptive work but also in God’s holy word. “Every saying of God is refined” (Prov 30:5 Roth); “This God, his way is blameless; the word of Yahweh is without dross” (Psa 18:30 JB); “The words of Yahweh are words that are pure, silver refined in a crucible of earth. Purified seven times!” (Psa 12:6 JB).

The triumph of the word of God in this great process of trial becomes a productive source of comfort and assurance. The greater our acquaintance with God’s word (Psa 119:127; Prov 8:10-11) via the constant consideration of its life-giving properties, the more confidence we place in it. The stronger our faith becomes. The greater our determination to be with Christ to reflect God’s glory throughout the earth.

The price of gold may rise and fall according to market trends but faith is more precious and elusive in these last days (Luke 18:8). Through faith and the abundant mercy of God we have hope of praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Christ will be apocalysed before us. At that great day, praise, honour and glory will be unveiled for us to see (1Cor 1:7) and, if God will, to be partakers and participants thereof (2Thess 1:7). All will be ours if praise is found on our Lord’s lips when we appear before him; when he “will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour and immortality” (Rom 2:6-7 NKJV).

1:8

Peter now sets forth another great source of joy to his readers. Not only is joy possible in times of trial due to the hope that is fixed before them, there is great joy in the fellowship possible with their unseen Lord. There is active and continuing love for him and confidence in his imminent return. This activity enables the sufferer to cope and to gain a measure of tranquillity that would not seem possible. Peter, in introducing this aspect, sets up a contrast between himself and his readers. It was Peter’s incomprehensible privilege to have personally known and walked with Jesus during his first advent. Peter’s readers had not seen Jesus, yet they were giving him the responsive love of their hearts in living fellowship. They saw Christ with the eye of faith and believed (2Cor 4:18). They continually expressed active confidence in him. And that belief brought them into a joy beyond expression and full of glory.

The words Peter uses strongly commends the strangers of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia to us. How do we compare to these faithful brethren and sisters? They had not physically seen Christ yet they loved (*agapao*) him. Do we really love him? While we may have heard of *agapao* and its related terms, do we really appreciate it? True, it is self-

sacrificing love but Thayer uses the following sorts of expressions to come to grips with this unique Greek concept; “prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it ... that love prompted by their religion ... the benevolence which God, in providing salvation for men, has exhibited by sending His Son to them and giving him up to death ... the love which led Christ, in procuring human salvation, to undergo sufferings and death.” Vine adds, “Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered.” How strong is our love for Christ? How generously do we extend it to others, especially towards them that are of the household of faith (Gal 6:10)?

Furthermore, says Peter, you still do not see him, but you are believing. The participle “believing” (*pisteuontes*), is in the present continuous tense. It describes a continual and habitual activity. Such was their belief in the trustworthiness of Christ. Christ’s pleasure in such conduct is obvious when we consult his words to Thomas in John 20:29; “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Peter is not required to detail his acquaintance with Christ as John did (1John 1:1). They believed and Peter could only commend them. In fact, Peter seems almost awed by their faith despite their handicaps of not having seen Christ and the trials they were undergoing.

They rejoiced (*agalliao* - see 1:6) with a great exultation with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Greek word for “unspeakable” (*aneklaleetos*) is only found here in the New Testament and gives the impression that no words are adequate to describe this joy. *Aneklaleetos* is rendered as “inexpressible” (NKJV, Diag, NIV) or similarly by most other versions. And not only is the joy unspeakable, it is crowned with glory (Wey). Put simply, “filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (NIV). How great is our joy in Christ? Is it *agalliao*? Is it *aneklaleetos*?

1:9

This joy was in evidence while they were securing the outcome of their faith, the salvation of their souls (Wey). “Receiving” (*komizomenoi*) is a present participle in the middle voice thus expressing the idea of “acquiring for oneself.” It appears to give the impression of busily acquiring in order to care for or preserve whatever it is that is being taken up. Their reward was still preserved in heaven (1:4), to be revealed in the last time (1:5), but they laboured with the vision of the future before them: the end of their faith. The end (*telos*) refers not merely to cessation, but to the goal or consummation of faith. This consummation is their salvation.

It is noteworthy that Christ brings into expression three fundamental, responsive activities - hope (1:3), faith (1:7,9) and love (1:8 - see also 1Thess 1:3; 5:8; 1Cor 13:13) with joy (1:8) added as an inevitable consequence. All these are focussed on Jesus Christ as alive from the dead. Faith in its two references has relation to both the future hope of salvation and Christ, the unseen Lord. In other words, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). The vitality of our dedicated service must take in all these distinctive characteristics.

The Hope of the Prophets

1:10-12

Some authorities consider these verses to be parenthetical. It is clear to me that they are not. The thoughts contained in them logically progress from the previous verses. As already noted, Peter is declaring the great blessings his readers have. He takes them through numerous facets of the joy of being part of God's elect arriving at 1:9 with "the salvation of your souls."

1:10-12 exclaims that they not only have promise of such a salvation but they understand what it is and the process whereby it will be brought to fruition. This privilege the ancient prophets did not have. Instead they wrote, on some occasions, without fully comprehending what they wrote, and for the benefit of future generations. Peter tells his readers, "You are that future generation." Just as today we gain from having the complete essential revelation. That should be for us, as it was in Peter's day, a great source of joy and a factor that firms our resolve to serve our master who is in heaven (Col 4:1).

This continuity is maintained as 1:13 augments 1:10-12 when it commences, "Wherefore" or as NKJV translates, "Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind"

1:10-12 has generated much comment among Christadelphian authors. Some have used these verses to garnish a specific digression. We will look at some of these, all of them quite profitable, as we proceed with our commentary on these verses. However, the point of 1:10-12 is not to prop up an interpretation or refute a false doctrine; it is to demonstrate the riches of knowledge that the readers of this epistle had. Sometimes we can miss the thrust of the argument by being diverted onto secondary matters.

1:10

The salvation of 1:9 has been to divinely-inspired prophets of times past a subject of quest and inquiry. The terms used in 1:10 for "enquired" (*ekzeeteo*) and "searched diligently" (*exerunao*) do not occur together anywhere else in the New Testament. In fact, they are found together, of all places, in 1Maccabees 9:26 where it is recorded, "These (governors) traced and searched out friends of Judas and brought them before Bacchides" (JB). The impression given is one of a thorough and intensive search by Bacchides' police in their efforts to track down the friends of Judas Maccabaeus.

Ekzeeteo is quite intensive in its meaning. It is not just "enquired" in a casual sort of way, like we would enquire about the weather. It literally means "to seek out."

Exerunao is only found in 1:10 and is very much a reinforcing of *ekzeeteo*. Thayer states that it means, "to search out, to search anxiously and diligently." Peter is demonstrating, with forthright language, the concentrated efforts of the prophets of old to discover the mysteries hidden with God. As they did not have the fullness of the gospel, which includes "the revelation of the mystery kept since the world began" (Rom 16:25), their enthusiasm in the hunt did not flag. An example of this can be found in the searching of Daniel into the words of Jeremiah via reading and prayer (Dan 9:2-3).

Why does Peter refer to this? Obviously, as we have earlier stated, to exclaim the privilege his readers had in the salvation fully revealed.

The other reason is the expectation for all the saints, in whatever time and circumstance, to diligently seek the ways of the Father. Hebrews 11:6 states, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek (*ekzeeteo*) him.” At the Jerusalem Conference, James clearly affirms, “That the residue of men might seek (*ekzeeteo*) after the Lord ...” (Acts 15:17).

Those prophets who diligently searched “prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.” This expression would have had particular relevance to the Gentile brethren. There are many passages in the Old Testament which predicted that God’s saving mercy would be extended to the Gentiles. Paul is compelled to cite several references to bulwark his statement of Romans 9:24 - “Such vessels (i.e. objects of mercy - Rom 9:23) are we who he has called from among the Gentiles as well as the Jews” (NEB). His citations from Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, the Psalms and Deuteronomy (Rom 9:25,26,33; 10:11,13,20; 15:9-12,21) provide a strong apostolic selection of the prophetic outbursts concerning the extension of God’s grace to the Gentiles.

“Grace” (*charis*) is used in reference to Barnabas’ (Acts 11:23), Peter’s (Acts 15:11) and Paul’s (Eph 3:1-2,8) commissions to preach to the Gentiles. Christ had himself foretold and commanded this development (Matt 28:19; Mark 13:10).

Undoubtably, in this context, the grace prophesied has its primary application to Gentiles but we should also expand the reference to embrace the whole outpouring of grace which followed Christ’s resurrection. The Jews who for envy strove to destroy their Messiah could now be saved because of him. 1:11 reveals the mystery that for so long eluded the comprehensive searchings of the prophets.

1:11

1:11 asks questions and answers questions. The obvious question that needs response is, “What is the Spirit of Christ?”, and the question it so simply answers is, “What is the salvation the prophets enquired and diligently searched for?”

Before we consider these questions it is more pressing that we try to determine exactly what the verse is saying. The AV, while faithful to the original, is rather difficult to understand. The Jerusalem Bible, while taking some liberties, presents a clear picture of the intent of the verse:-

“The Spirit of Christ which was in them foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should come after them, and they tried to find out at what time and in what circumstances all this was to be expected.”

What is the Spirit of Christ? According to Brother Crawford¹⁰ and the Companion Bible the phrase is objective genitive. It was not “Christ’s Spirit” or “Spirit from Christ” or “Spirit

¹⁰ CRAWFORD, *The Spirit*, p222

which Christ gave” but “the Spirit which taught about Christ.” Thus David, “being a prophet ... spake of the resurrection of Christ” (Acts 2:30-31; Psa 16:10).

In His revelations to man, God had Christ as the central theme. These revelations came to the prophets from God, through the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit taught the prophets about Christ and inspired them to testify of him. As Brother Mansfield states, “There is only one spirit, namely God’s (Eph 4:4) and this worked in the prophets (Neh 9:20; 2Pet 1:21).”¹¹

However, this Spirit did not give them all knowledge as they tried, without success, to find out at what time and in what circumstances the sufferings of Christ and subsequent glories would take place. In spite of this, the testimony of the prophets was dramatic enough. The prophets foretold that first, the Christ must suffer; second, that this was to precede his entry into glories (Luke 24:25-27); third, that outstanding among the results of this suffering would be the granting of saving grace to Gentiles. Such developments - that Christ should suffer and that Gentiles should be saved - were unexpected and unwelcomed by the Jews, despite the explicit prophecies and promises of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The prophets wanted to know more. They had the overall picture but not the specifics. It is interesting to note that the mystery of the gospel had an appointed time for its revelation and that it was Peter who unlocked it; first, to Jews at Pentecost and then, ten years later, to the Gentiles.

The prophets knew of Christ’s sufferings, Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 are beacons of prophecy, and they knew of his glory, or rather “glories,” as it literally is.¹² But how these were to be applied to the way of salvation was the information they lacked. Even the timing of those events was a study of great toil. Some had the prophecies of Daniel, many did not. The wise men of Matthew 2:1-2 came from the east seeking he that is born King of the Jews. How could a star tell them a King had been born in Jerusalem?

These wise men were, in all probability, associated with the school of the wise men instituted and instructed by Daniel in Babylon some six hundred years earlier (Dan 2:48). They may have heard of Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24-25), as can be implied by the narrative at the end of Matthew 2:16. Their watching had been rewarded and perhaps, in their small way, they were the commencement of Simeon’s prophecy at the birth of Jesus, that the child was “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). Yet, the birth of Jesus was of no consequence to the vast majority of the children of the prophets. Very few were watching. One was Simeon, “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25), another was Anna (Luke 2:38) and others included the aforementioned Gentiles from the East.

Whereas the time (*kairos* - period of time, season) could be approximated, the exact process was not understood until Christ fulfilled what was required. Not only did the prophets search, with imprecise results, Christ’s disciples failed to understand, even after plain speaking on the part of the Lord. Mark says, after Christ explained his arrest, death and resurrection, that the disciples “understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him” (Mark 9:32). Even after his resurrection, as Peter and John stood at the empty tomb, John records, “For as yet they knew

¹¹ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p104

¹² Nestle etc: not the singular as in 1:21. These obviously refer to more than Christ’s resurrection and ascension, as they includes the glories of the kingdom and beyond (Psa 2; 16:8-11; 110). The plural is only used elsewhere in 2Pet 2:10 and Jude :8 in reference to mortal “dignities.”

not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). Afterwards, to Cleophas and, possibly, Peter¹³ on the way to Emmaus, Jesus was compelled to say, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things; and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25-26). Christ then expounded the Old Testament prophecies regarding himself.

Later, in Luke 24:44-48, when the eleven were gathered in Jerusalem, he opened “their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” Thus he unlocked the secret of ages to these disciples. They were witnesses (Luke 24:48). They were enlightened. Now they were to preach “in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). Peter, the chief speaker at Pentecost, could now answer the previously unanswerable question with, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), and thereby revealed the fullness of the gospel to the Jews. Ten years on in Acts 10 we read the opening of the gospel door to the Gentiles where Peter says to Cornelius, “To him (Christ) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

One wonders how Peter felt as he wrote 1:11. Did he marvel at his own lack of reception, particularly after he would have recalled the clear testimony of Christ? How blessed he was that Christ persevered with him. How careful Peter was in ensuring the spiritual welfare of his readers. In 1:12 we see what privileges the recipients of this epistle had; privileges that are ours today.

Before we advance to the next verse there is another item of information we can gain from this verse. 1:11 introduces us to the sufferings of Christ. The word “suffer” or “sufferings” (either *pasko* or *patheema* in the Greek) occurs no less than eight times in 1Peter with respect to Christ. It is also used eight times in 1Peter of the sufferings of believers. This balance and emphasis permeates this epistle, moreso that any other, in order to reinforce the message that suffering will occur prior to the glory that will be revealed. This suffering is also meant to be after the example of Christ - an example that is expounded in the pivotal section of the epistle (i.e. 2:21-25).

1:12

What a remarkable verse of Scripture! It holds a wealth of information. This passage tells us for whom the prophets spoke. It tells us that preaching is the bringing of the gospel and that the preaching those in Peter’s day had received was through the Holy Spirit. What is astonishing is the declaration that the preacher’s message is of things which the angels long to catch a glimpse.

As we discussed earlier, the prophets searched their own message to discern its meaning. Now we see that they received information that a later generation would read and understand. As Brother Carter writes, “In the writings of the Old Testament God has anticipated the needs of subsequent generations. He alone knew of those coming generations, and He made provision before”¹⁴ (see also Dan 12:4,9,13). The apostles, after the blanket over their

¹³ NORRIS, *The Gospel of Mark*, p169-170. Brother Norris provides interesting evidence to assert that Peter was the other disciple that day to whom the Lord appeared on the way to Emmaus.

¹⁴ CARTER, *The Oracles of God*, p29

understanding had been swept aside by Christ in his post-resurrectional ministry, had come to understand “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest” (Rom 16:25-26).

How blessed they were! Peter’s mind must have been drawn back to the blessing Christ bestowed on the disciples because they saw that which many prophets and righteous men longed to see (Matt 13:16-17; Luke 10:23-24).

Peter’s statements go further than just pronounce to whom the prophets spoke. They demonstrate that the Old Testament Scriptures were primarily meant, in the purpose of God, to provide instruction for latter-day believers (Rom 15:4; 1Cor 10:11). These Old Testament holy Scriptures are “able to make (us) wise unto salvation which is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim 3:15). Too often we are directed away from the writings of the prophets. We would do well to not allow such guidance rob us of the distinctive and divinely-intended use of the Old Testament.

By way of digression, Brother Abel¹⁵ uses these verses (1:10-12) to show that the view that inspiration was an enlightening of the authors which did not guarantee historical or doctrinal trustworthiness (i.e. partial inspiration of the Bible) to be erroneous. Peter states that the prophets did not fully understand what they wrote. As Stibbs asserts, “Such a statement implies unmistakably that what they prophesied was not of their own imagining or devising, but that they were carried out of themselves and gave utterance to testimony, which came not from themselves but from God (John 11:49-52; 2Pet 1:19-21).”¹⁶

The apostles were the vehicles for the preaching of the gospel in its revealed state. And this preaching was unto Peter’s readers “with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven” (see also Eph 3:5). This would appear to be a distinct reference to a past act as the historic sense is being used. The obvious suggestion is the day of Pentecost which was prefaced by the Holy Spirit sitting upon each of the Apostles (Acts 2:2-3). The miracles of that day was sufficient confirmation of the authenticity of their preaching and Peter may have been jogging their memory to allay any doubts that may have been entering their minds.

In concluding this section, Peter continues to enhance the excellence of the salvation revealed to them and to us. Although this salvation is not designed for angels (Heb 2:16), they long to pry into its mysteries. The word for “to look into” (*parakupto*) means, “to stoop down or bend down to look” or “to look carefully into.” It is used of the disciples (Luke 24:12; John 20:5) and Mary Magdalene (John 20:11) stooping to peer into the sepulchre of Christ. Angels take an intense, wondering interest in what God is doing on earth for the salvation of man. They rejoice over the sinner that repents (Luke 15:10).

The expression also indicates that the angels were limited in their understanding. They do not know everything (Mark 13:32), yet they have an eagerness to comprehend God’s purpose. The salvation of God is such a tremendous thing that not only do the angels take an active interest in it, they long to see it.

¹⁵ ABEL, *Wrested Scriptures*, p231-232

¹⁶ STIBBS, *1 Peter*, p82

It is as if Peter is saying to the believers, “The salvation declared unto you is from God in heaven, is the teaching of the ancients, is now understood yet was not fully comprehended by those before you and is the thing which even the angels desire to look into. How greatly privileged and blessed you are!” Our understanding of our salvation must be accompanied by intense interest, great joy and steadfast devotion. If angels enthuse over a process which does not affect them, how great should be our anxiety to be part of that process. Brother Whittaker writes, in his inimitable style, “Yet by contrast with this heavenly excitement many a ‘saint’ of modern times can hardly bring himself to cursory reading of the gospels twice a year. Blessed indeed are their eyes and ears, for they shall find time for futile and soul-destroying television programmes instead.”¹⁷

As Peter goes on to say, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind ...” (1:13 NKJV)!

¹⁷ WHITTAKER, *Studies in the Gospels*, p267

A Call to Holy Living

1 Peter 1:13-2:3

The Holiness of Their Calling

1:13-16

Peter has revealed the basics upon which the life of the communities he is addressing need to operate from. He has declared the realities of salvation and present suffering that adherence to the gospel brings. He has spoken of the glory to which the believer can look forward to.

But, the believers must be vigilant and active in the present battles. If they wish to partake of the living hope then a new life is required. Peter stresses the necessity of an active response of mind and a correct discipline in behaviour. They are to do God's will and to be like Him. Their devotion is to the doing of God's commandments and the imitation of God's character; not the satisfaction of selfish desires and the mimicking of the fashions of the world.

The doctrinal exposition has been set in place, now Peter expounds the ethical applications.

1:13 "Wherefore"

Rendered "Therefore" in many versions (e.g. NKJV, NEB, NIV). It indicates that the exhortations which follow are grounded on the previous statements. It is significant to note that a change of emphasis is being introduced by this statement. Salvation, we have been repeatedly told, is predicated on faith (1:5,7,9). We have to develop our faith, at all times acknowledging our complete dependence on God's grace. Now we are challenged to discern that, on account of God and faith, energetic and disciplined activity in God's service is expected of us. It is up to us to not only enjoy our special relationship with God and His son but to give active expression in obedience to God's will. We are not to serve the way we think is acceptable. We serve to meet God's requirements.

"gird up the loins of your mind"

According to Brother Mansfield and Alford this expression is in the aorist tense, implying something that is done once for all. The tense is reflected in the Diaglott and YLit where it is translated, "having girded up the loins of your mind." While other versions tend not to agree with such a rendering, it seems the most appropriate. Remember, those receiving this message have already been commended for their faith, endurance and joy. They had at one point in time, possibly at baptism, adopted the energetic outlook this phrase implies. Having done that they are now exhorted to continue steadfast in the correct way, taking care to avoid the snares ready to take them out of the path of righteousness.

The phrase is vivid and quite unique as "gird up" (*anazonnumi*) is only found here. Most commentators believe that this is a reference linked to men of the Middle East who wear long gowns which are girded up in preparation for energetic effort. It is similar to our expression, "to roll up the sleeves." By pulling up the robe and tying it fast with the girdle or broad belt the wearer received greater freedom of movement.

Peter is telling them that they have done the necessary preparation and they are ready to do serious business. Note that it is the mind that gives itself to strenuous activity. Conversion to Christ requires a mental awakening and mental development. Christianity is not limited to living a good life without consideration of the hope of salvation. Our minds are to be renewed; transformed by the power of God's word (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:17,23). Brother Roberts in commenting on the girdle of the High Priest writes, "The typical significance of the girdle of the priestly linen coat, as distinguished from the coat itself, would therefore be intelligent and executive righteousness: a resolute binding together and strengthening of the principles of righteousness for action."¹

I believe there is even greater significance in this expression. The word *anazonnumi* is derived from two Greek words - *ana* and *zonnuo*. *Zonnuo* is only found in one verse of Scripture, John 21:18, where it is used twice. Remarkably, this verse is Christ's prophecy to Peter of the death he would undergo: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not."

If anything would have become fixed in Peter's mind it was those words. They appear to contain a mild rebuke. In his youth, Peter was self-sufficient, able to gird himself. In his antiquity he will be overwhelmed by an event over which he would have no control. Others would take him and gird him. While we understand this girding to refer to Peter's death whereby, unlawfully and without appeal, Peter would be cruelly crucified, the question still arises as to why Peter uses the expression in 1:13? I believe Peter had the first use of *zonnuo* in mind. In his self-effacing way, Peter acknowledges that his readers were better than himself. When he was young he was self-sufficient, dependent on no-one. His readers have girded up the loins of their mind. Peter's self-sufficiency was his original spiritual impediment. He commends those who have cast off self and girded up their minds in God's service.

"be sober"

This is not saying that they needed to be sober because they were failing in this way. Literally the phrase is, "being sober" (Alford, Marshall) and is more an encouragement to continue and progress in sober ways. Like in the English, the Greek (*neepho*) has two meanings. Primarily the word denotes "abstinence from wine" but metaphorically comes to mean "sobriety generally in conduct, speech, and judgment" (Selwyn).

They had to refrain from drunkenness in a literal sense as actual intemperance was a pressing temptation in pagan times. They also had to be steady, steadfast, solid in their minds. They had to be self-disciplined in contrast to being self-indulgent or artificially excited by a false religious ecstasy. The faithful is not carried away into extravagant behaviour like some inebriate, but acts as a person in control (Gal 5:22-23).

Even today, it can be easy for a susceptible believer to be carried away with this, that and the next sudden enthusiasm; to have a mind which is readily intoxicated with the latest craze.

¹ ROBERTS, The Law of Moses, p160

“hope to the end”

“Hope fully” (NKJV, NIV) “unreservedly” (Selwyn). “To the end” is the Greek *teleios* which means “completely or without reserve” (Stibbs). The great characteristic of the true believer is that he lives in hope to the hilt, and because of this lifestyle can endure whatever trials are placed upon him. The hope of the gospel is the dominating factor in his life.

“for the grace that is to be brought”

This phrase uses the present, and not the future, participle. Marshall translates, “on the grace being brought to you” (see also Roth, Green, YLit, Diag). While this may suggest that the grace of God is ongoing and whenever Christ is revealed to the believer it is to confer benefit, it can also mean that God is now working to bring us to the fulfilment of the hope - the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The meaning, in its dual application, would have been a source of tremendous strength to these brethren. Having girded up the loins of their minds, they are encouraged to maintain sobriety and to hope without holding back because not only will God work in their mortal lives but has prepared His glorious reward for them at the appearing of His son.

1:14

Those who have girded up the loins of their mind and live in the on-going grace of God, with the objective of being a recipient of the ultimate grace at Christ’s appearing, do so as obedient children. That is as children of obedience (Alford). It is not just referring to children of God who are obedient but those whose prevailing spirit is obedience. They are given over to obedience in habitual practice and expression. They contrast vividly with “children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2; 5:6) and “children of transgression” (Isa 57:4).

The word for “obedient” (*hupakoeē*) is based on *hupakouo* which signifies, “obedience as a result of attentive hearing” (Bullinger). Obedience can only be brought about by undivided attention to the word of God. That is Peter’s emphasis as he continues with “not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts” Remember Peter’s allusion to “gird” in 1:13. When he was young he girded himself. When he was with Christ he tended, at times, to be a poor listener. He failed to always grasp the intent of Christ’s words. He encourages his readers to listen and obey. After all in 1:2 he had already outlined that they were chosen and set apart by God for obedience. Such activity was the proper expression of their God-given life and ought to be characteristic of them.

Obedience can be demanded but consider the other word in the equation. They were children. As 1:17 puts it, “ye call on the Father.” “As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). No higher relation with God than that of sons is possible. This will be fulfilled in the bestowal of sonship in immortal nature. What follower of Christ would demur God’s demand for obedience? What mortal son of God would fail to give him obedience? Yet we know how easily we fail and Peter warns against those influences which cause us to disobey.

Peter says, “do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance” (NIV). The Greek *suskeematizomai* is only found elsewhere in Romans 12:2 - “be not conformed to

this world” - and contains the word *skeema* which Paul uses in 1Corinthians 7:31 - “for the fashion (*skeema*) of this world passeth away.” The ways of the world are superficial, changeable and transient. The old way of living was for the present, devoid of long-term value and dominated by evil desires.

This phrase is a clue to the Gentile origin of the recipients of this letter. Gentile life was dominated by desire. It parallels with today’s society for sheer fleshliness. Barclay, after describing some of its attributes, summarises, “It was a world which was mastered by desire. Its aim was to find newer and wilder ways of gratifying its own lusts. It was a desire-dominated society.”² They had come out of this society. They were once in ignorance. This ignorance is ignorance of God; especially as He is now revealed through Christ. This ignorance was adumbrated in Jew (Acts 3:17) and Gentile (Acts 17:30). In the Jew it was spiritual blindness (1Tim 1:13); the Gentile, pagan carnality (1Thess 4:5).

Now they are children of obedience.

1:15-16

Our obedience, as children of God, is not restricted to not conforming to the evil desires we had when we lived in ignorance. Our obedience is outworked in positive acts of holiness.

The word “but” is better translated as “nay rather” (Alford). 1:15 is not an afterthought. It is a powerful progression from the previous verse - we do not do evil things, nay rather we pursue holiness. Why? Because, God, who called us, is holy.

According to Barclay, the word for “holy” (*hagios*) is derived from a word meaning “different.” That which is *hagios* is different to ordinary things. God is morally pure and perfect. Ordinary things are not. The chosen of God are set apart by God. They are special in His sight. Ordinary people are not.

A perusal of Mosaic ordinances clearly discloses the principle of *hagios*. The temple is *hagios* because it is unique among buildings. The sabbath is *hagios* because it is different to other days. But the temple is no more and the sabbath replaced. The principle remains. Hence Peter’s quoting from Leviticus 11:44 when he says in 1:16, “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Even though Peter realised the inadequacies of the Law when compared to the salvation in Christ (1:19), the demand for holiness on the part of God’s people is undiminished. He could with perfect consistency reiterate this claim of the Law and declare it to be still binding upon the brethren of Christ. The believer is *hagios* because he is different from other men.

The new standard of living, the model to be copied, is nothing less than God Himself. We are now to be “imitators of God, as dearly loved children” (Eph 5:1 NIV), to strive to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48 NIV). We “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator” (Col 3:10 NIV). The conduct (“conversation” AV) of our new life must be a struggle to attain to and maintain

² BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p221

holiness. The expression is to “become holy” or “show yourselves to be holy.” It is the logical consequence to God’s call (1:2 see also 2:9,20-21; 5:10).

Why does Peter quote Leviticus 11:44 to spiritual Israel? We have already discerned its obvious meaning. It also assists the believer to understand the mechanism whereby holiness is pursued and gained.

Reference to Leviticus reveals the context of this powerful verse; a section dealing wholly with diet. The verse declares the permanent validity of the Law’s basic demand; the context provides the exhortation.

The spiritual applications of the laws concerning diet are all too clear. The clean animals are generally characterised in being ruminants and surefooted. Holiness is gained from eating and assimilating spiritual food. Holiness is exhibited in walking in wisdom. “He who walks with integrity walks securely” (Prov 10:9 NKJV). What is the food that wise men partake of? “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Yahweh Elohim T’zvaoth” (Jer 15:16). “The entrance of thy words giveth light” (Psa 119:130).

As Brother Roberts has written, “The truth is the sanctifying power, and this not merely as a thing once learnt, but a thing constantly read and thought about.”³

The Ground of Their Calling

1:17-21

A problem that could arise out of the earlier verses is a misconception of one’s ability to be holy. Some could have said that their behaviour was indeed circumspect and that their lives were not in accordance with the former lusts. It could also be misconstrued that the believer could approach the holiness of the Father. Even if these were not the reactions to Peter’s comments thus far, a warning needed to be sounded as to the power and prestige God has; particularly the power He has over His individual children.

There was also a need to reinforce the basis of their calling. It was not their personal righteousness that was responsible. It was God’s impartiality toward the Gentiles, the precious blood of Christ and the overall plan of the Father. It was not some haphazard event. Through Christ they can look to God in confidence and hope. They can see in the glory given the exulted Jesus the promise and pattern of their own salvation. Such awareness should humble them before the Father. It should fill them with awe of God, knowing that they have God as their Father - He who is judge of all the earth.

1:17

In 1:15 God had called (*kaleo*) them. This was meant to generate certain relationships and responses. The best response was, and still is, to wholeheartedly accept the call, cast off the old ways, take on a new life and become a child of obedience. The privilege this response

³ ROBERTS, *The Law of Moses*, p 273

grants is the ability to call upon (*epikaleo*), that is appeal to (Acts 25:11 etc) or invoke (Selwyn, Diag), Him “as Father” (Alford, Roth etc). The believer can appeal for aid from God as Father.

“Father” is very emphatic in the Greek and this emphasis deliberately stresses the wonder that believers are able to invoke the supreme, impartial Judge by such a name. It is not something that should be taken for granted. In fact it should raise a new concern. God is impartial and will judge according to every man’s work. Initially, Peter had difficulty with this principle. God pays little regard to mere superficial appearance. Although *aprosopoleptos* (“without respect of persons”) is unique to 1:17, we see similar phraseology in Acts 10:34 where Peter was taught, prior to the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius, God is no *prosopoleptes* (“respector of persons”).

The use of these terms enhances the viewpoint that the ecclesia was mixed (i.e. Jew and Gentile) and, more importantly, restates one of the most consistent and powerful themes of the Bible - God judges every man according to his works (Deut 10:17; 2Chron 19:7; Jer 17:10; Ezek 18:30; Rom 2:9-11; Eph 6:9; 2Cor 5:10; Gal 2:6; Col 3:25). As followers of Christ, with God as our Father, we are under a new constraint; namely to win praise from God rather than punishment. The reality of this should encourage another reaction: fear.

“Fear” (*phobos*), in this context, is better rendered “reverence” and represents the true response to God as Father and to God’s mercy and forgiveness (Psa 130:4). God forgives that man may fear Him. Indeed, we do fear that God is the impartial judge of all, but added to that is the riches of God’s mercy to all who repent and accept it. Reverence is formed when the emotion aroused by God’s mercy is added to the fear evoked from the thought of God as Judge. This reverential fear, as opposed to terror, is not something that is confined to specific times for worship. It should govern the whole conduct of our lives.

It is interesting to note how Peter reintroduces the concept of being sojourners and links it with reverence. The word *paroikia* (from which we get the English “parochial”) indicates that believers are to live in this world as in a place to which they do not belong. This parochialism is highlighted by their reverence towards God. Not only will they shun the ways of the world, the world will reject them. Peter obviously wants them to understand their lack of a real place in the society of Asia Minor. This is clear in that he has repeated the introduction of 1:1 and reiterates it in 2:11.

1:18-19

God does not warrant reverence solely for the fact that He is the impartial Judge. 1:18-19 declares that God’s mighty work in redeeming mankind is also a source of overwhelming reverence on our part. God has established the way whereby we, the sinful sons of Adam, can be redeemed and reconciled to Him. It was not through money nor the sacrifice of animals. It was by way of shedding the precious blood of Christ.

Brother Thomas, in quoting 1:18-19, exclaims the power of this redemption when he writes, “Redemption is release for a ransom. All who become God’s servants are therefore released from a former Lord by a purchase. The purchaser is Jehovah; and the price, or ransom, paid, the precious blood of the flesh through which the Anointing Spirit was manifested. It is therefore styled, ‘the precious blood of Christ’ ... If this Christ-Lamb had not been slain, the

‘New Song’ of Revelation 5:9,10 could never have been sung; the 144,000 could never have been sealed; the robes of the saints, the palm-bearers of Revelation 7:9-14, could never have been washed white in blood; there would have been no Altar, no worshippers thereat, nor souls underneath it in death (Rev 11:1; 6:9); and there would have been no ‘fine linen, clean and white’, to clothe the bodyguards of ‘the King of Kings’ (Rev 19:8,14). All these parts of the Apocalypse are based on the slaying of the Christ-Lamb as the redemptive price of the servants of God.”⁴

The believers were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold yet silver is used in the Law of Moses as a token of redemption (Lev 27:15-16). A token is all that it is. As Brother Carter states, “Silver cannot redeem. A ransom cannot be paid in the form of wealth. It required that life should be given.”⁵ This is precisely Peter’s line of reasoning. If it were not so then man could redeem earlier apostate life by a monetary offering. Their vain conversation (“aimless conduct” NKJV) describes the way of those without the worship of the true God; either because they have never known it or have fallen into apostasy from it. A corruptible offering is grossly inappropriate to redeem man from such a deplorable condition. As Brother Carter writes, “Jesus said, ‘The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45). There are two things to be learnt from these words. First, that Jesus was doing something that was a service, a ministration; and second, that this service would result in the release of many who came within the reach of the benefits of his work. Both matters find abundant emphasis in apostolic writings. ‘Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price’ (1Cor 6:20) ... ‘Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood’ (Rev 5:9). Christ ‘gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works’ (Titus 2:14). The deliverance is from sin (Rom 6:17), and finally from death.”⁶

What does it mean when we say Christ has paid the price? In answering this question we should stress what it does not mean. It does not mean that the price paid is a corresponding equivalent payment on behalf of those he came to save. This is pushing the signification too far and leads to the error of substitutionary theory. It makes the act of redemption a purely legal exercise. The literal blood of Christ did not constitute a literal payment. There was no virtue in the literal blood of Christ as it was no different from that of any other man. Its value was in what it, the shed blood of Christ, represented. It was “of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Brother Roberts declared, “That God’s method for the return of sinful man to favour required and appointed the putting to death of man’s condemned and evil nature in a representative man of spotless character, whom He should provide, to declare and uphold the righteousness of God, as the first condition of restoration, that He might be just while justifying the unjust, who should believingly approach through him in humility, confession and reformation.”⁷

Without the shed blood of Christ, the lamb without spot and blemish; without the life of perfect obedience; without the upholding of God’s righteousness, there would be no

⁴ THOMAS, *Eureka*, Vol 1 p11

⁵ CARTER, *Prophets After the Exile*, p111

⁶ CARTER, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, p40-41

⁷ ROBERTS, *Diary of a Voyage*, p68

resurrection and thus, no hope (1:3; 1Cor 15:14). Substitutionary theory, avidly promulgated by errorists both within and without the Christadelphian community because of its apparent scriptural base and simplicity, is false. Not only does it imply that Christ's resurrection played no part in man's redemption⁸, it is unjust. Why should the innocent be put to death and the guilty be allowed to live? Does such uphold the righteousness of God, the impartial Judge of 1:17? If Christ died instead of us, why do we die? And why did Christ rise? No, it is not substitution but representation by Christ and our association with him. That is how it can be said that God forgives for Christ's sake.

The redemptive work of Christ is not completed by a single legal transaction whereby Christ has made man free in a final and absolute sense. A man can still serve sin as much after, as before, baptism. He may, after baptism, choose to serve his sinful nature. Therefore redemption can encompass two stages. The first commences with baptism and occupies the entire mortal probation of the believer. During this time the purifying power of the gospel is operative. Forgiveness is available. The example is held up to emulate. Ultimately, for those accepted ones, Christ at his appearing "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body" (Phil 3:21). Cleansed in mind and body, they are redeemed; the perfected sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

Those who genuinely appreciate God's mighty work of redemption will reverence Him without constraint.

1:20

Peter continues his reasoning by announcing that the redemption God has extended is not some sort of ad hoc arrangement that emerged from the disorder of fallen humanity. It was all planned. God foreordained (*proginosko* - "to have knowledge beforehand" Thayer) the work of Christ from before the foundation of the world. From the very beginning, God had intended to provide such a "lamb" in order that redemption might be possible.

When was "the foundation (*katabolee*) of the world (*kosmos*)"? *Katabolee* literally means "a casting down" (Vine) and in all but one of its uses in the New Testament refers to the laying down of the foundation of the world. *Kosmos* refers primarily to order and arrangement and in a number of passages denotes "the present condition of human affairs, in alienation from and opposition to God" (Vine - see John 7:7; 8:23; 14:30; 1Cor 2:12; Gal 4:3; 6:14; Col 2:8; Jas 1:27; 1John 5:19).

Brother Thomas expands on this interpretation when he writes, "The things laid, or fixed, in the rudimental constitution of the world, may be summarily stated in the following particulars:-

1. Sin in the flesh, the enemy of God, contending for the dominion of the world.
2. Mankind in a state of nature, subject to the propensities; and to pain, trouble and death.
3. Labour and toil the condition of existence in the present state.
4. The subjection of woman to the lordship of man.

⁸ see BARLING, *Redemption in Christ Jesus*, p26, or *The Christadelphian*, Vol 83 (1946) p83

“To these things was established a divine antagonism, by which they might be controlled; and a system of things elaborated in conformity with the purpose of God. This part of the foundation may be stated as:-

1. The law and truth of God as expressed in ‘His Way’, demanding unreserved submission to its authority.
2. Mankind under the influence of this truth assuredly believed, contending for it.
3. Divine power exhibited in the punishment of men, and in the performance of His promises.

“The action and re-action of these agencies upon one another was to produce:-

1. An enmity and war in the earth between the Sin-power and the Institution opposed to it.
2. A bloody persecution of the adherents of the truth.
3. The destruction of the Sin-power by a personage to be manifested for the purpose; and
4. The consequent victory of divine truth, and establishment of the Kingdom of God.

That the CRISIS OF THE FALL WAS THE PERIOD OF LAYING DOWN THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, in its civil, social, and spiritual, relations, appears from the use of the phrase in the apostolic writings.”⁹

The foundation of the world, that is the laying down of the conditions that currently plague the arrangement of society, is the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. It was there that the process of redemption for fallen humanity was declared (Gen 3:15). However, God foreknew that process before the cataclysmic events in Eden occurred. God had predetermined that He would provide Christ. Brother Mansfield puts it this way, “Though through foreknowledge He knew Adam would sin, it was never His intention that His creation would always be subject to sin and death. Hence provision for the redemptive work of Christ was made before sin reared its evil head.”¹⁰

Peter continues in reinforcing the privilege of his generation by penning, “but was manifest in these last times for you.” In these last days (Heb 1:1-2), in the end of the world (Heb 9:26), that is the final days of the Mosaic constitution or Judah’s commonwealth, has Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Peter’s readers knew that. They understood. They were in the forefront of the greatest drama of history. How that would have helped them to realise the love of God, the generosity of their calling, and so strengthen them in the midst of the world’s indifference and cruelty.

1:21

Peter concludes this section with an exquisite piece of scriptural prose. The NKJV tidies up the lack of precision in the AV when it translates the verse, “who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” The differences in translation are important. It is through Christ, not by Christ, that we have hope of resurrection and future glory. Those who wish to be truly, and are, in Christ will gain salvation. Those who, through Christ, believe in God are also “in God.” It is not that their “faith and hope might be in God”, they are “in God.” What encouragement Peter holds out!

⁹ THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p125

¹⁰ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p108

As 1:19 says, we are redeemed by the blood of Christ. 1:20 says it was all part of God's plan that such a lamb be provided to repair the damage that occurred at the foundation of the world. 1:21 shows that the faith and hope we have in God are brought about by God having raised Jesus from the dead and giving him glory. What does that mean to us?

The term "in God" (*eis theon*) suggests active approach and committal; believing "into God." As the verse outlines, God has acted decisively to open a way whereby we can have faith and hope. God accepted Christ's messianic work by raising him from the dead and then by giving him glory with the bestowal of divine nature. Not only do we have faith because God raised Jesus but, in that resurrection followed by immortality, we have a great hope. By association with Christ we can share in the same glory which he received and still enjoys (Rom 5:2; 8:16-21).

As well as powerfully reinforcing his reader's privileges, Peter's double use of *eis theon* exposed the weaknesses of the religious systems competing with God's truth. Judaism had no place for Jesus and denied his resurrection. True Christians believe God because He raised Christ from the dead and gave him glory. Paganism, with its diversity of deities, is challenged by the believer having faith and hope and by being "in God." Such spiritual intimacy was not the way of paganism. Pagan gods were but an extension of human emotions and intellect. They were overwhelmingly anthropomorphic. The God of truth invites us to be a manifestation of His character and His moral outlook.

The recognition of our calling and the unique position we have, through Christ, in God must produce in us a new life.

Their New Life

1:22-2:3

With the ground of their calling established, the challenge to live differently is renewed. They understood the means whereby their redemption can be accomplished, so they should put off sinful habits. They have been given a new life and hope of eternal life by God, so they should reflect their faith and hope in corresponding activity. The activity which they are exhorted to is brotherly love. This is complemented by a directive to put off or lay aside those attributes and attitudes which hamper, even deny, the expression of brotherly love.

Peter's readers are reminded that the knowledge of the way of redemption and correct living before God can only come from the word of God. Their hope has been expounded from God's word. That word is to be assiduously considered. Their characters are to be nourished by it as it has placed them in the new spiritual; □ house where Christ is the chief foundation stone.

1:22

Peter, after outlining that their faith and hope was in God who raised Jesus from the dead, reminds them of their association with Christ's resurrection via baptism. "Obeying the truth" refers to their response to the gospel and this obedience was first declared in their baptism.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that “purified” and “born again” (1:23) are both in the perfect tense and thus refer to one decisive act in the past. Although baptism is not specifically mentioned, the act of baptism illustrates that the recipient acknowledges the truth of the word of God and, by declaration, confesses his faith (3:21).

Obviously this act is the commencement of a life dedicated to the truth, repudiating the errors of matters external to the gospel, and the continual purification of their soul or life. As we saw in 1:2,14, they were set apart unto obedience.

However, their lives were not restricted to their relationship with God and His son. As the RV translates, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren ...”¹¹ What does this mean? Baptism is firstly an obedience to the truth, and secondly unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

Sometimes we can overlook the second part of the formula. While emphasis is placed within 1Peter and throughout Scripture on obedience, it is critical that its simple and compulsory application in brotherly love be imprinted in our understanding. It is to be love unfeigned (*anupokritos* - “without hypocrisy”). In the two other places where *anupokritos* is used with “love” it is with the word *agape* and is in regard to *agape* being developed by brethren (Rom 12:9) or exhibited by a faithful apostle (2Cor 6:6). The unfeigned love of 1:22 is *philadelphia*. It should not be a painstakingly developed love. It should spring automatically out of a person who has declared their obedience to the truth in the ordinance of baptism. *Philadelphia* is the prerequisite for *agape* (2Pet 1:7). Paul in Hebrews 13:1 says, “Let brotherly love continue.” In other words, it was evident and healthy in the ecclesial environment to which he was writing. So it was in those who were to receive Peter’s first epistle.

Philadelphia, from *phileo*, speaks of being friendly to your brethren or a love born of liking. These brethren had found mutual friendship and companionship in the truth. They genuinely liked each other and enjoyed each other’s company. The gospel had, for the ecclesia, broken down the social and racial barriers that permeated society. But *philadelphia*, while essential, is not sufficient. Peter continues, “see that ye love (*agape*) one another with a pure heart fervently.”

Peter was painfully aware of the difference between *agape* and *phileo*. In John 21:15-17 Peter could not declare *agape* love of Christ. His recent experience had given him perspicacity of his true position before his Lord. He knew that whereas he could like, even admire, Jesus, he was, at that time, unable to proclaim that he loved Jesus more than himself. When tested he had denied his master out of self-preservation.

As Thayer annotates, “*Agape* properly denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration and esteem ... but *phileo* denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion.” Bullinger in his exposition of *agapao* says, “*Agapao* denotes the love which springs from an admiration and veneration, and which chooses its object with decision of will, and devotes a self-denying and compassionate devotion to it. Love in its fullest conceivable form ... These two words are not

¹¹ Note that “through the spirit” is omitted by most, if not all, texts outside of those used by the AV and NKJV. While this simplifies our reading and understanding of the verse, it makes little difference to the meaning of the passage. See comment on “spirit” in notes for 1:2 and also MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p109

used indiscriminately. *Agapao* never means to kiss; *phileo* never means to acquiesce or cherish with reverence ... *agapao* is to make much of a thing, to admire for some good and sufficient reason, but *phileo* denotes the love which springs naturally from the thing loved, even where no just cause of love exists.”

They possessed *philadelphia anupokritos*. They had to develop *agape* to one another with a pure heart fervently. What does it mean “with a pure heart”? Whereas earlier in the verse “purified” refers to a ceremonial purification (*hagnizo*), a pure (*katharos*) heart is one which is free from things which soil or corrupt. It is sincere and genuine. As NEB translates, “whole-heartedly.” Sometimes *agape* appears, by description, cold and formal. No, Peter links it with sincerity and zeal. “Fervently” (*ektenos*) means “with full intensity”, literally “at full stretch.”

In 4:8, Peter again combines these unique terms when he implores, “And above all things have fervent (*ektenees*) charity (*agape*) among yourselves.” This could give the impression that Peter’s readers lacked fervent love. This would be true because the standard that is set is that of God Himself. Whereas brotherly affection should naturally proceed from our obedience, the intensity of *agape* love is developed through the power of the word of God moulding us during our mortal life. It can and should be exhibited during our life. However, being a divine attribute, unnatural to carnal man, our divulgence of it is inconsistent in both regularity and vigour.

At the very least, Peter could recognise their unfeigned *philadelphia*. Could such a commendation be made of the ecclesia today?

1:23

Peter reuses the word *anagennao* (see comments on 1:3) when he speaks of being born again. Whereas 1:3 states that we have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1:23 says that we are born of incorruptible seed by the word of God. 1:3 is specifically concerned with the hope to which we have been begotten. 1:23 stresses the immortality of God’s word (*logos*) and that our calling is not via the temporary arrangements of man but by the permanence of God. Perhaps some were being seduced by the short-term riches of sin for a season. Maybe Peter is reinforcing that they have not received some casual calling which, like a military posting, has a specified duration. No, they had been called to that which is eternal by He who is eternal.

Anagennao can be translated as “begotten again” (RV, Wey, YLit). While this is not necessarily an entirely literal rendering it befits the context of “seed” (*spora* - only in 1:23). *Spora* refers to a “sowing, a begetting of children” (Bullinger) and is not used in reference to the offspring of that seed. Its only use in the Septuagint (2King 19:29) is in regard to “sowing.” The new life Peter has been impressing on his readers is communicated to men, or men possess it, through the sowing of the divine word - the word which had been actively brought to them by the apostle. This *logos* is incorruptible. It was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-4) and is the gospel. This is undoubtedly the case, particularly from Pentecost onwards. In arriving at this conclusion we need to stress context, because *logos* is a general word which requires its setting to interpret it. The apostolic evidence for *logos* to equal the gospel is abundant (Acts 4:4; 6:4; 8:4; 10:36; 14:25; 15:7; 2Cor 6:7; “... the word of truth, the gospel” Eph 1:13; Phil 1:12-14; “the word of truth of the gospel” Col 1:5 etc).

This interpretation also suits the context of 1Peter 1, because we saw in 1:19-20 that the work of atonement, through the precious blood of Christ, was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Brother Thomas writes, “The New Birth, like the one of the flesh, is not an abstract principle, but a process. It begins with the begetting and ends with the having been born. A son of God is a character, which is developed out of the ‘incorruptible seed’ of God, sown into the fleshly table of the heart. When this seed, or word of the Kingdom, is received it begins to work in a man until he becomes a believer of the truth ... He is humble, child-like, teachable, and obediently disposed; and his simple anxiety is to know what God would have him to do. Having ascertained this, he does it; and in doing it is ‘BORN OUT OF THE WATER.’ Having been begotten by the Father by the word of truth, and born out of water, the first stage of the process is completed. He is CONSTITUTIONALLY ‘in Christ’.”¹²

All of us have received the sown seed. The seed in the parable of the sower is the word of God (Mark 4:14). The seed cannot fade as it is incorruptible. The productiveness of the soil determines the response to that seed. The seed will prosper and bring forth “some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” if the seed is received by good ground - “he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit” (Matt 13:23).

Note Peter’s emphasis of the incorruptible nature of the word of God. Firstly, it was not as human seed which is corruptible and results in a body inheriting mortality and decay. Secondly, the word of God liveth and abideth for ever; terms which are equated to God Himself (Dan 6:26). In the following verse Peter contrasts the word of God to flesh, before restating the truism in 1:25.

1:24-25

The word of God lives and abides for ever. This contrasts dramatically to flesh - all flesh is grass. Peter asserts this contrast with a quotation from Isaiah 40:6-8. God’s word never becomes obsolete. It continues to speak vital, unchanging and always relevant truth. It continues to find completion and vindication in the unfailing fulfilment of its prophetic utterances.

In Isaiah 40:6-8 the transitoriness of the natural creation is contrasted to the unfailing continuance of divine utterance. Human beings, without exception, are like the grass of the field. Human glory is like flowers. After a brief and troubled existence man is dead and gone; the exact opposite of living and abiding. The only hope for all flesh is God’s word which endures for ever and offers a life, a future life, which is eternal.

Why does Peter specifically cite from Isaiah 40? Because its message is simple and fits the impression Peter wishes to make. The very circumstances and statements of Isaiah 40 were highly appropriate for the environment Peter was writing to. The prophecy commencing at Isaiah 40 was addressed to a people small in number and oppressed, and offers them hope and comfort. 1Peter is identical in its setting. The message of Isaiah 40 was also reflected by the

¹² THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p135

“strangers scattered abroad.” God promises deliverance to those who are repentant and receptive, and His promise, in contrast to all else in human life, remains sure. It is as if Peter, in going back to the ancients, declares to his readers that they are not unique in history. They are part of God’s remnant who, although flesh, have witnessed throughout time to the everlasting word of God. God advances His word through unaccredited men of which they are representative. Yet such participation could result in the transformation of their mortal bodies into incorruptibility. “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

The immediate context established the contrast between flesh and the word. There are more within the chapter. In 1:3 we have “a living hope” followed in 1:4 by “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away.” Flesh is as grass yet, as we saw in our consideration of 1:4, the inheritance on offer fades not away, or is, in beauty, like the mythical flower that never loses its bloom. Grass withers but the inheritance is incorruptible just as our redemption is not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. Peter uses the word for “falleth away” (*ekpipto*) in 2Peter 3:17 in reference to defilement by the error of the wicked. Their inheritance was undefiled. Their saviour, unlike fallen sinning flesh, was a lamb without spot and blemish (1:19).

It would be obvious to all where loyalty should lie. Peter puts the facts powerfully before them and us and adds, almost in afterthought, “And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you.” There it is. The next logical step is to question, “What are we going to do about it?” Peter commences chapter 2 with the answer.

2:1

The new divinely-enabled life of the child of obedience is but a fraud unless attitudes and activities toward our brethren reflect such intentions. Anything which contradicts or frustrates brotherly love, particularly in the outworking of divine *agape* love, should be decisively excised.

It would appear that this had occurred among Peter’s readers. The Greek tense is aorist (see Alford and CompB) and is rendered that way by YLit and Diag: “Having put away therefore, All Malice, and All Deceit, and Hypocrisies and Envyings, and All Evil Speakings.” But was this so? Could it be said of any, outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they had put away all these things? Could it be said in such general terms of such a large reading audience? Surely envy, which Barclay says “is the last sin to die”, was not totally eradicated from the brethren of Peter’s day. What does Peter mean?

I believe the chapter division does a great disservice. As we saw in 1:22-23 Peter alludes to baptism. 2:1 could be a similar reference. At baptism they laid aside or stripped off as a garment (see Acts 7:58 for such a usage of *apititheemi*) the evil things of times past and emerged as newborn babes to God’s word. It was that condition, the divestment of self, they were to strive to progress in throughout their mortality.

The challenge is obvious. The true believer must constantly be on the alert for polluting influences. In commenting on 2:1-2, Brother Sargent wrote, “Self-examination as a community does not mean looking for the faults of others, but examining our individual selves in another relation. For it is on us as individuals that the life of the ecclesia depends.

It does not depend alone on any one section of brethren - speaking brethren, examining brethren, or any other - however responsible the service they may be called upon to give. It depends on you and me and all of us ... Every brother or sister contributes to make the spiritual level of the ecclesia what it is - high or low, good or bad ... Every one helps either to raise or to lower it - and probably does both at different times. Conversely, the general standard of faith in the ecclesia either helps or hinders the spiritual life of the individual. If in looking around we find an increasing failure to appreciate the claims of life in Christ, what have we done to maintain the standard?"¹³

What are those sullyng influences we cast off at baptism and must constantly combat in our life in Christ?

The true believer must strip off all malice (*kakia*). *Kakia*, while a general term for "evil", is best understood in the New Testament as "more the evil habit of mind" (Trench); active ill-will. A person with *kakia* is one who wishes harm on another. *kakia* is the antithesis of love.

There is also guile (*dolos* - deceitfulness). *Dolos* is a fault that is difficult to outgrow. Literally it means "to catch with a bait" (Thayer) as one would ensnare an animal by deceiving it. *Dolos* is the conscious deception by a person who is out to deceive others in order to achieve their personal ambitions (see 2:22).

There is hypocrisy (*hupokrisis*). Selwyn considers this to be the temptation to join the brotherhood from false motives or with reservations. Ananias and Sapphira are infamous examples of this abominable trait (Acts 5:1-11). They played an accepted outward role in order to enhance their position in the ecclesia. A religious hypocrite is one whose alleged profession is for personal profit and prestige and not for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and his brethren.

There is envy (*phthonos*) which is a frequent cause of disharmony and strife within the brotherhood. It is the constant plague of all religious organisations including that which holds to the true gospel - the Christadelphians. Envy is easily inflamed, completely voluntary and vigorously denied by its greatest exponents. The Jews delivered up Christ for trial out of envy (Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10). It was with the disciples during the drama of the upper room (Luke 22:24). It vexed the early ecclesia (Phil 1:15) and is the very spirit which dwells in all mortal men (Jas 4:5). Envy can only die when self dies.

There is evil speakings (*katalalia*). *Katalalia* is slander or disparagement of an individual normally when the victim is not present. Barclay renders it as "gossiping disparagement." How easy it is to listen to the latest saucy gossip and to garnish it with that additional piece of information. How "innocently" we repeat a malicious tale without having confirmed its authenticity or worrying about its implications. Everybody denounces gossip yet most find it irresistible, if not enjoyable.

Peter's catalogue of the activities we should cast off does not include the heinous crimes which receive star billing in our newspapers - murder, theft, arson, rape, blackmail etc. Peter has listed those activities which everybody can easily participate in, at times without realising it, and which are the most destructive agents against brotherly love and ecclesial unity.

¹³ SARGENT, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 89 (1952), p354

It is not the crimes which find their way into the courtrooms of the world that destroy the brotherhood. It is ill-will, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and gossip.

2:2

After detailing the negative influences which take us away from God, Peter now states the positive influence that should fill the life of the believer; “Like newborn babes, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (NIV).

The overriding picture is that of a sucking child being nourished by his mother’s milk. Transferred to a spiritual level, the true believer is as a newborn child being nourished by the food best suited for his development; spiritual milk from God. The picture is not of a novice starting out in the truth who will later progress to solid food. This contrast, while part of 1 Corinthians 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12-14, is not the message Peter is conveying. The terms used indicate that, at whatever stage of spiritual development a believer may be in, the spiritual milk offered by God is the best possible food. The emphasis should be placed on the craving of the newborn babe for milk as opposed to the composition of the milk.

The term “newborn” (*artigenneetos*) is unique to 2:2 and is used to enhance the imagery. “Babes” (*brephos*) can refer to a number of stages in a child’s development; foetus, newborn, infant. Peter’s allusion is to the just-born babe with his virtually insatiable appetite for his mother’s milk. Hence the use of the expression *epipotheo* for “desire.”

Epipotheo is a strong word which indicates strong desire and vigorous action. It is translated in other versions as “crave” (NIV, NEB), “eagerly crave” (Roth), “long for” (RSV, RV), “thirst” (Wey, Moff) and is used by the apostle Paul when expressing his earnest desire to be with his brethren and sisters (Rom 1:11; Phil 1:8; 1Thess 3:6; 2Tim 1:4). The word is common in the Septuagint, especially the Psalms, and therein expresses intense and yearning desire e.g. “As the hart earnestly desires (*epipotheo*) the fountains of water, so my soul earnestly longs (*epipotheo*) for thee, O God” (Psa 42:1 LXX); “I have longed after (*epipotheo*) thy salvation, O Lord ...” (Psa 119:174 LXX). For the sincere believer, the study of God’s word is not a labour but a delight; for he knows that he will find the nourishment he longs for.

This powerful longing is after “pure spiritual milk” (NIV, Marshall). “Sincere” is the Greek word *adolos*, which is the opposite of “guile” (*dolos*) in 2:1. Peter is setting up a word-play, in deliberately choosing this unusual word, to establish the contrast. The best food for a newborn babe is his mother’s milk. Not only is it specifically formulated to provide ideal nourishment, it is delivered unadulterated; without blemish. So too is God’s word. When we take our nourishment from His book we are receiving it in its purest form. No man-made publication can supersede the word of God. No commentary can surpass the original product. No uninspired writing can overrule a tenet of God’s inspired book.

“Of the word” is possibly better rendered as “spiritual” (Marshall, Alford, Selwyn) and its association with “milk” describes the proper food for a child of God. Spiritual milk, obviously the word of God, provides spiritual nourishment. It is not provided merely by religious ceremony, attendance or appearance. Brother Carter writes, “Peter ... counselled the ‘elect’ to desire ‘the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby’ (1Pet 2:2). By this

means ‘the inward man is renewed day by day’ (2Cor 4:16), and a new man develops ‘which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him’ (Col 3:10). ‘The fleshly mind’ (Col 2:18) becomes a spiritual mind.”¹⁴

By imbibing this spiritual drink “ye may grow to salvation” (Marshall). “To salvation” is omitted by some late manuscripts and is not found in the AV. Its inclusion is most probably correct and supports the hypothesis that the milk mentioned in this verse is not part of a diet that is to be outgrown. Rather it refers to God’s grace as presented in His word and is essential for the salvation of the believer. As Brother Sargent says, “Spiritual hunger and thirst is for present righteousness because it is for the future, and the beginnings of the future are in the present; and hunger for righteousness is hunger for the food of righteousness, which is the Word.”¹⁵

Taken together, 2:1 and 2:2 present a balanced picture of the activity of the ideal saint. They show that wrong relations with other people or activities, both within and without the brotherhood, can put us off our spiritual food and thereby stunt our development. Only those who excise unprofitable attitudes, attributes and activities can have a healthy, proper appetite for essential spiritual food. Those who partake of such food will grow in spiritual maturity and will, by God’s grace, experience ultimate salvation.

2:3

Peter concludes this section with an allusion to Psalm 34:8 - “O taste and see that Yahweh is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” 2:2 says that true saints crave after the word of God that they may grow unto salvation. 2:3 follows by exclaiming that they are bound to do this because they have tasted of the grace of God. God’s grace is not a ticket to do as we please (Rom 6:1). It creates an obligation, as well as providing a powerful incentive, to seek after His ways.

The sense of 2:3 is, “for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (RSV) or “seeing that you ...” (Selwyn). They had experience of God’s goodness and, therefore, should be responding along the line described in the previous verse.

The word for “gracious” (*kreestos*) actually means “good” (Marshall) and is associated in the New Testament with kindness and goodness. When we consider the problems confronting the ecclesia and those prophesied by Peter one could ask the question, “How is God kind?” But this is unnecessary as Peter has presented, in the previous chapter, a clear exposition of the privileges they had in Christ. Not the least being the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:19). Every brother and sister has experienced that kindness. This could be what Peter is alluding to. It is evident from 2:4 that the “Lord” referred to is the Son of God.

Knowledge of the great work of the Son, a mission not fully comprehended by the prophets and a source of great excitement to angels (1:10-12), must inspire service in the saint. Besides being aware of his work, we are constantly blessed by its on-going efficacy.

¹⁴ CARTER, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, p130

¹⁵ SARGENT, *The Teaching of the Master*, p51

The more we partake of the spiritual milk of the word of God the more we discover the lovingkindness of God, how spiritually lacking we are and that our spiritual appetite is sharpened in desire for further nourishment.

The Chosen Stone and his Chosen People

1 Peter 2:4-10

The New Spiritual House

2:4-5

Continuing from 2:3 we find expressed in these two verses the fact that all who come to Christ in response to the gospel become incorporated, by their relation to him, into a temple or priesthood, whose objective is to offer God acceptable sacrifices through Jesus Christ. Christ is the unifying centre of this building to God. He is the one that we approach despite him being rejected of men. He is chosen of God and precious.

Christ is called a living stone and those who associate with him become as living stones and are integrated together to form a spiritual house. This special relationship is not without obligation. The lively stones must conform to God's measurements so that it is possible to fit into the building.

2:4

2:4 is clearly a reference to Christ in language derived from the Old Testament, as Peter explicitly indicates in 2:6-8. Jesus Christ is the one we approach as he is the living stone. The verb *proserchesthai* ("coming") expresses the idea of drawing near with the intention to stay and to enjoy fellowship (Stibbs). Many translations render the opening expression of this verse as, "Come to him" (e.g. RSV, Wey).

But why does Peter use the term "living stone" of Christ? A number of sound reasons can be advanced.

One is that the term "living" is an idiomatic expression used by Jews to declare the excellency of the thing to which it is applied. Examples include, "Living water" (John 4:10,11), "Living oracles" (Acts 7:38), "Living way" (Heb 10:20) and "Living fountains" (Rev 7:17). Christ is not just a stone, he is a stone (*lithos*) of superb quality. *Lithos* is the usual word for a worked stone, whether for a building or a precious stone (Selwyn). Christ is the perfect cornerstone for the spiritual house and precious in the eyes of his Father, the Master Architect.

Also, when applied to Christ, we have the added concept that he is more than a living stone. He is life-giving. The "living water" which he dispenses shall be to those who drink of it "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). He is the "living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:51). "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). His shed blood constitutes "a new and living way" (Heb 10:20) by which believers have access to God. When Peter calls Christ the "living stone", he has in mind the fact that Christ is living and a communicator of life to those who come to him in faith.

Thirdly, Peter, by contrast, is revealing the inadequacy of pagan religious systems. The cornerstone and adjoining stones are “living” as opposed to the dead stones of the temples of the cults. The house is “spiritual”; a dramatic contrast to heathen worship. The head of this religion was alive, something which could not be said of the most lavish pagan deity. The believers “spiritual sacrifices” (2:5) were acceptable through Jesus Christ and not through any merit in the worshipper.

Finally, Peter’s declaration, particularly when linked with his subsequent statements, reveals that the Jewish leaders were wrong. Jesus was alive, chosen of God and precious. His rejection was not only a serious, if not fatal, mistake by the people and their leaders but a fulfilment of prophecy. Peter develops the prophetic implications in 2:6-8.

Jesus was “disallowed (*apodokimazo*) of men.” Peter uses the word that Jesus prophetically applied to his rejection by the elders and his generation (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 17:25). *Apodokimazo* is found nine times in the New Testament and means “to reject as a result of examination and disapproval” (Vine). In all but one instance, Heb 12:17 in regard to Esau, the word concerns the rejection of Christ. Esau’s judgment was just. Christ’s was outrageously unjust and Peter propounds this when he declares that Jesus was “chosen of God” (*theos eklektos*). In calling Christ the “chosen of God” Peter highlights the iniquity of the Jews as he cites the term used by them when they derided the crucified Messiah - “He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God (*theos eklektos*)” (Luke 23:35). In an example of divine irony, Jesus was *theos eklektos*, he did save others, he did save himself and he continues to save others. And he is precious (*entimos*).

Entimos means to be “held in honour, prized” (Thayer). Although rejected by men, he was chosen by God and held in honour by God. As Brother Mansfield has written, “Only one who rendered perfect obedience could fill such a place, there has only been one such!”¹

2:5²

In 2:4 the chief one of God’s elect was rejected by men but was chosen of God and precious. God’s elect, the ecclesia (1:2), must strive to emulate this divine estimate of Jesus. The present reception of the truth does not guarantee a place with the final approved. Instead, as living stones in a spiritual house, we, all of us, are to offer spiritual sacrifices. This is acceptable to God.

Those who have received the gospel and acted on its requirements are “as lively (living - 2:4) stones.” In 2:4 the italicised “as unto” should be deleted as it hinders the distinction Peter is making. Jesus Christ is a living stone. The baptised in Christ are as living stones. Christ in his own right is the living stone of prophecy. The members of the ecclesia are as stones via the work of Christ. Our position is derived through him. The believers are not classified as living stones merely to signify they are not dead stones. They have prospect of eternal life because of Christ, the living stone or life-giving stone. Therefore, their life should be a constant shaping and smoothing of their primitive, hewn surface in order to be able to align themselves with the chief cornerstone.

¹ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p113

² See Appendix 1 for the reproduction of an especially practical article on 2:5 by Brother Grimes that was originally published in *The Christadelphian*, Vol 67 (1930), p21-25

As the Greek indicates, this is a continual process - “are being built up a spiritual house” (Marshall, Selwyn, NKJV). The process will not be completed until the coming of Christ. Incorporation into the final building requires preparation now. In placing our confidence in God and Christ, in pursuing the example of the Son, in constantly considering his life we are preparing, and Christ is preparing, a place for us (John 14:2). Brother Carter states, “His present work as High Priest on behalf of his people, and the direction of human affairs to the end appointed, are parts of his preparatory work on their behalf.”³

At the present, a spiritual household existing as the true ecclesia is styled “the household of God” (Eph 2:19). This is but an imperfect precursor to the spiritual house in the age to come, when the saints will reflect the glory of God mentally, morally, physically - perfectly.

The future age will also establish the holy priesthood which we are, or should be, preparing for. “For a holy priesthood” (Roth, Marshall, Diag) would seem a more accurate translation. Although we are working to be part of the holy priesthood that does not mean we are not part of a priesthood today. 2:9 is very clear in affirming that we, like those of Peter’s era, are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood ...” and repeats the word *hieratuma*, which is only found elsewhere in 2:5.

Hieratuma means “the order or body of priests” (Thayer) thereby exulting them above society in general to a princely class in the eyes of God. God’s servants are priests devoted to their work, serving at a rank and with a freedom that makes them exempt from the control of everyone except God and Christ. We obey the laws of the land because God commands us to do so. We offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And we are all members of the priesthood and all potential heirs of the Melchizedek priesthood. The scriptural doctrine is that the whole ecclesia is a priesthood and not just particular officials. It is a status and a privilege enjoyed by the whole brotherhood. God’s chosen sanctuary is His people. The priesthood is no longer restricted to a specially qualified minority, on whose ministrations the majority of the people is dependent.

Although the church has its distinctive “priesthood” and this ordination is without any foundation in Scripture, we must guard against a similar situation occurring within the ecclesia. Study, meditation, education and application of God’s word is the responsibility of every person in the brotherhood. All are priests. No brother or sister should be elevated to a status whereby their word is likened to “the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered” (Est 1:19). The spoken and written religious word is only correct if vindicated by the Scriptures of truth.

All of us are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. This is distinct from the material sacrifices of Jewish and pagan religion. However, we are not limiting this to being a New Testament phenomena. The Old Testament describes contrition, prayer, righteousness, praise and thanksgiving as acts of sacrifice (Psa 4:5; 50:14; 51:17; 107:22; 141:2). Prophets of God clearly rejected the sacrificial system when the wickedness of the worshippers was rampant (Isa 1:11-15; Hos 9:4; Mal 1:7-8). At other times the superiority of righteousness over animal sacrifice is emphasised (1Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8). This is the emphasis of the new order.

³ CARTER, *The Gospel of John*, p156

Spiritual sacrifice includes prayer (Rev 8:3-4), practical ministry to the needs of others (Heb 13:16), praise and thanksgiving (Heb 13:15). Broadly speaking, it is complete surrender of self to God (Rom 12:1).

The offering of our lives to God means that they are no longer ours but His, and therefore must be kept from impurity. The saint makes his work and worship an offering to God. Everything he does is for God and thus, the meanest task is to God's glory. Labour in the service of God is not a wearisome burden to be pushed through; it is a joy and a privilege.

Furthermore, the sacrifices made in wholehearted service are acceptable to God. A believer can offer sacrifices that please God because they involve spiritual worship of willing obedience and are manifested in a life of freely-chosen personal devotion. An animal sacrifice could not render such but, those of the Mosaic covenant, were typical of the Lord Jesus Christ and the example he established for all to imitate (Gal 3:24; Heb 9:12; 10:1).

The Chief Cornerstone

2:6-8

Peter next substantiates, with Old Testament prophecy, the exhortation contained in the previous sub-section. In 2:4 Peter declares that Christ is a living stone, disallowed of men but special to God. In 2:5 we are instructed to be like him and to offer up our lives in service to God. Both assertions, while straightforward and acceptable to us (unfortunately our commitment is not always matched by application), were radical to Jews and pagans alike.

Peter brings forward three important Old Testament passages to, at least, silence his Jewish critics. Isaiah 28:16 is cited to affirm Christ as the cornerstone, chosen and precious. Psalm 118:22 is quoted as a fulfilled prophecy of the rejection and subsequent exultation of the Son of God. Isaiah 8:14 presents the picture of those who have failed to strike up the relationship Peter exhorts his readers to.

This skilful piecing together of three distinct passages of Scripture presents a beautiful Biblical illustration of 2:4-5. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah yet he was rejected by the very builders whom one would have expected to welcome him with acclaim. They found in Jesus one who completely offended them. Despite their assessment, he is the one whom God has set in place as the chief cornerstone of His spiritual house. All who believe in Christ will not be offended or disappointed by him. They, as stones, will join the one great unifying stone and thereby share in the acceptance and glory he received from the Father.

2:6

Peter vindicates his conclusions of 2:4-5 with "because (*dioti* - not the same as the "wherefore" of 2:1) it is contained in Scripture" (Marshall) and cites Isaiah 28:16; the first of his three Old Testament proofs. Peter is not alone in using this passage to uphold the view that Christ is the cornerstone. This verse had quite a hold on the thoughts of the apostles and is quoted in Romans 9:33; 10:11; Ephesians 2:20, as well as 1Peter 2:6.

We can also observe the careful way Peter has prepared his readers for this citation. In 2:4 he said that Jesus was a stone (*lithos*), chosen (*eklektos*) and precious (*entimos*). All three words are repeated in this verse. And his citation from Isaiah 28 provides an important embellishment. Jesus is no ordinary stone. He is chief corner (*akrogoniaios*) stone. *Akrogoniaios* means “placed at the extreme corner” (Thayer) or “designed for the corner” (Selwyn).

Some attempt to translate the word as “corner foundation” (Marshall) but this is technically not possible. The cornerstone and foundation stone are quite different in purpose. Paul states that the foundation is the apostles and the prophets, and Christ is the cornerstone (Eph 2:20). No doubt the apostles and the prophets were entirely dependent upon the work and strength of Christ in order for them to be the foundation, but the cornerstone has qualities which apply uniquely and majestically to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The chief feature of the cornerstone is that it controls the design of the edifice. As Paul explains, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21). The cornerstone, unlike a foundation stone, is visible. It is responsible for the beauty of the building. If a secondary stone is out of shape or chipped it will pale beside a good true cornerstone and therefore be discarded. The cornerstone is necessary for the cohesion and strength of the wall of the building. It will keep the walls perpendicular to the foundations and run at the correct horizontal angle.

So too does Christ. The strength of the ecclesia is directly proportional to its relationship with and attitudes toward Christ. An unstable spiritual house is not the fault of the foundations or the cornerstone. It is the result of the shoddy workmanship of the secondary stones. The house may collapse, as Israel’s did, but the cornerstone will not be shaken.

Another feature of the cornerstone is that it holds together two walls. Christ joins together as brethren, into a body dedicated to God, those who were formerly Jews and Gentiles. This is certainly a major inference of Ephesians 2:20-21 as the context bears this out (Eph 2:14). However, while racial tension was virtually an ubiquitous problem of the early ecclesia, this is not the primary thrust of Peter’s line of reasoning. His emphasis is the total spiritual house and how it aligns with its cornerstone. That is his precise point as he continues, “and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

“Confounded” (*kataishuno*) is better rendered “put to shame” (Thayer, CompB, Rom 9:33). A believer who has conformed to the great stone designed for the corner will not be shaken by whatever is hurled at him. Such trials are expected as part of his present pilgrimage and are humbly and adroitly contended.

How is a follower of Christ put to shame? It is not by trying to fit tightly against the cornerstone. Perhaps we allow some of the rough edges to stay. We know they are unacceptable but we resist smoothing them away. Our inconsistency is soon revealed. We say Jesus is Lord, but when tested our hypocrisy is exposed and we are put to shame. Shame is prevalent when the eyes of those around us detect our flaws. If we constantly strive to be like Christ we will not be put to shame before God. Conversely, if we are shameless and impervious to change, shame will be our reward at the judgment (Dan 12:2).

Shame is also linked to idolatry. The Hebrew noun *boshet* was substituted in a number of places for Baal (Jer 11:13; Hos 9:10). Ish-bosheth (2Sam 2:8), the “man of shame”, was originally Esh-Baal (1Chron 8:33), the “man of Baal.” If we claim to be Christ’s servants yet serve idols, in whatever form they take, our shame will be manifest both now and at the judgment. John’s advice, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1John 5:21) is synonymous to, “he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame” (NKJV).

Christ’s adversaries were ashamed before him (Luke 13:17). May it be that we are not counted with them, rather that we are not ashamed “but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed (*kataishuno*)” (Rom 5:3-5).

2:7-8

To a believer, Jesus is precious. Literally the start of 2:7 reads, “To you then is the honour who believe” (Alford). Bullinger informs us that this awkward reading is the result of a deliberate use of a figure of speech called Hyperbaton, or Transposition, where the words of a sentence are put out of their natural or usual grammatical order. The emphasis, in this instance, is placed last so as to stress the fact that the Lord Jesus is precious, or in honour, to believers and no-one else.

However, there is more to it than that. While the term for “precious” (*timee* “honour” 1:7 - not *entimos* of 2:4,6) is being applied directly to Christ, this honour, by association with Christ, is shared with the faithful. Some versions attempt to assist this concept with translations like, “To you believers, therefore, that honour belongs” (Wey). Such an interpretation is not without substance but it diverts attention from Christ, the source of any honour to the believers and the recipient of honour from the saints.

This section is saying that to those who believe, Christ is honoured and they will share in that honour if they are exulted in the future age. However, to those who disbelieve, instead of being an object of honour, Christ is rejected, a stone of offence and a stumblingblock. By extension, Christ will, instead of sharing honour with them, reflect their opinion of him by rejecting them.

When we trace the word *timee* and its associates, *timao* and *timios*, within 1Peter we are presented with a comprehensive picture of what should be the life of the believer and how he relates to Christ. Of Christ we read that he is “precious” (*timee* - 2:7) and that we are redeemed by his “precious (*timios* - 1:19) blood.” As believers we undergo trials of our faith but these are more “precious (*timios* - 1:7) than gold which perisheth” and by them we are refined “unto praise and honour (*timee* - 1:7) and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” However, our relationship with Christ is not a selfish one. In everyday affairs we “honour (*timao* - 2:17) all men.” In concerns of authority we “honour (*timao* - 2:17) the king.” While these requirements are not always easy, God holds out to everyone that approaches Him via Christ “great and precious (*timios* - 2Pet 1:4) promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”

“But for those who do not believe” (RSV), the precious stone takes on different characteristics. Peter now quotes from Psalm 118:22 and attaches Isaiah 8:14-15 onto it. A number of commentators seem baffled by this unusual composite citation, but there is no

mystery. Peter, under Spirit guidance, has dexterously combined a verse which referred to how Christ was treated by men and God with another verse which declares how Christ will affect those who originally rejected him. The first quotation presents historical facts, the second, their on-going repercussions.

There is no doubt that Psalm 118:22 is prophetic of Christ because our Lord Jesus Christ uses the verse, in devastating fashion, in reference to himself (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). His use of the verse following the equally devastating parable of the wicked husbandmen so antagonised the chief priests and the scribes that they resolved that same hour to lay hands on him (Luke 20:19). The tragic irony was that their actions fulfilled the prophecy precisely as Christ had enunciated. Further tragedy was that they also failed to recognise Christ's exultation to the head of the corner.

To a faithful person, by analogy a person who appreciates an exquisitely constructed house, the cornerstone is an object of grace and beauty. To an unfaithful person, by analogy he who stands to lose much by the building's construction, the cornerstone is a source of terror and destruction. As Christ states, "Whomsoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke 20:18).

The occasion of Christ's citing of Psalm 118:22 obviously made a powerful impact on Peter as he used the words in Acts 4:11 in a speech to the Sanhedrin; many of whom had reacted so treacherously when Christ had used the words of himself.

There was another incident that Peter would not have forgotten. In Matthew 16, not long after Christ had praised Peter before the other disciples, he said to him, "Thou art an offence (*skandalon*)" (Matt 16:23). While Peter, like Paul in Romans 9:33, is using these terms which equated with the Hebrew and not the Septuagint, he would have been deeply saddened to write the word his master was forced to label him with. *Skandalon* refers to "any person or thing by which one is drawn into error or sin" (Thayer). Peter had unwittingly attempted to fulfil that role.

Peter's consternation was not the result of that incident alone. A far more humbling and humiliating event was Christ's response, in the upper room, to Peter's confident outburst: "Though all men shall be offended (*skandalizo*) because of thee, yet will I never be offended (*skandalizo*)" (Matt 26:33). Christ followed this by prophesying, much to Peter's horror, Peter's threefold denial of his Lord. In fulfilling this prophecy, Peter did become offended by Christ. It was not to occur again but the great shame that smote Peter that fateful day vexed him for the rest of his life.

But how is Christ a *skandalon*? Surely he does not deliberately entrap a person into sin? He is also called a stone of stumbling (*proskomma*). *Proskomma* means a "stumbling block" that causes one to fall and metaphorically impels them to sin. Christ is both *proskomma* and *skandalon* to the disobedient. It particularly annoyed and offended the Jews that his words, deeds, career and especially his ignominious death on the cross failed to correspond with their preconceptions of the Messiah. Hence they despised and rejected him, and by that crime brought punishment and woe upon themselves. To our generation, Christ becomes a stumblingblock to those who are "disobedient"; those who disobey are the disbelieving. Unbelief is the root error. It can be present in any modern-day saint. Just as true faith

manifests itself in obedience, so secret unbelief inevitably finds expression in deliberate disobedience.

Instead of being scandalised by Christ, the Jews as well as the saints were “appointed” (*tithemi*) to serve; to keep his word. Christ was actively set in place (2:6 - “lay” *tithemi*) as the chief cornerstone. The same stone that by divine appointment is the saviour and confidence of the believing, brings down the unbelieving with ineluctable judgment (Matt 25:46).

The People of God

2:9-10

After spending time on the essentially negative subject of those who disobeyed, disbelieved, stumbled at the word, and rejected Christ, Peter advances us into a beautiful, positive, spiritual section. The contrast is introduced by that little word “But.” Instead of having all those characteristics outlined in 2:7-8, the true ecclesia, including the faithful brethren to whom Peter wrote, were very special to God.

Again Peter applies Old Testament concepts to this New Testament generation. As we saw in 1:16, divine principles remain unaltered even though the ordinances of the old covenant have been replaced. We are to be holy because God is holy. Those who serve God are His people.

Brother Carter, in his exposition of Malachi 3:17, records, “The language is obviously based upon the terms of the old covenant: ‘Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation’ (Exod 19:3-7). It also clearly has reference to a future good when the faithful are rewarded according to God’s book of remembrance. The conclusion is inescapable that the Kingdom in the past was a type of something yet to be. The statement in Malachi is in fact a link with the New Testament usage of the language. We have first Peter saying to the ‘elect according to the foreknowledge of God, in sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ’: ‘Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1Pet 1:2; 2:9,10). The nation of Israel were a ‘kingdom of priests’ - the saints ‘a royal priesthood’; in the first the emphasis is political, in the second spiritual, as befitted the circumstances of each.”⁴

2:9 “a chosen generation”

Genos eklektos - As we discussed in our commentary of 1:11, Peter in the early verses stresses the notion of *eklektos*. Although rejected by the world and taunted by the Jews, in God’s eyes the saints are his “chosen race” (Marshall, Diag, NEB, RSV etc). Peter uses this term first. They were being reassured by this encouraging exordium. God had chosen them like he had chosen the seed of Abraham. They were more than the natural seed of Abraham. They were “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29).

⁴ CARTER, *Prophets After the Exile*, p297-298

In all likelihood Peter has taken this phrase from Isaiah 43:20-21. What does this phrase and its origin teach us? What did it mean to Peter's readers? These verses are prophetic of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, and the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles. By referring back to Isaiah, Gentile readers would have received comfort in yet another confirmation of their divine election.

As Brother Walker states, "But Israel remembered not the former things, neither considered the things of old, which were but typical of his final and world-wide deliverance. Therefore God, as He had beforetime revealed through Moses, now through Israel again declared that He would be honoured even by the unclean beasts of the Gentiles."⁵ Yet Peter provides adequate and sensitive balance by later citing from purely Jewish foundation prophecies.

What is more important is the impression this phrase should have had on them. Firstly, their relationship with God was not an entitlement. It was a privilege. Brother Mansfield stresses, "A chosen generation is a race, or people brought into existence by Divine choice, and not by fleshly birth (John 1:13)."⁶

Secondly, this election was for service. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise" (Isa 43:21). Their privilege is that they will be used for the purpose of God and praise to God. And this is only possible if they serve God in obedience; the third aspect of their election.

Obedience was the Achilles heel of natural Israel. After Isaiah utters the inspiring words of Isaiah 43:18-21 which foretell the great work of the new covenant, he turns to berate Israel for their disobedience (Isa 43:22-24). The privilege of our election brings responsibility. We are not chosen to do as we like. Our privilege is to obey God.

Therefore, to be *genos eklektos* is to be chosen as a great privilege; a privilege which is reciprocated in obedience and service to God.

"a royal priesthood"

See notes on 2:5 for comments on this phrase. We have already deduced that this means we are all members of the priesthood and all potential heirs of the Melchizedek priesthood. Every baptised individual has the same access and approach to God. Every baptised individual must offer his work, his worship and himself to God.

Again when we locate the source of this phrase we discover an emphasis on obedience and service. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant ... ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:5-6). This must be referring to a special, non-Aaronic priesthood. All Israel could be set apart for God. All could be part of a priesthood whereby entry was not through blood-lines but through faith. The same is held out to everybody today.

As Brother T. J. Barling so gravely puts it, "All men are equal before God in their natural state. The social and other distinctions which impress, or depress, men and women mean little to God: 'All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than

⁵ WALKER, *The Ministry of the Prophets: Isaiah*, p564

⁶ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p115

nothing and vanity' (Isa 40:17). Furthermore, when individuals receive recognition by God, no new ground of difference comes into being, for the new standing is the result, not of personal merit, but of divine grace. In his regenerated condition ... man is called upon to give his life to God. He becomes a priest by virtue of his call to the Gospel ... This idea of the consecrated life of the believer is absolutely fundamental. The only hierarchy that the New Testament knows is priests, comprehensive of all believers, and one high priest, the Lord Jesus. This thought is expressed with the rare felicity in Hebrews 3:1: 'Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession' (RSV)."⁷

This priesthood is a royal priesthood. We are called to serve and to reign. In the future age the accepted will be kings and priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) with Christ (Zech 6:13).

“an holy nation”

As with the previous expression, this is derived from Exodus 19:6 and was originally applied to Israel. Israel, as one of the nations, was distinct or different (*hagios* - see notes on 1:15-16) by reason of being consecrated to God. The believer has been chosen by God that he may be holy or different from other people. He is dedicated to God's will and God's service. A person who commences a life in Christ, if genuine with themselves, will realise, even before baptism, that they are compelled to be different from other people. It is an inescapable fact.

The basic tenet of holiness is separation. Not simply to be an ascetic or martyr in a religious cause but to work for God. While it is true that we should not touch that which is unclean, we must also be as sons and daughters to our Heavenly Father by responding to His requirements, in love, with a willing disposition (2Cor 6:17-18)

“a peculiar people”

The RV provides a literal translation with, “a people for God's own possession.” “Peculiar” is the Greek *peripoyeesis* and means in 2:9, “possession, one's own property” (Thayer). On many occasions an object will take on a new value because it has been possessed by some notable person. A battered, antiquated typewriter may find pride of place in a museum because it was owned by a writer of classics. A pair of smelly socks may be displayed in a sporting hall of fame because they belonged to a champion athlete. A believer in Christ is generally a very ordinary person with little, if any, fame in worldly affairs. But he acquires a new value and dignity because he belongs to God. God has purchased him (Acts 20:28; 1Cor 6:20; 7:23; Eph 1:14).

Most commentators take time in exploring the Old Testament sources of the four descriptive phrases used in this verse. All these phrases were initially applied to Israel. However, due to their hardheartedness which climaxed in the slaying of their Messiah, God put them aside and turned to the Gentiles (Acts 15:14). The opportunities and privileges of the gospel are available to all who respond, irrespective of racial origin or social status (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The faithful ecclesia now constitutes the true Israel of God.

⁷ T J BARLING, *The Letter to the Philippians*, p114-115

However, what I believe is more apparent is the repetitious nature of the four expressions. While all have variations from each other and distinct nuances can be attached to each expression, the broad picture of each is identical. All affirm the great privilege of the saints in being chosen, royal, different, possessed of God. All infer that great responsibilities are placed upon this privileged group. They are chosen to serve and obey God. They are set apart as priests to serve and obey God. They are holy in that they dedicate themselves in service and obedience of God. God owns them so they respond in service and obedience as faithful children. This emphasis is maintained with the following expression which clearly declares the objective of the true ecclesia.

“that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into this marvellous light”

We are the previous four expressions in order to show forth (*exangelo* - only in 2:9) the praises (*aretee*) of God. *Exangelo* has the meaning “to advertise” (Selwyn) or “make known by praising or proclaiming.” It is a dramatic word that reveals the true function of the ecclesia. It is to proclaim the excellencies, mighty acts and virtues of God. How skilled are we in this field? How earnest is our proclamation? Do we find it easier to hold back when the situation requires an open, honest declaration of the privileges of being in Christ? Does our life reflect the task we have been given?

The Psalmist exclaims, “Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness” (Psa 150:2). Their lies the spirit of the man of faith.

Aretee means, “excellencies, noble acts” (Selwyn) and connotes both excellence in activity and prestige. In the verse before us, *aretee* would be especially linked to the redemption brought about by Christ’s death and resurrection, and the divine wisdom, love, power and mercy which lay behind it. God is a being with unsurpassed qualities which have been revealed in the great deeds He has accomplished in the work of Christ and the bringing in of outsiders to benefit from it.

As Peter continues, God has called the ecclesia out of darkness into light. They have changed from heathens to the brethren of Christ. As Paul explained to Agrippa, he was sent to the Gentiles, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).

Darkness often represents the sphere or condition of sin - “Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in ways of darkness” (Prov 2:13). As Jesus says, “If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Matt 6:23). This darkness reached its climax in the sin of those in crucifying him “this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53).

When God calls people, they are being drawn into a marvellous light. When a man takes on the sin-covering name of Christ, he is a son of God and is as close to God as he ever will be in his temporariness. Life is no longer a trackless wilderness. The way is clear. The desire is to serve God and the power to do so comes from reading His instructions and communicating in prayer. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?” (Psa 27:1).

2:9 is a beautiful passage of Scripture. I believe Peter had Isaiah 60:1-3 in mind when he wrote this verse. The very people he was writing to were a direct fulfilment of one of the most intelligible yet profound prophecies of the Old Testament; “The Gentiles shall come to thy light.” And we of this generation are dwelling in the radiant light of the gospel of God’s truth.

Brother Barling puts the challenge to us, “Let us see to it that this is true of us, by giving ourselves wholly to God’s service; loving Him with all our heart; surrendering to Him the fat and the strongest portion of our lives; living by every word that proceedeth out of His mouth; yielding ourselves to the influence of His Spirit; doing all things, however menial, as unto Him and solely to His glory. Then, in His mercy, when that day comes when the earth shall be full of His glory, and when even the bells of the horses shall be ‘Holiness unto the Lord’, He will be pleased to dwell in us and admit us into perfect and eternal fellowship with Him and with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, our Saviour and our King.”⁸

2:10

In being called from darkness into light, they had previously been in a situation when they were without mercy and outside of the family of God (Eph 2:12). Peter impresses this change in circumstances by referring to the position of natural Israel as declared by Hosea (Hos 1:6-2:1; 2:23). The thrust of Hosea’s prophecy was that Israel were subject to God’s mercy and were His people but Hosea’s generation had so apostacised from true worship, turned to other gods and ignored the God of Heaven that God says, “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel” (Hos 1:6), and Israel is “not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hos 1:9). Their beautiful relationship with God was reversed. No more would His holy name reside with them. The relationship established some hundreds of years ago was undone. In Deuteronomy 32:21 unidentified foreigners are labelled as “not a people” (Heb *lo-am*: similar to Lo-Ammi of Hos 1:9). Israel, in the eyes of God, were no better than the heathen.

Peter’s readers were once a non-people. Whereas Israel was holy only to lose their distinctiveness through wickedness, the Gentiles were born into darkness. But Israel’s situation will be restored - “I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God” (Hos 2:23). Note the reaction of the Jews. They will finally recognise Yahweh as their God and mirror that realisation in action, including the confession that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah.

The strangers and pilgrims of 1:1 having been called into light, recognised Jesus as Messiah, expressed a desire to serve the God of Israel and realised their dependence on God for salvation. Peter, like Paul in Romans 9:25-26, uses the prophecy of Hosea, essentially a forecast of Jewish restoration, and applies it to Gentiles. They, because of their reaction to God’s call, were now the people (*laos*) of God.

The use of the word *laos* would have had a special significance to the Gentile brethren. The term connotes, “community.” In the mixed society of the Roman Empire, where freedom of association was subject to restrictive laws as in modern despotic states, this sense of community must have worn very thin. Peter’s words were designed to convey to his audience

⁸ BARLING, *Law and Grace*, p202

that they now belonged to a new and unique community which claimed their loyalty. It was something which could give all their instincts of patriotism full satisfaction.

They had continued long in the state of being without mercy but in one decisive act, their conversion, they had now obtained mercy. Pagan religion is characterised by terror of all-consuming gods. Remnants of paganism have been incorporated into apostate Christianity in the form of the all-consuming supernatural Satan who, in some sects, commands more attention than God Himself. A true Christian is the person who has discovered the wonderful love and mercy of God especially as adumbrated in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. While fear of God is necessary in order to establish proper reverence in the believer (1:17), the saint can have confidence in the mercy that God is prepared to shower on those who approach Him in time of need (Heb 4:16).

SUMMARY: THE CHOSEN STONE AND HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

“This passage as a whole (2:4-10) also indicates that this calling and destiny are fundamentally realised only in and through Christ. He it is who is the ‘chosen of God’ or God’s ‘elect’. He is the priest upon his throne who combines in his person royalty and priesthood. He is given unique privileges as the Holy One of God, and as God’s very own Son. These honours he shares, as the Christ, with his people. They are ‘for you therefore which believe’ (see 2:7 RV and RV mg). So it is the company of erstwhile outsiders with no status and deserving judgment as sinners who, because of God’s mercy toward them in Christ, and because they have come to Him, and believed in Him, are told that they now constitute a community characterised by election, royalty, priesthood, holiness and privileged relation to God as His special people. They are also told that what has happened to them, and what they are by God’s doings, is intended to proclaim or advertise to the universe the worthiness of God’s works and ways.”⁹

The Pilgrim Life in Relation to Others

1 Peter 2:11-3:12

The Example of Self-Discipline

2:11-12

Peter has more than adequately portrayed the privileged relationship that the saints enjoy towards God. He now lays down principles that should be observed in their mortal sojourn on the earth.

He makes a twofold demand for disciplined and distinctive personal conduct as brethren in Christ. 2:11 presents the half of the demand which is negative and private; a demand for self-discipline in personal living. The other half of the demand, outlined in 2:12, is positive and public; a demand for behaviour that is openly and recognisably virtuous in the eyes of men.

⁹ STIBBS, *1 Peter*, p105

2:11

One of Peter's techniques in writing this epistle is to reintroduce or repeat themes. For example, *eklektos* has been used four times within two chapters (1:2; 2:4,6,9) yet Paul only used the word five times in all his writings. Peter's message is uncomplicated and simply constructed. He has certain themes he is stressing and these are not just mentioned, explored and left behind. He is constantly recapitulating.

They were the elect of God. However, despite their elevated status before God, a status that was their's because of God, they were not to forget that they were strangers and pilgrims in this world. They were the outcasts of society. They had to demonstrate their detachment from the world by their behaviour and innermost thoughts to God.

Even before Peter reiterates the stark reality of their worldly status, he gently reminds them of his feelings towards them. He calls them "Dearly beloved" (*agapeetos*), a term he repeats in 4:12 before advising them of the severe trials soon to afflict them. Peter knows their history and future. It is as if with quiet resignation to their fate he expresses his love for them.

We have already discussed the concept of *agape* (see notes 1:8,22) and Peter reintroduces the subject at this most appropriate time. Not only is he declaring his love for them, he is emphasising *agape* as a characteristic of the holy community (1:22). They loved Christ (1:8). They must love each other. And Peter is a fine example of *agape* love towards brethren.

Part of Peter's love was the advice he gave them. He beseeched (*parakaleo*) them. *Parakaleo* is derived from two Greek words and means, "to call aside, appeal to (by way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, or instruction)" (CompB). Peter was not berating them. He was taking them aside and quietly instructing them. Surely this is the best approach for those under pressure. A terse, aggressive form of "counselling" is rarely appropriate. Even when the apostle Paul castigates the wayward Galatians he does not present as being wrathful; moreso worn down and despondent at their foolishness.

Peter's quiet reminder is that they are strangers (*paroikos* - see 1:7) and pilgrims (*parapidemos* - "strangers" in 1:1). They were not alone in these circumstances for Peter may be citing from Genesis 23:4 where Abraham said to the sons of Heth, "I am a sojourner (*paroikos*) and a stranger (*parapidemos*) among you" (LXX). And this from the man who was promised the land he was standing on.

What does it mean to be a sojourner; a temporary resident or without rights? It means that by being part of God's royal priesthood, God's holy nation, God's chosen generation, we are detached from this present world. We do not belong to the Gentile world around us. We have a spiritual inheritance (1:4-5) and we must show our response to this calling in the quality of our lives.

So long as we are in this world there should be, in our lives as saints, a certain withdrawal. Such discipline is in the interests of our personal and spiritual well-being. We are to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Fleshly lusts are the selfish and lower side of man's nature. Paul supplies a list of the sins of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 and includes, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance,

emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and the such like.” These lusts carry on a campaign the moment one decides to serve Christ. This war is against a man’s soul (*psuche*) or his life; the life which had been purified (1:22), the life which can be saved through the work of Christ (1:9), the life of which Jesus is the Shepherd and Bishop (2:25).

2:12

There was another good reason why the believer must abstain from fleshly lusts. The early ecclesia was under fire. Slander and untrue accusations were continually being made against them. The most effective way to refute these charges was to live so lovely a life that they would be shown to be false. 2:12 calls for the visible fruits of the inner purity of 2:11. Peter’s careful regard of the effect that life and conduct have on the minds of contemporary society goes back to the Sermon on the Mount. Peter adopts the same expressions of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (*kalos ergon*), and glorify (*doxaso*) your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Their mental change must be outworked in “conversation honest” or a total conduct, a total way of life which is good, lovely, gracious and fair to look upon. The word for “honest” (*kalos* - translated as “good” later in this verse) is distinct from the normal word for “good” (*agathos*) in that it implies that the conduct in question is not only good, but also appears so. This point was of particular importance in a society which applied to the highest kind of human character the term *kalos kagathos*; which means, “one whose intrinsic goodness is also beautiful in other’s eyes” (Selwyn). In other words, the believers in Christ have to be at the pinnacle of society when it comes to moral exactitude. Near enough is not good enough.

Brother Ladson wrote, “In association with the word ‘conversation’ in 1Pet 2:12 occurs the word ‘honest’, another expression which has become narrowed in its meaning in our modern speech. The original sense is much more than merely refraining from stealing and lying. It contains the ideas ‘honourable’, ‘beautiful’, ‘fitting’. A moral and spiritual beauty is connoted. The RV gives instead of ‘conversation honest’, the alternative ‘behaviour seemly’, that is fit to be observed by the Gentiles as characteristic of the brethren of Christ. And not only before the Gentiles for the same writer by the same spirit tells us we must ‘first show piety at home, for that is good and acceptable before God.’

“But our present usage of the word ‘honest’ in relation to ‘conversation’ or conduct must not be forgotten, for it is certainly an element of spiritual beauty. One is at times grieved by the exhibition of a petty dishonesty that is humiliating to have to speak among ourselves. We should recognise that it is the same thing to rob a railway or tramway company by false declarations about luggage or tickets, or by taking advantage of a conductor’s oversight, as it is to steal from a friend. It is not far from a lie to prevaricate with ‘I do not know’ or ‘I am not sure’, in answer to inconvenient questions such as ‘Are you coming to the lecture to-night?’ when we really know that we do not intend to be present. It is in effect, if not in intention, as dishonest to keep lent books under the euphemistic term ‘borrowing’, as it is to run away with them from a street bookstall, but not so courageous. The sense of honour should be fine and delicate, sensitive to any approach of unworthiness, and this on the highest

ground, not only to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, but to keep the honour of the brotherhood unsullied because it is the honour of God.”¹

As Brother Ladson states and the apostle Peter stresses, the motive for creating this impression is not self-regarding. Its aim is the conversion of the unbelieving world through the example of the true believers in Christ. The best advertisement for the gospel is its adherents.

But how difficult it is to be the moral paragon in the face of trial. As Peter says of the gospel’s critics, “Wherein they speak against you as evil-doers” (RV). They were already subject to malicious gossip and slander.² Despite the urge to vehemently defend such evil speakings, even with barbed evil speakings of our own, the best answer is deeds not words (2:15). Peter expressly forbids “evil speaking” in a saint (2:1). Exemplary behaviour can have long and beneficial effects that are not immediately apparent.

The word for “behold” is “here present participle, not aorist, as covering a longer period of time than the actual good deeds, and including the observers’ memory of them and reflexion upon them” (Selwyn). There are three stages in the apostle’s scope. First, the good works are performed. Second, the Gentiles watch them and reflect upon them. Finally, as a result they glorify God “in the day of inspection” (Brother Thomas).

When is the day of visitation? Christ uses a similar term when describing the judgments that were to occur against Jerusalem in AD70 (Luke 19:44). Its association is therefore one of judgment and not of conversion. While AD70 was a day of visitation, the day of visitation is when “the Rainbow Angel or Perfect Man, is to be made manifest, and developed into being”³: “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of the Deity’ (Rom 2:5-6). It is a day in which He will separate the satanic goats from the sheep who have heard his voice, and done his Father’s will.”⁴

The instruction to believers is to be distinct from a world that will perish; not merely to survive but to convert others. Peter repeats this theme in 3:1 and 3:16. This is our challenge. It is by the quality of our daily living and behaviour that we must commend the saving truth of the gospel to those who still do not believe.

Towards Secular Authority

2:13-17

In 2:11-12 Peter provides a general appreciation of what should be the life of a believer. Believers were to abstain from fleshly lusts and conduct their lives in a way to stultify criticism. While this advice is very sound, he now presents specific applications to illustrate

¹ LADSON, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 63 (1926), p16

² See “THE SETTING OF THE EPISTLE - The Historical Setting” - page 13, for details of the slander against the ecclesia

³ THOMAS, *Eureka*, Vol 3B p188

⁴ THOMAS, *Eureka*, Vol 3B p65

it. What follows is a series of practical exhortations. He hones in on areas which were most relevant to his generation; beginning with their relationship with civil authorities.

2:13⁵-14

The lot of the true Christian, as established by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, is to submit to civil authority (Matt 17:27; 22:21). In fact, when this Christ-declared principle was ignored the truth was in tragic and rapid decline. Brother Carter, with his usual perspicacity, wrote, “When declension from the faith of the apostles set in, Christians began sometimes to oppose the authorities, sometimes to fight them, until in the days of Constantine the State became nominally Christian. But the true followers of Christ recognised that ‘Christendom’ was astray. Its doctrines were not in harmony with the Word of God, but its very existence as a religion of a state was a fulfilment of the prophecies of Christ’s last message. The state has never been truly Christian. Faithful Christians have never occupied positions of authority whether in pagan or Christian times. But to them in every age the command to be subject to rulers has applied.

“The command applies whether the rulers are good or bad. When the letter to the Romans was written Paul had always received favourable treatment from the Roman officials. But it deserves notice that in the later epistles, when the attitude of the authorities to the Christians had changed, the same commands are repeated”⁶ (1Tim 2:1-2; Titus 3:1-2; 1Pet 2:13-15).

Indeed, times were not easy and they would certainly become no easier. Peter was well aware of the future of the community he was writing to. Nero’s persecutions were but a few years away. Trajan the Emperor and Pliny, Governor of Bithynia, would persecute the brethren with increased severity. But still the command is to submit. Despite the circumstances that confront the believers they must be good and useful citizens of the country in which they are set.

We are to submit to every ordinance of man. Why? For the Lord’s sake. What does it mean, “For the Lord’s sake”? According to Selwyn, the Greek construction, of which “submit” is part, indicates that the submission required is an act of faith rather than a rule of conduct. Submission is deliberately chosen and voluntarily undertaken. Marshall literally translates it as, “because of the Lord.” In other words they were to be imitators of Christ. He had shown complete submission before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate. His disciples must do likewise. This is certainly the emphasis of 2:21-25 and inferred in 2:14.

Another explanation is that in order to commend Christ as Lord to others and to avoid bringing reproach on his name submission is enjoined. This is the point of 2:12 so 2:13 is a logical flow-on.

This submission is to the King, whose rule is unquestioned, and to governors who have a purpose for their authority. Before we examine the purpose let us consider the word “governor.”

⁵ See Appendix 2 for the reproduction of an article on 2:13 by Brother Turner, written when the English brotherhood was threatened by civil legislation, that was published in *The Christadelphian*, Vol 77 (1940), p323-325.

⁶ CARTER, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, p136-137

The only governors (*heegemon*) specifically mentioned in the New Testament are Pilate (Matt 27:2), Felix (Acts 23:24) and Festus (Acts 26:30). Pilate was hounded by a wild and noisy rabble to permit the crucifixion of the sinless Son of God. Yet Christ submitted. Felix after arriving at no legal reason to incarcerate Paul kept him imprisoned for over two years in order “to show the Jews a pleasure” (Acts 24:27). Yet we read of no objection being made by Paul. His reaction is submission. Festus also was prepared to send Paul to a certain death “willing to do the Jews a pleasure” and declared Paul to be mad. Paul, who had to do God’s work in Rome, was spared this injustice by appealing to Caesar’s judgment seat. There is little doubt that Paul, if decreed to return to Jerusalem, would have obeyed as unto the will of God.

The examples are there. Peter’s readers would not have known of Paul’s trials but were fully cognisant of the circumstances leading up to Christ’s death. Peter was himself a witness and he stresses the example of Christ in the pivotal section of his epistle (2:21-25).

Peter does not let the matter rest. He provides another reason for submission and, as he explains in 2:15, this reason is that it is “the will of God.” The idea Peter is promoting, a concept found throughout the New Testament, is that life is meant by God to be ordered and that the state is divinely appointed to provide and maintain that order. Although the state would appear to be organised selfishness the alternative is anarchy. Even in today’s corrupt state system the principle that vice be punished and virtue encouraged is promoted. Imagine the condition of our society without civil institutions like Police, Social Security, health services, law courts and prisons.

Our lot in this democratic age is to co-operate no matter how severe the state may be. We pay our taxes, not cheat the system. We obey the road rules. We heed local council ordinances. We do not defy those seemingly petty rules which we know the authorities will have extreme difficulty enforcing. But why? 2:15 supplies the answer.

2:15

The overriding factor for doing as required in 2:13-14 is that it is the will of God. What is the will of God? It is that we suffer instead of doing wrong (3:17). It is the opposite of the lusts of men (4:2) which are the will of the Gentiles (4:3). It is to keep one’s life in well-doing (4:19). In other words, the will of God is always good, always morally correct, never evil. And that is how the believer is to appear before the world.

Believers should be subject to the civil government and by their law-abiding behaviour avoid condemnation and win commendation of those in power. As Peter continues, such conduct “may put to silence (*phimoo*) the ignorance (*agnosia*) of foolish men (*aphron*).”

Phimoo literally means “to close the mouth with a muzzle, to muzzle” (Thayer) and therein we have two applications. Firstly it creates the picture of a critic being rendered speechless by exemplary conduct or incisive speech. Christ put the Sadducees to silence (*phimoo*) with his powerful reasonings from the Word of God (Matt 22:34). The lunatic (Mark 1:25) and the elements (Mark 4:39) were silenced by our Lord.

Secondly, *phimoo* can mean to prevent somebody from speaking against the truth. If one were to muzzle an ox to prevent it eating grain it would be done before the animal commenced work and not halfway through the process after it had eaten its full.

So a saint by his lifestyle can silence those who speak against God and prevent others who were contemplating doing so. The second application is the most desirable because it is better to prevent a donkey from braying than to stop it when it has brayed.

Peter labels the opponents of the gospel *agnosia* and *aphron*. *Agnosia* is a strong word (not the same as *agnoia* in 1:14) which denotes reprehensible ignorance. It refers to “ignorance as directly opposed to *gnosis*, which signifies knowledge as a result of observation and experience” (Vine). It suggests obstinate unwillingness to learn or accept the truth.

Aphron is indicative of those who are without reason, who are senseless in what they say about true religion. The two terms when combined connote unreasonable men. Nothing can convince them of the truth: “Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). The only thing that may silence them is law-abiding conduct and truthful speaking.

2:16

While the uncaring world is *agnosia* and *aphron*, Peter warns his readers that they do not abuse the liberty they possess. Believers should enjoy the freedom which is theirs in Christ but not use it for a cloak of maliciousness. What does this mean? How can freedom in Christ be used for a cloak of evil (*kakia* - see notes on 2:1)?

The believer may use an unjustifiable religious excuse to disobey a civil ordinance. Perhaps an individual could misuse current religious taxation clauses to gain illegal exemptions. How often can we refuse to join a trade union yet insist on our “rights” when we feel our boss is unreasonable?

But 2:16 goes a little further than that. The freedom that we have been granted is freedom from sin. Our past sins are forgiven, our on-going sins can be forgiven. That does not, in any way, mean we can continue in evil confident of inexhaustible grace. Peter, like Paul in Romans 6:1-2,18-22 and Galatians 5:13, is issuing a warning against using such freedom as a cloak for license. Such people, says Peter, are themselves “the servants of corruption” (2Pet 2:19).

In fact, when we consider the past few verses we note a number of paradoxes. In 2:16 we are free but as slaves of God. We are not subject to the domination of man. We are subject to God. Yet this subjection involves submission to rulers and powers. If we love God we can do as we like. But to do evil, to refuse authority, to display “malice and guile and hypocrisies and envies and evil speakings” (2:1) is to demonstrate that the love of God is not in us.

Our freedom is evident when of our own volition we choose to serve God. Our service is not because we have to. We want to. As 1Corinthians 7:23 says, “You have all been redeemed at infinite cost: do not become slaves to men” (Wey).

2:17

Peter concludes this sub-section with a series of mottoes for Christ-like living. This fourfold injunction is intrinsically well balanced and affords a fitting summary on true Christian citizenship.

“Honour all men”

In this first clause Peter lays down the obligation of the respect and courtesy due to human beings. Man being in God’s image is not without honour (Gen 9:6; Psa 8:4-5; Prov 14:31; Jas 3:8-10). Such was not the case in Peter’s time with the proliferation of slaves and a tyrannical autocrat in power. Even today the individual can be neglected in order to facilitate the economic necessities of the state. No, we are to place a value on every person and treat him or her as a human being.

“Love the brotherhood”

Whereas honour is due to all, love is to be extended by the believer to the brotherhood. We are not called upon to make the same sacrifices for those outside the brotherhood as we would for those within. *Agapao* (“love”) connotes far stronger emotions and associations than *timao* (“honour”). The dominant atmosphere within the ecclesia must be love (1:22; 3:8; 4:8; 5:14).

It is worth noting that the believer is being enjoined to love the brotherhood (*adelphotees* - only here and 5:9 in the New Testament) and not to love certain individuals. How easy it is to make sacrifices for those we like. How readily we can be part of a clique which not only has difficulty extending *agape* to others inside the ecclesia and outside our clique but to even permit them the respect and courtesy which is due all men, whether in the body of Christ or not.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa 133:1).

“Fear God”

Peter continues with what in all likelihood is a citation from Proverbs 24:21. The wise man also wrote, “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning (‘principal part’ AVmg) of knowledge.” Fear does not mean terror (see notes on 1:17); it means awe and reverence. Brother Crawford continues, “But it means more than that. Paul said, ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God’ (Heb 10:31). It means a right attitude to God and the practical expression of this attitude in a man’s day to day life. We must be committed to God’s purpose. This means serving, worshipping, obeying and loving Him (John 4:23,24; 1John 4:19). It also means turning from evil (Prov 3:7) and hating evil (Prov 8:13).”⁷

“For Yahweh Elohim is a sun and shield: Yahweh will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa 84:11).

“Honour the king”

⁷ CRAWFORD, *Proverbs*, p47

Peter's final injunction summarises 2:13. Peter repeats this specific instruction because he wanted the brethren to understand and remember it. Of all the four mottoes this one was the most likely to be disregarded. The king in question was none other than the iniquitous Nero who was soon to brutally persecute their brethren and sisters in Rome. They had to honour him. It is the teaching of the New Testament, including 2:14, that rulers are permitted to reign by God so as to preserve order among men, and that they must be respected, even if they are Neros.

What would we think of our rulers if they put our brethren to death in horrifying circumstances and attempted to destroy the ecclesia of God? Would we have honoured Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin or Ayatollah Khomeini if the ecclesia received the usual treatment they dispensed to religious minorities?

Towards Masters

2:18-20

Peter now provides a very specific and relevant example of what has just been mentioned. While slavery may mean little to a Christadelphian, the majority of Peter's readers most probably were slaves. Peter's specific example should not be neglected by today's audience. This portion contains principles which time has not changed as well as introducing the most relevant of all sections in this epistle. To understand the real meaning of what Peter is saying we need to appreciate something of the nature of slavery in the time of the early ecclesia. Barclay observes, "In the Roman Empire there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves. In very early times there had been few slaves in Rome; slavery began with Roman conquests, for slaves were originally mainly prisoners taken in war. By New Testament times, as we have said, slaves were counted by the million. It was by no means only menial tasks which were performed by slaves. Doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, secretaries, stewards were slaves. In fact, all the work of Rome was done by slaves. By this time the Roman attitude was that there was no point in being master of the world and doing one's own work. Let the slaves do that, and let the citizens live in pampered idleness. The supply of slaves would never go down.

"... It would be quite wrong to think that the lot of slaves was always wretched and unhappy, and that they were always treated with cruelty. Many slaves were loved and trusted members of the family; but one great inescapable fact dominated the whole situation. In Roman Law a slave was not a person; he was a thing; and he had absolutely no legal rights whatsoever. However well he might be treated, he remained a thing with nothing in the world to call his own, not even himself. For that reason there could be no such thing as justice where a slave was concerned."⁸

Into this scenario came the gospel with its message that every one who came to the true God was precious in His sight. Social barriers as a result of this teaching were broken down within the ecclesia. It would not have been impossible for a slave to be a spirit-endowed elder of the congregation that a freeborn master was but a member of. This was obviously a new and revolutionary situation. Therefore, Peter is compelled to urge slaves that the

⁸ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p249-250

freedom of the gospel does not negate their everyday role as slaves. A believing slave was not to take advantage of a believing master by shirking his work. Nor should the believing slave, who is a slave having acquired a new dignity, strive to rebel against an evil master. There was no place in Peter's flock for a lazy worker or a rebellious individual.

Instead the believer must be a better worker than anyone else. His faith should bring him under self-discipline and should make him more conscientious than anyone else.

2:18

Peter addresses this section to servants (*oiketees*). *Oiketees* means a "house-servant" (Vine) and is translated that way in Acts 10:7. It seems odd that Peter uses *oiketees* in preference to the more servile and oft used *doulos*. Trench considers *oiketees* the equivalent of *doulos* in this verse as far as the audience being addressed but the use of *oiketees* is quite significant. Peter is not thinking of these slaves as members of a social class but a household, even a family. The behaviour of such a servant has a direct effect on the life and spiritual welfare of the family he is enslaved to. By his example he can lead unbelievers to the truth and not degrade his freedom in being inefficient for a believing master, thus affecting his master's ability to treat him as he should.

While Peter uses a mitigating term for slaves he uses a strong word for "masters" (*despotees*) instead of *kurios* which is found in 3:6 ("lord"). Trench when comparing these two words says, "*Despotees* exercises a more unrestricted power and absolute dominion, confessing no such limitations or restraints" as *kurios*. Peter in discussing the spiritual function of a servant's lifestyle within his household does not in any way lessen the subservient position a slave must adopt to his master. The master has absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. In fact he uses the same expression to describe a believer's relationship to God (1:17) as that of a slave to his master. This could be extended to mean that out of reverence to God and His providential ordering of circumstances the servant obeys his master, regardless of what sort of individual his master is. Whatever way we look at it, it is a divine requirement.

His master could be good and gentle (*epi-ikees* - "considerate" NIV, NEB: i.e. "those who make reasonable allowances, and exact no more" Alford) or froward (*skolios* - "crooked" Thayer; Luke 3:5; Phil 2:15: "harsh, unjust" Selwyn). It does not matter. Brother Carter writes, "'Singleness of heart'; 'from the heart'; 'with goodwill'; these expressions define the motive with which men should work, whether in the first or the twentieth century. Masters may be bad; mass production today may make a man feel he is a cog in an organisation as soulless as a machine; the reward may be small. But the real Master is not unmindful of the service; neither is he unobservant of those who work as unto him and for him. His reward is sure, and amazingly generous. It is 'good' to those who render good service - so good in fact, that it is a gift and not something earned. There is encouragement here for the toiler; and inducement to continue to the weary"⁹ (Eph 6:5-8).

2:19-20

It is so much easier to be a faithful servant to the considerate master. Peter does not dwell on such but on those servants who have difficult even violent masters.

⁹ CARTER, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, p146

The masters portrayed in these verses are those who cause their servants to “endure grief” (*lupee*) and suffer “wrongfully” (*adikos*), and who buffet (*kolaphizo*) them. *Lupee* “signifies pain, of body or mind; it is used in the plural in 1Peter 2:19 only, RV, ‘griefs’” (Vine). *Adikos* means, “unjustly, undeservedly, without fault” (Thayer) and *kolaphizo* denotes, “to strike with the fist” (Thayer). All the terms illustrate that the lot of a slave with a froward master was characterised by unjust treatment and violence. As we said in our introduction to 2:18-20, the slave had no legal recourse for compensation. He was merely a chattel for his master’s use; not a human being.

Peter’s expressions are not selected purely for their meaning. *Adikos*, while unique in the New Testament to 2:19, has a strong Old Testament background in the Septuagint and is found predominantly in the major poetical books i.e. Job, Psalms and Proverbs. Job was an example of tremendous suffering. His life was in tatters with the destruction of his material possessions, the slaying of his children and the unprecedented indignity this once great man had to endure. The Psalms are not without similar examples. We read of David in the midst of his enemies declaring, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee” (Psa 25:21): “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living” (Psa 27:13). From Proverbs, the persecuted could take comfort from Yahweh’s declaration that he hates, “a tongue unjust (*adikos*) ... an unjust (*adikos*) witness” (Prov 6:17-19 LXX) as well as heeding the warning that such behaviour was not to be found in the believer (Prov 4:24; 10:31; 15:26; 17:15).

Kolaphizo is a highly significant word because there is no doubt Peter had the example of Christ in mind when he used it. In Matthew 26:67 we read that they did “spit in his face, and buffeted (*kolaphizo*) him; and others smote him with the palm of their hands” (see also Mark 14:65).

Peter says there is really no credit (*kleos* - “glory”; only here) in taking punishment manfully when one has done wrong. It is the patient, uncomplaining submission to unjust suffering, or suffering when one has done well, that is acceptable to God. Such action corresponds with the behaviour of Christ. Peter makes that abundantly clear in the following verses, while addressed to slaves, but applying to all saints; bond and free.

Remember Peter is stressing wrongful suffering. We do not deliberately provoke suffering by blatantly antagonising our fleshly masters. Such suffering is richly deserved. Self-glorifying martyrdom is not a divine principle. However, to suffer unjustly is “thankworthy” (*charis*) and “acceptable (*charis*) to God.” *Charis* is the normal word for “grace” (see notes 1:2) and in this context signifies “a gracious act pleasing to God” (Selwyn). Again Peter probably has his master in mind when using *charis* this way. In Luke 6:32-34 three times the question is asked, “What thank (*charis*) have ye?”, which we can paraphrase to mean, “In what sense are you doing a gracious deed when you are doing something which comes easily or even naturally?” Surely this is the theme of 2:19-20. Service to a benevolent master is easy. Willing service to a violent, froward master is close to impossible. A true disciple of Christ will follow Christ’s example and “for conscience toward God endure grief.”

“For it is a fine thing if a man endure the pain of undeserved suffering because God is in his thoughts” (NEB).

Christ Our Example

2:21-25

Herein lies the pivotal section of Peter's first epistle. Throughout the letter his emphasis is suffering, submission, obedience and love. How do we translate these divine principles in our life? These precepts are not the basis of an academic exercise. We do not sit for an annual examination and after passing progress to the next grade in our religion. No, they are provided to guide our conduct and form our habits in order to finally produce characters which will be approved in the day of Christ.

To assist us in making the difficult transference from the abstract to the concrete, examples are given to us throughout the pages of Scripture. It is these examples which embellish the principles to such a degree that we have the distinctive and voluminous result called the Holy Bible. The example of Christ is without precedent and parallel and demands our attention more than any other. We are required to copy him. Nobody suffered, submitted, obeyed and cared more than he did; particularly in those last few hours of his mortal life.

“Both Jews and Romans condemned and killed the just one and he did not resist them (Jas 5:6). With a pretence of justice Jesus was brought before Annas and Caiaphas; he was led before the whole Jewish Council. He was tried by Pilate, sent to Herod, and then taken back to Pilate who passed sentence. The laws under which he was tried had safeguards for the fair hearing of an accused man, and regulations for guidance of the judges that they should apply the law justly. But men fail; fail because influenced by feelings and emotions aroused by personal interests. Jesus faced his judges calmly and with quiet dignity. He knew what the issue of the hearing would be: he had prepared himself for the sequel. He looked his judges in the face; he was innocent, they were guilty. But Jesus looked beyond the men who condemned him. As the Psalmist had said of him: ‘I have set the Lord always before my face: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved’ (Psa 16:8). Peter witnessed the trial, he denied his Lord; Jesus looked also at him. Did Peter wonder how the Lord should so finely comport himself when falsely accused, when surrounded by wicked men wholly bent on his destruction? He understood later, and he gives the explanation in his first epistle.”¹⁰

Technically speaking, this critical sub-section is addressed to slaves. Most translations disagree with the AV and render the word “us” in 2:21 as “ye” or “your” e.g. “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (RSV). Also the commencement of 3:1: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection ...” is a direct link back to 2:18.

However, that does not mean the message is lacking in relevance to those who are not slaves. Peter is careful to include everybody, including himself, when he states in 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (RSV). While Peter is specifically dealing with a slave coping with an unjust master, the example he provides is not idiosyncratic to slaves. The example of Christ applies to every saint in every generation. We will consider 2:21-25 primarily as it applies to all believers.

¹⁰ CARTER, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 82 (1945), p19

2:21

Unjust suffering is a predicament to which all believers are called (*kaleo*). In 1:15-16 the saints are called to holiness, in imitation of God. In 2:9 they are called from darkness into his marvellous light. Now they are called to suffer. This calling is not without reward because Peter also states that they are called to suffer so as to receive a blessing (3:9) and unto eternal glory (5:10)

Why are the believers called to patient endurance when suffering unjustly? Because Christ suffered for us. Peter's answer is the perfect answer. Jesus was none other than the suffering servant. 2:21-25 contains many reminiscences from Isaiah 53; the supreme picture, which saw its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, of the suffering servant. He was without sin yet he was insulted, subjected to physical abuse and eventually put to death as though he were the worst of criminals. Throughout his ordeal he accepted all that happened to himself with implacable love and in doing so prepared the way to enable forgiveness of sins. He has left us an example that we should follow.

Christ had taught his disciples three things about suffering:-

- i) that he must suffer (Luke 24:25-27,44-47);
- ii) that his suffering would benefit others (Matt 20:28; 26:28); and
- iii) that all who follow him must be similarly prepared to suffer (Mark 8:34; 10:38,39).

Peter initially had difficulty coming to grips with his Lord's statements and attempted to prevent him from going to Jerusalem and suffering many things of the elders, chief priests and scribes (Matt 17:22-23). However, as we discussed earlier¹¹, Peter's spiritual maturity had advanced dramatically from those early heady days. In 2:21 he combines all of Christ's instructions concerning suffering.

First, "Christ also suffered." Suffering was divinely appointed for Christ and foretold by the prophets (1:10-12). Second, his suffering was not just for himself but also "for us", so as to secure the redemption of others (2:24). Third, he provided "an example" for all his followers to emulate.

Note that Christ suffered *for* us, not *instead of* us. He manifested the way of life that believers must copy. He established the standard. If he died instead of us then we should not suffer at all as Christ has done so as our substitute. No, the disciples of Christ are called to "consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:3 NIV).

Peter when declaring Christ's "leaving (*hupolimpana*) us an example (*hupogrammos*)" uses words which are found nowhere else in the New Testament nor are they to be found in the Septuagint. *Hupolimpana* means "leaving behind" rather than simply "leaving" (Selwyn). Christ has left behind an example. *Hupogrammos* has two meanings, either of them appropriate. It can mean an outline sketch which the learner had to fill in. It can also mean

¹¹ See section "The Writer of the Epistle," pp 15-16

the copyhead of copperplate handwriting in a writing exercise book which the child had to copy out on the lines below. Such a process, for the young child, is difficult, unnatural at first and imperfect. The child in order to become proficient must practise, practise, practise. The more the child develops his handwriting through constant exercise, the closer it will align to the copyhead. As with the child so with us. Christ has left behind an example. No longer does Christ have to suffer. He has achieved perfection through a life of suffering and has been glorified by God (Rom 6:9-10).

We should follow in his steps. The verb translated “ye should follow” (*epakoloutheo*) means “to follow close upon” (Thayer, Stibbs); that is to tread in Christ’s footsteps. Peter knew exactly what that entailed. At one stage he was quite naive as to what his Lord was doing when he asked, “Lord whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards” (John 13:36). Now he understood and he exhorts his readers to that end.

Unfortunately, we need to digress at this stage. One of the most disheartening happenings among the followers of Christ is when an essential doctrine is challenged by brethren who wrest Scriptures. The result is not only controversy and, at times, division within the brotherhood but that a majestic section of God’s word is avoided because of what it might be implied to say.

2:21 is used to prop up a faulty theory which propounds that evil in human beings is not inevitable nor is it impossible for sinful flesh to keep the law. It is asked by this theory’s adherents that if Jesus had a latent ability to overcome that was unique to him, how could he be an example that we should “follow his steps” (2:21-24)? In other words, it would seem that the admonition to follow closely in his steps is unjust if it is impossible for us to do so.

Brother Mansfield directly answers this question when he writes, “This is a crucial question. Obviously, in the questioner’s mind, we ought to be able to do what the Lord did, and hence render perfect obedience. Where is there a single example of this? In the history of the human race - apart from Christ? Obviously this fact of experience denies the validity of the theory.

“The answer to the question is revealed by the Lord’s statement: ‘Unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more’ (Luke 12:48). The Lord was given more than others, and of him was required a greater response. He developed the full potential of what was possible by him to please the Father, and that is the example set by him. We can do the same recognising that we lack the potential he had, and therefore necessarily falling short of his excellence. The Lord provided a sacrifice for the shortcomings of others; but had no sacrifice to provide forgiveness for himself. Though Son of God, and possessing abilities above those of any other human being (for he was of our nature), he still had to develop it, and rested heavily upon God to do so. We need to do the same thing recognising our limited capacity. We follow his steps as sheep do that of a shepherd, realising the greater status and ability of the shepherd. We ‘learn of him’, not only as to the source of strength, but as to what is required.

“We follow in his steps; we do not match his example. No one has done, throughout the six thousand years of history. Did not even Peter and Paul fall short? Did Moses, David or Daniel render perfect obedience? Of course not. Christ is the measure by which can be

ascertained our own shortcomings. When we are made conscious of these we are humbled to see the forgiveness of God and His strength to climb higher in the ladder of spiritual achievement. We will never reach the top until Christ returns. Paul set before himself the mark of the high calling in Christ, but he also expressed his limitations: ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend (in the future age) that which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’ (Phil 3:12-14).”¹²

2:22-23

The standard has been set and the command has gone forth. But how do we follow in the steps of the Lord? Do we strive for crucifixion or to go through a series of highly dubious court proceedings? If we are called upon to do so, yes! But most, if not all, of us are not called upon to do so. Peter provides specific illustrations which apply to all believers. All sin, all have spoken with guile, all are reviled, all suffer. Christ did no sin. Guile was not found in his mouth. He rose above his tormentors and committed himself to God. These are the areas we need to examine in ourselves. As we discussed in 2:21, it is impossible for us to perfectly emulate our master but we must, to the best of our ability, copy his attributes. Christ’s great work in achieving sinlessness enables God to rightly forgive the sins of those who genuinely follow in Christ’s steps. This is the point of 2:24.

The first specific of Christ’s example is that he did no sin. Sometimes it is felt that Christ was able to commit no sin because God made it easy for him; that it was impossible for Christ to sin. To believe such is to err. The Messiah had to be one who was capable of sinning but was able to conquer sin. He would not be a proper representative of sinful flesh if it was impossible for temptation to defeat him; that is if he had no latent urge to sin. Such was not the case. “Christ at birth inherited on the one hand the human urge to disobey God’s Law, and on the other the power to maintain a sinlessness to which his brethren can only hope in measure to attain after repeated failure, and with God’s help.”¹³ If Christ inherited a capacity for sinlessness that we do not have, where does that leave us?

Brother Barling instructs, “Yet, despite their weakness, God bids men be perfect as Himself (Matt 5:48). This is no paradox; for though every man is sinfully inclined by nature, and for that reason no one fails to offend, yet, when ‘strengthened with might by God’s spirit in the inner man’ (Eph 3:16), a person can conquer every weakness which past failures have made him aware. But his sufficiency is of God (2Cor 2:14; 3:5), and achievement is for him a conquest over specific weaknesses, not a state of innocence from which he need never depart. If perfection were immediately attainable by man, such provision for pardon would be the worst discouragement of effort, but since perfection is only attainable after repeated failure, the forgiveness of sins is the best inducement to renew and intensify effort.”¹⁴

Peter in recounting Christ’s sinlessness recalls his statement of 1:19 - “a lamb without blemish and without spot.” By contrast, Peter next recalls his teaching of 2:1. The believers

¹² MANSFIELD, *The Ecclesial Calendar*, Supplement to *Logos*, Issue 255 (September 1987), p20

¹³ BARLING, *Redemption in Christ Jesus*, p36, or *The Christadelphian*, Vol 83 (1946), p115

¹⁴ BARLING, *Redemption in Christ Jesus*, p34, or *The Christadelphian*, Vol 83 (1946), p114

were to have laid aside “all guile” (*dolos*). No *dolos* was found in Christ’s mouth. As Isaiah 53:9, surely the Old Testament chapter uppermost in Peter’s mind as he wrote this section, says, “Neither was any deceit in his mouth.” Christ’s speech was open and sincere at all times.

Sometimes in speaking what we think, in all sincerity, is the truth we heap abuse upon a person. We might be right and they might be wrong. We could very well be correcting a serious flaw in their behaviour or understanding. We may be defending the standards of the truth. But, we are wrong. If any man had the right to reply with crushing effectiveness, with speech that would belittle and destroy his opponents, it was Christ. But he did not. How easy it is to render railing for railing (3:9)! Even the great apostle Paul erred in this way (Acts 23:3-5). No, while we must be honest, forthright and strong in our stance for the truth, we should be so without abuse and with discretion. Such is the example of Jesus Christ and the instruction of Paul (1Cor 4:12-13)

Christ suffered but he did not invoke judgment upon his oppressors nor condemn them. Instead he uttered the remarkable words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). As Isaiah 53:7 records of the suffering servant, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth.”

What Christ did do was to commit “himself to him that judgeth righteously.” The word for “committed himself” (*paradidomi*) is not an unusual word as it is found some 121 times in the New Testament, but many of its usages are of some profundity. The word for “betray” used in reference to the betrayal of Christ by Judas is *paradidomi*. Jesus was delivered (*paradidomi*) to the Gentiles; betrayed to the chief priests and scribes (Matt 20:18-19), into the hands of sinners (Matt 26:45); delivered to Pontius Pilate (Matt 27:2); delivered for envy to be crucified (Matt 27:18,26). Finally, “He gave up (*paradidomi*) his spirit” (John 19:30 NKJV). In reality all of what he did was part of his committing himself to God.

Peter had earlier not understand when Jesus spoke of how he would suffer and die. He tried to stop his Lord and was chastised for his dangerous concern. Peter was also an uneasy witness to the final hours of his master’s life, even denying any association with him when questioned. Now, as he writes, everything is crystal clear to Peter. It was all God’s will and Jesus submitted. There lies the example. Christ submitted to the righteous Judge; the same Judge who in Isaiah 53:12 said of his suffering servant, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”

2:24

Why does Christ receive the blessings mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph? Because, as Isaiah 53:12 continues, and from which Peter cites in 2:24, “he poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Peter now provides a striking picture of the example of Christ. In 2:22 Christ was portrayed as innocent in a negative sense - he did no sin. In 2:23 we saw how he committed himself to God. 2:24 is more powerful. Christ did no sin and suffered, to save others. And his suffering involved horrendous physical affliction and a cruel public execution.

Peter’s description is spectacular and dramatic. He gives his testimony as an eyewitness to the most important event since the foundation of the world (1:20). This deed to save sinners was wrought by Christ “who his own self” Note the emphasis. Peter could have written, “Who bare our sins.” No, instead in using an expression most grammarians would scorn as a clumsy tautology we read, “Who his own self bare our sins.” Peter’s words are reminiscent of Hebrews 2:14: “he also himself likewise took part of the same.” Why this stress? The apostles wanted the ecclesia to understand that Christ identified with the nature of those he came to save. He was not a substitute. He was a representative of mortal man complete with mortal nature - a nature common to all and under sentence of death because of sin.¹⁵

In this nature he “bare our sins in his own body” (NKJV). Note how Peter has changed the reference from the second person to the first person plural (“our sins”) in order to include himself among the sinners whom Christ came to save.

In what sense did Christ bear our sins? Brother Roberts writes, “Christ bearing sins on or to the tree is a figure of speech. Literally, sins are acts of disobedience and cannot be carried anywhere. But because the ground of their forgiveness was Christ’s submission to the death of the cross, that death is figuratively considered as a bearing of them to or on that accursed instrument of torture and execution. In this obvious sense, we can understand God laying on him sins past, present and future of all His people.”¹⁶ It is by our association with Christ’s act we can have forgiveness of sins. Christ literally experienced crucifixion, we undergo it symbolically: “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Christ destroyed the body of sin by virtue of which others may obtain forgiveness of sins on complying with certain conditions - belief, baptism, faith.

In baptism “our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed” (Rom 6:6). Christ’s work has opened the way whereby all who wish to comply will have their sins destroyed as readily as Christ’s body was destroyed. Christ established the way to the Kingdom. Flesh must be put to death. The righteousness of God must be upheld. Sin had been condemned in Christ’s death on the cross and the righteousness of God has been declared and exhibited to all the world in the shedding of his blood.¹⁷ All who would be saved must be able to look at his cross and say, “The cross is the proper place for me, if I

¹⁵ CARTER, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, p81

¹⁶ ROBERTS, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 31 (1894), p67

¹⁷ ROBERTS, *The Christadelphian Instructor*, p20

wish to start again in newness of life.”¹⁸ Christ exhibited to mankind what is required of them. Those who associate with Christ can be forgiven for Christ’s sake (Eph 4:32; Col 1:14; 1John 2:12).

Brother Mansfield writes, “Christ’s perfect example, his complete sinlessness, emphasises their shortcomings and the extent and reality of active sin, and therefore makes more obvious the need for them to seek the forgiveness that will be granted all who approach God through him to that end (Rom 3:25).”¹⁹ And it means more to the follower of Christ than that. He is now dead to sins and alive to righteousness. The effect is one of striving to abandon sin, rather than a release from guilt. The believer’s life is redirected towards righteousness.

“Being dead to” (*apogenomenos* - only here in the New Testament) literally rendered is “to be away from” (Vine). It speaks not of being unable to sin, but of the believer’s attitude towards sin as a result of comprehending the example of Christ. Instead of being dictated to by the natural inclinations of the flesh, the saint lives unto righteousness. “Having died unto sins” (RV - note aorist tense) at baptism, the goal and motive of the new life a convert espouses is righteousness (Rom 6:11; Gal 2:20).

What glorious, balanced thoughts pervade this section! Christ died a gruesome death; he triumphed over sin. We died to sins at baptism; we live to righteousness.

But so that we do not gain an inflated view of our worth, Peter restates the example of Christ: “by whose stripes ye were healed.” He casts us back into that most humbling of Bible chapters as he cites from Isaiah 53:5.

Peter understood the example of Christ. He was an eyewitness to it. He saw the disfigurement of the one he knew was unworthy of any cruelty man would inflict him with. He understood Isaiah 53. He had already alluded to Christ when he was buffeted (2:20), tormented (2:21), reviled (2:23) and crucified (2:24). Now he refers to Christ’s scourging.

This is what Buss says about Christ’s scourging: “It was the custom amongst the Romans to scourge a condemned prisoner, and Jesus is delivered over to the soldiery for that purpose - another act of monstrous injustice as well as cruelty; for he had already been twice declared free of fault. This horrible punishment, preliminary to the cross, was inflicted with such barbarity that it was known as ‘the intermediate death’: and indeed the victim usually swooned during the process, and not infrequently died before he reached the cross. The stripes were laid on with the whip, and not with rods ... the scourge was furnished with leather thongs loaded sometimes with balls of lead, or with sharp-pointed spikes or pieces of bone, which mangled back and chest, and left the fainting victim a mass of wounds and bruises ... stripped to the waist, the hands tied, a body leaning forward, the condemned man was bound to a column, while the lashes were laid on by the executioner.

“Thus Pilate scourged a prisoner whom he himself three times pronounced to be innocent (John 18:38; 19:4,6). So did the innocent suffer for the guilty. ‘He was wounded for our

¹⁸ NORRIS, *The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ*, p34

¹⁹ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p124

transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed' (Isa 53:5)."²⁰

What an example! How far short of it we fall! By his stripes we are healed. What an irony. The one who effects the cure suffers so that the afflicted are healed. "Stripes" is used of leprosy in Psalm 38:5 ("wounds") and "healed" for the healing of a disease throughout the Old Testament. No man can cure a leper. Only God can. Remember Jehoram when asked to cure Naaman's leprosy bewailed, "Am I God to kill and make alive" (2King 5:7). But we see this unique individual, provided by God, with his stripes, through his sufferings, via his body beaten black and blue, that we may be healed of our leprosy.

It is not by our own righteousness that we are healed, even though we are to live unto righteousness. Christ bore our sins to the tree. By his stripes we are healed.

And Christ is our example. Look at what Christ has done for us. How do we regard and treat our brethren and sisters? What will we see when we look into Christ's face at the judgment seat; suffering, nakedness, hunger, anguish? Or will we gasp in disbelief at our Lord's precis of us, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee" (Matt 25:44)?

How should we treat our brethren and sisters? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt 25:40).

2:25

After reminding his readers of the indomitable example of Christ, he reminds them of their position before their conversion. Peter does this via a citation from Isaiah 53:6. They were once "wandering as sheep" (Marshall). The image is that of people roaming about, without a "shepherd", as opposed to having left the guidance of the "shepherd." The term is therefore applicable to Jewish and Gentile converts. But their activity in life had changed. They are now "turned" (Marshall, NEB) to the "shepherd."

According to Selwyn, the word translated "returned" (*epistrepho*) in the AV is best translated as "turn about" or "turn around." It is translated as "converted" and "turned" in many places in the New Testament - e.g. "how ye turned (*epistrepho*) to God from idols" (1Thess 1:9). They were not returning to their previous shepherd as the readers of this epistle had not had any shepherd (Mark 6:34).

What a sobering contrast this presents to Peter's lament in his second epistle where some did return, not to Christ but to wallowing in the mire of the world. In 2Pet 2:22 the washed sow and the disgorged dog return to their filth in those striking analogies of people who have known the way of righteousness but "turn (*epistrepho*) from the holy commandment" (2Pet 2:21). How grieved Peter must have been when he saw the world re-entangle those he had laboured so hard to save, and Christ had died for. But in 1Peter we read of Peter's delight at those who had turned to Christ, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Jesus took the title of shepherd to himself, when he called himself the good shepherd and by saying that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11-18). To Christ

²⁰ BUSS, *Roman Law and History in the New Testament*, p230-231

those who desired to know of God were like sheep waiting for a shepherd (Matt 9:36). Furthermore, the servants of Christ, particularly those who oversaw the welfare of the ecclesia, are given the privilege and responsibility of feeding and shepherding the flock of God (5:2; John 21:16).

Perhaps we do not fully appreciate the work of the shepherd in the Middle East. An English author, George Adam Smith, notes, “Judaea offers a good ground as there is in the East for observing the grandeur of the shepherd’s character. On the boundless Eastern pasture, so different from the narrow meadows and dyked hillsides with which we are familiar, the shepherd is indispensable. With us sheep are often left to themselves; I do not remember to have seen in the East a flock without a shepherd. In such a landscape as Judaea, where a day’s pasture is thinly scattered over an unfenced tract, covered with delusive paths, still frequented by wild beasts, and rolling into the desert, the man and his character are indispensable. On some high moor, across which at night hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff, and looking over his scattered sheep, everyone on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judaea sprang to the front in his people’s history; why they gave his name to their king, and made him the symbol of Providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice.”²¹

The shepherd’s task is one of care in its widest sense, including searching for the lost, gathering the sheep together, tending those that are sick, guarding them from wild beasts or other enemies, and leading them to good pasture. Such is “our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20).

He is also called the “Bishop” (*episkopos*). *Episkopos* simply means “overseer” (Vine; Acts 20:28) and, in this verse, is not a second title so much as a description of the function of a shepherd; that is to be an overseer, to exercise oversight or pastoral care over the flock. Peter’s statement implies, what was explicitly taught by Christ in John 10:16, that what unites the flock, previously scattered, is their allegiance to the one shepherd (see notes on 2:5). There is only one “chief Shepherd” (5:4) who is the overseer of the ecclesia and that is Christ himself, not some mortal man: Pope or self-appointed guru.

In concluding this segment we need to be reminded that it concerns Christ as our example. In the aspect of being the shepherd, Christ provides an example which can be so easily neglected. How readily we can disregard the necessities of others with the excuse that our concern is primarily, if not exclusively, that of our own family or immediate circle of acquaintances. We might say that our mission in life is to see our children baptised and after that, perhaps, we may permit others to benefit from our obvious, as they have been successful, talents. And what if somebody else strays from the flock or even appears disoriented within the flock. How easy it is to feel it is not our concern, that somebody else, usually the Arranging Brethren, will look after the situation. Such an attitude is absolutely foreign to the good shepherd. Instead of standing back with a pensive, “I knew it would happen”, or “Let’s make sure the rest are safe” attitude, the true shepherd urgently launches a rescue operation (see Luke 15:3-7).

As Brother Whittaker writes, “He is not content merely to go to the top of a nearby hill in order to scan the countryside. He doesn’t sound his pipes, and then shrug his shoulders if

²¹ SMITH, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p311

there is no response from a long way off. He 'goes after that which is lost, until he find it!' Here is resolution and persistence, a spirit that is unwilling to admit defeat."²²

The role of every person in the ecclesia is to care for the needs of others. Christ's example of love included him bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.

The Duty of Wives

3:1-6

Submission was, and still is, the primary duty of believers, particularly if such wish to win over others to the gospel. In Peter's time it was especially relevant as a submissive attitude would make it difficult for the meanest individual to condemn them. If suffering came as a result of unjust behaviour towards them, so be it.

Peter prescribes submission in a general way - "Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (2:13). And he does not think it needful to lay down any exceptions to this general rule. Instead he applies the rule to specific examples. The first and most troublesome in the fledgling ecclesia was the reaction of slaves to masters. If any area was open to outside criticism it was the sensitive issue of slaves. It affected everybody. The slightest whiff of rebellion by a believing slave would only heap contempt on this new religion. Peter provided the greatest example possible in emphasising the subservience required of a slave. The status quo was not meant to be challenged by a slave's newfound "freedom in Christ."

The second area of sensitivity was that of wives to husbands. Much has been said of the role of women in the ecclesia and 3:1-6 is oft-quoted, sometimes inappropriately. Before we dissect this section we need to consider the status of women in Peter's time as well as the exquisite construction of the section.

As with the slave, the unfolding of the gospel led to an overall elevation in social status for a woman. Sometimes the impression can be gained that women controlled Roman society; that most women led affluent, profligate and influential lives. This was not generally the case. Unique examples certainly exist but they reveal the exception and not the rule. Corinth was dominated by a religion which was female-dominated. Ephesus was the seat of Diana-worship. But even in these examples the emphasis was religion combined with prostitution. It was set up by men for the gratification of male sensual desires. We also have the example of the "devout and honourable women of the city" having sufficient influence to have Paul and Barnabas evicted from Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:50). Again these women did not represent the total female population. They were obviously from the upper social orders.

The everyday woman of Greek and Roman civilisation lived a demeaning life. As Barclay writes, "In every sphere of ancient civilisation, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was owned by her husband in exactly the same way as he owned his sheep and his goats; on no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her at any moment. For a wife to change her religion while her husband did not, was unthinkable. In Greek civilisation the duty of the woman was 'to remain indoors and to be obedient to her

²² WHITTAKER, *Reformation*, p25

husband'. It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little, and ask as little as possible. She had no kind of independent existence and no kind of mind of her own, and her husband could divorce her almost at caprice; so long as he returned her dowry. Under Roman law a woman had no rights. In law she remained a child. When she was under her father she was under the *patria potestas*, the father's power, which gave the father even the right of life and death over her; and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband."²³

The introduction of the gospel was certain to cause friction. Believing wives and unbelieving husbands was unprecedented in the pagan world. It is virtually impossible for us to comprehend what life must have been like for the wife who was brave enough to be baptised into Christ.

This is why Peter's advice to wives is six times as long as his advice to husbands. If a husband became a believer he would, whether rightly or wrongly, more than likely bring his wife into the ecclesia and there would be no trauma. The opposite situation was to produce severe dislocations and acute problems.

What was she to be in relationship to her husband? Submissive. Look at the fine structure of 3:1-6. An examination of the total passage reveals the thought and inspiration that went into Peter's writing. Peter had an uncanny ability to anticipate responses and deal with them before they were raised. His speech at Pentecost is a striking example of this phenomenon.

Firstly he instructs wives what they are to do: "be in subjection to your own husbands." The natural response to this, especially after mistakenly feeling that one's "freedom in Christ" had mitigated such submission is, "Why?" The rest of 3:1 provides the answer to that.

Now that they know what they are to do and why they should, the next question is, "How?" - how do they subject themselves to a husband who could be highly antagonistic towards the gospel and all that is associated with it? In 3:2-4, Peter tells them how in stressing pure conduct, reverence, meekness, quietness, and by counselling against extravagant outward appearance.

But Peter does not leave it there. What precedent is there in such an attitude? Is it only a new concept? No, Peter declares that holy women, who trusted in God, from old time, were subject to their husbands (3:5). And then should any dare demand, "Name one such woman of old", he does. Peter provides the example of Sarah in one of the most brilliant usages of Scripture one will ever observe (3:6).

So Peter has set up a beautiful yet simple framework to deal with this sensitive issue. He covers all necessary areas without any superfluous detail - What, Why, How, Who generally and Who specifically.

3:1-2

²³ BARCLAY, *Letters of James and Peter*, p258-259

As mentioned in the introductory comments, Peter continues his Code of Submission, commenced in 2:18, by application to wives. The word “likewise” indicates this link. We have already discussed the lot of wives in the ancient world, so what does Peter advise?

First of all we need to consider what he did not recommend. He did not advise the wife to leave her husband. The believing wife must remain with her husband, even if he is an unbelieving heathen. Peter does not instruct the wives to upbraid, nag or preach to their husbands. He does not suggest that they inform their husbands of their new religious freedom and insist on certain rights that such freedom brings.

The advice is simple: be a good wife, submit. Be “in subjection” (*hupotasso* - used also in 2:13,18) or yield to your husband’s control. Note it was to their “own husband” they had to submit. Peter’s teaching implies, as stressed elsewhere by Paul, the headship of the husband over his wife. The subordination enjoined is one of function as a wife within the sphere of the home. Every home, every family, if it is to be united and run smoothly must have a head. And that head is the husband.

Non-compliance with this principle would damage the family environment and, in the case of a religiously-mixed marriage, bring the truth into disrepute. This principle applies to all wives as intimated by the word “if”, but it is particularly important for a wife with an unbelieving husband. Or as Peter describes such husbands, those that “obey not the word” (*apitheo to logos*).

Apitheo is a strong word meaning to disobey and is probably intended to describe husbands who deliberately set themselves against the truth. Such a husband may be won over to accept the truth, so Peter suggests, by the silent witness of his wife’s conduct. As NKJV translates, “they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.”

Peter in striving to press the message uses a grammatical figure called Antanaclasis, whereby a word is used in two different senses in the same sentence: “That, if any obey not the word (*logos* - the gospel), they also may be won without a word (*logou* - speaking or talking).” Her gospel proclamation is via silent preaching. By the virtues of her life she may break down the barriers of hostility and prejudice, and win her husband for Christ.

Even in a household where husband and wife are one in Christ, the loveliness of the wife can soften the aggressive or wrathful husband. The wife who adopts a stance which supports her husband’s unChristlike behaviour is failing in her duty. To exacerbate a husband’s disgruntled outlook towards others in the ecclesia with well-timed, poignant comments or by supplying additional information that “justifies” her husband’s opinions is not only very damaging to him, but to herself, to the young minds taking it all in and, not the least, to the ecclesia.

Also the wife who dominates her husband is in danger of stifling his ability to perform effectively in ecclesial affairs as well as providing a poor example to her children and other sisters in the ecclesia (Titus 2:4-5).

How else can a wife convert her husband or win him over? 3:2 continues by stressing purity and reverence. The expression, “while they behold” translates an aorist participle. The sense is, “because they have seen.” “Behold” (*epoptuo* - only here and 2:12) means “to view

attentively” (Thayer). The life of a believing wife will be under constant and intense scrutiny from a husband who opposes the gospel. Every observation must be met with a life that is chaste and reverential.

Her life must be pure; based on chastity and fidelity. Her husband should be unable to substantiate any accusation of immorality. Remember that one of the major slanders against the early ecclesia was that its “love-feasts” were orgies of unbridled lust. An errant wife would give her husband cause to despise her and the brotherhood. She must be reverent. Her whole life is lived in the presence of God after the example of Christ. She must pay due respect to her husband, despite the difficulties she may have to live under.

As Brother Thomas writes, “Nor should their obedience be restricted to Christian husbands only. They should also obey them ‘without the word’; that is, those who have not submitted to it, in order that they may be won over to the faith when they behold the chaste and respectful behaviour of their wives, produced by a belief of the truth. Such are the statutory provisions enacted in the world’s constitution at the beginning, with respect to the position of women in the body social and political. Any attempt to alter the arrangement is rebellion against God, and the usurpation of the rights of men to whom God has subjected them. Their wisdom is to be quiet, and to make their influence felt by their excellent qualities. They will then rule in the hearts of their rulers, and so ameliorate their own subjection as to convert it into a desirable and sovereign obedience.”²⁴

3:3

The principle declared, Peter moves into specifics. 3:3 presents what the godly woman should avoid - extravagant external adornment. Why should external dress be such a concern? Several reasons are evident. Firstly, the implication of 3:3 is the labour bestowed on dress, which consumes much time. Secondly, it is not the way to attract a husband to the gospel; surely Peter’s main point. Thirdly, it was typical of the women of Peter’s day. As we saw in our introduction to 3:1-6, women in the ancient world had little, if any, part in public life and therefore nothing to interest them and little in which to pass the time. For that reason some ancient public notaries argued that women must be allowed their interest in dress and adornment. Undue interest in self-adornment was then, and still is, nothing other than a sign that the person who indulges in it has no greater and wider things to occupy the mind.

Peter speaks of “adorning” (*kosmos* - one of the words used for “world” throughout the New Testament) which signifies, “arrangement” or “order of things.” Therefore, Peter is referring to more than putting on pleasant apparel; it is the cultivation of an appearance designed to inappropriately impress men and to elevate oneself rather than reflect the sincerity and sobriety encouraged by faith. I suppose it is ironical that *kosmos* can be used for “adorning” and “world”, because, whether we like it or not, our clothing does reflect the fashions of the world in many respects. For example, the shortish skirts worn by sisters in the 1970s were anathema to a sister of the 1980s. The wide “picture” ties fancied by brethren in the 1970s were held in derision by brethren of the 1980s but enjoyed a return to favour in the 1990s. As the fashions return the ecclesia will almost inevitably respond.

²⁴ THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p123

Isn't it interesting that the three areas Peter addresses are hair, jewellery and clothing. Times do not seem to have changed all that dramatically.

Hair and its styling was a major preoccupation of the women of the Middle East. Great care was taken in dressing the hair and long hair was greatly prized. The custom of plaiting the hair was very ancient, possibly originating with the Egyptians. What is actually wrong with a woman braiding the hair? It does not seem that the final product causes the most concern, but the preoccupation with, the enormous amount of time spent in, and the reasons for ornamenting hair that were the problems.

One authority states, "In the daily use of cosmetics they bestowed the most astonishing pains in arranging their long hair; sometimes twisting it round on the crown of the head, where, and at the temples, by the aid of gum, which they knew as well as modern belles, they wrought it into a variety of elegant and fanciful devices - figures of coronets, harps, wreaths, diadems, emblems of public temples and conquered cities being formed by the mimic skills of the ancient friseur; or else, plaiting it into an incredible number of tresses, which hang down the back, and which, when necessary, were lengthened by ribbons so as to reach the ground, and were kept at full stretch by the weight of various wreaths of pearls and gold fastened at intervals down to the extremity."²⁵

"How dreadful!", we may remark, but how different is that to the sister who dutifully wears her hat to the Memorial Meeting but in a way to best display her hair. While we must be suitably presented so as to not discredit the gospel we must not be dedicated to the vain maintenance of our external appearance.

What else does Peter single out? The wearing of gold. Many brethren and sisters wear gold; rings, watches etc. Again Peter is implying more than wearing a ring. The word for "wearing" (*perithesis* - only found here in the New Testament) means "the act of putting around." It refers to the "adornment consisting of the golden ornaments wont to be placed around the head or the body" (Thayer); that is, an exaggerated use of jewellery. Perhaps such a problem rarely exists in the ecclesia today, whereas women throughout ancient history seemed infatuated with jewellery. Isaiah appears to satirise the numerous devices women would wear (Isa 3:18-28). His list almost sounds like an automotive spare parts catalogue with its bonnets, mufflers, tires, chains and so on.

But what was the objective of such excessive jewellery? Only those of wealth could wear an abundance of quality jewellery. While we may not pursue such extremes of adornment, we must be especially careful that we do not flaunt our wealth in other ways. Jewellery is designed to attract attention. We can receive the admiration and envy of our brethren in ways which are just as ostentatious.

Peter concludes his consideration of the external with a reference to flashy clothing. The word for "apparel" (*himation*) was used "especially of an outer cloak or mantle" (Vine); that is the garment designed predominantly for show. We have already mentioned fashion and how it affects the ecclesia. The point is that care must be exercised. Sisters are to dress neatly and in good taste as befitting sisters in Christ. In doing so they avoid extremes of fashion.

²⁵ FREEMAN, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p486

The three areas Peter counsels against must have been significant problems of his era as Paul lists the same three in 1Timothy 2:9 - hair, jewellery, clothing. Paul emphasises modesty, shamefacedness and sobriety, as well as providing the yardstick in 1Timothy 2:10: “which is proper for women professing godliness” (NKJV).

3:4

Peter continues from 3:3 by outlining the correct adornments of a woman professing godliness. The place for adorning is the hidden man of the heart. Who or what is the hidden man of the heart? Christ refers to the heart as the seat of good and evil deeds and words (Matt 12:34-36; 15:18-19). It has the power to destroy a person or deliver a person (1Cor 4:5). While our heart is hidden from view this is but a temporary arrangement as “there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested” (Mark 4:22). The judgment will reveal all.

Yet, in the true saint, the hidden man of the heart should be Christ himself (Eph 3:17). “Hidden” is the word *kruptos* from which we derive “crypt” or “vault.” We need to bury Christ deep within our hearts. He must be found at the very seat of affection. This would appear to be Peter’s connotation as he uses terms which equate to his master - not corruptible, meek, quiet, of great price. If we heed Peter’s advice, Christ, at the judgment, will look into our hearts and see himself. How much more precious that would be than any Babylonish garment or gloriously arrayed hair. The human personality is so much more important than the superficial display of externals.

Externals are temporal and corruptible. The inner man of Christlike disposition is incorruptible (*aphthartos*). How is this so? Because it is derived from the incorruptible word of God (1:23), is recorded in God’s book of remembrance (Mal 3:16) and leads to an incorruptible inheritance (1:4). Externals are not only temporary in their constitution, an obsession with them will ineluctably lead to shame, contempt and eternal death.

The recommended adornment is a “meek and quiet spirit” or “disposition” (Selwyn). What is the difference between “meek” and “quiet”? “Meekness” is an attribute that bears with serenity the disturbances caused by others. “Meekness is first a disposition towards God; an awe of Him which results in confident dependence on Him as righteous and faithful. But humility towards God has its effect in a forgiving and self-abnegating spirit towards men. That quality is shown above all in the example of Christ.”²⁶ “Quietness” is an attribute of character that does not cause disturbance.

The wife of an unbelieving tyrannical husband would display meekness in the way she submitted to her husband’s demands and by her co-operation. Quietness would mark her consistent attitude to her husband and life in general. She would show no sign of rebellion or resentment.

Such a disposition, in the sight of God, is “of great price” (*polutelees*). How different are God’s values from man’s. Man finds “an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard” *polutelees* (Mark 14:3) and elaborate clothing *polutelees* (1Tim 2:9). Not God. For “God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearance but Yahweh look at the heart” (1Sam 16:7 JB).

3:5-6

The jewels of 3:4 are those which adorned the holy women of old. The outstanding wives of Old Testament times are introduced as examples or parallels to inspire New Testament wives. Those women enjoyed a privileged status as members of God’s chosen people; they were

²⁶ SARGENT, The Teaching of the Master, p41

holy (*hagios* - see notes 1:15-16). They learnt to make the God of Israel their confidence and hope. They displayed outworked holiness in their behaviour. Their lives were adorned by those desirable characteristics of personal conduct, particularly in relation to their husbands; namely submission, active well-doing, and absence of panic and alarm.

Specifically, Sarah is singled out in 3:6 as one who demonstrated a wife's proper deference to Abraham, acknowledging him as her master.

Why isolate Sarah's example? Firstly, Peter was able to ingeniously call on scriptural confirmation of the validity of her example. Secondly, Sarah is a very special woman. Isaiah calls Sarah the mother of God's faithful people (Isa 51:2) and if believing wives are adorned with the same graces of modesty, humility and chastity they will be her daughters and within the family of the faithful people of God. This is Peter's intent in the expression, "whose daughters ye are."

In citing Sarah's example, Peter takes us back to the occasion when angels, on their way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, confirmed to the now very old Abraham that his aged wife Sarah would bear him a son (Gen 18:10). Sarah's reaction is well known; "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen 18:12). It seems so flippant, so artless, but Peter is not focussing on her attitude to the angels but to her husband. Many times we would have overlooked this significance were it not for Peter.

Sarah did not express her feelings out loud. She laughed within herself. Inspiration has preserved the very thoughts of Sarah; thoughts hidden to mortal observers but divinely revealed to us. In the silence of her heart she called Abraham, "Lord." If she had said it aloud, addressing her question to the distinguished guests present, it would have been expected or she may have done so to create an impression. She could have called Abraham all sorts of names in her heart but to style him as "lord" was a token of her genuine, sincere regard for her husband. She did not make a big display of her obedience. It was genuine and discreet.

Peter is pressing the point. Sarah's was an internal adorning. Her attitude towards her husband was her real ornament; a jewel that all believing wives should be wearing. Unlike other jewels, it is not set in gaudy show, it could be hidden from human eyes. But the jewel that pertains to the hidden man of the heart is open to God and precious in His sight.

Sarah's regard for her husband is selected by Peter for others to emulate. They are her children, her daughters "if you are doing good and are not afraid with any terror" (NKJV). They are not to submit out of terror. They submit because it is God's will (2:20; 4:19). Let wives in Christ do good in serenity of spirit, and calmly leave all else in God's hands (Prov 3:25-26). To do so is to follow, in a small but excellent way, the example of Christ.

The Duty of Husbands

3:7

Peter maintains the balance that is so typical of apostolic writings. Peter has laid down the duty of wives and now he goes on to lay down the duty of husbands. Marriage should be based on reciprocal duty and reciprocal obligation. Any marriage in which all the privileges are on one side and all the obligations are on the other side is bound to be an imperfect marriage with every chance of failure. It must be noted that the apostolic balance was a new concept in the ancient world. The comments that introduced to 3:1-6 outlined the woman's total lack of rights in the ancient world.²⁷

3:7

Following on from 3v6 in which Sarah is highlighted as the example for believing wives, we could infer that Sarah's love and respect was not the product of fear, but won by Abraham's loving attitude towards her. If Sarah is an example to wives so also, implicitly, is Abraham to husbands. As Brother Barling continues, "He and his wife - like all married Christian couples - were 'heirs together of the grace of life'. His prayers and Sarah's were not hindered by marital discord, but were eventually answered when Isaac was born."²⁸

Peter again commences a section with, "Likewise." This presents a slight problem. The "Likewise" of 3:1 linked back to 2:18 as the message concerning wives was identical to that for slaves: submit. Husbands are not in subjection to wives and 3:7 does not propound submission for husbands. Therefore the "Likewise" of 3:7 must attach itself to something else.

As we have already stated, one such link is back to Sarah of 3:6 and, by inference, to Abraham who is the example for husbands. Perhaps even more appropriate is the example of Christ. He submitted and he suffered and has left this example for all (2:21). But now he is the shepherd and overseer (2:25). Perhaps in that position he provides an example for husbands. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man" (1Cor 11:3). See the point? The way a husband treats his wife should resemble the way Christ treats his ecclesia. Christ is not condescending. Christ is not belligerent. Christ is not violent or abusive. He takes immeasurable care in nurturing and developing his flock. He watches, feeds, leads and forgives. He even gave his life to enable the salvation of those who are drawn to him.

We have the examples of Christ and Abraham, but what are the specifics of a husband's relationship with his wife? 3:7 literally translated sheds an interesting light on Peter's words: "Husbands likewise, dwelling together according to knowledge as with a weaker vessel the female, assigning honour as indeed co-heirs of the grace of life ..." (Marshall).

See the subtle difference from the AV and most other versions? Husbands are to dwell with wives protecting, guiding and helping as she is a weaker vessel. But she is deserving of honour and respect because her reward, if accepted at the judgment, is identical to that

²⁷ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p264

²⁸ BURLING, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 85 (1948) p4

received by faithful husbands. The role of the woman may be different to the man's when it comes to home life and ecclesial duty but her spiritual rights are identical. She has promise of the same reward. She is baptised into the same hope. She should be permitted, within her God-given role, access to the same opportunities of spiritual enhancement.

In other words, husbands must not treat their wives as second-class citizens because, in the eyes of God, she is capable of receiving equal blessing. It is true that she is the weaker vessel and is to abstain from platform duties and major decision making, but it is the husband's obligation to ensure that his wife is given ample opportunity to prepare herself for a place in the kingdom.

What does Peter mean by the expression, "weaker vessel"? The weakness, in "□comparison to man, is twofold. Firstly, woman is physically inferior. The husband dwells with his wife understanding that in many ways she is dependent upon his physical strength. This physical strength must not be used against his weaker partner as his behaviour towards her must be chivalrous. In the ancient world, chivalry was non-existent. As Barclay states, "It was, and still is, no uncommon sight in the East to see the man riding on a heavily laden donkey while the woman trudges by his side. It was Christianity which introduced chivalry into relationships between men and women."²⁹ The man should recognise the woman's more limited physical powers and give her corresponding consideration and protection.

She is also the weaker vessel due to her diminished status to that of man's. This is the case because as Paul indicates, "Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1Tim 2:13-14). From creation the man has some sort of responsibility or position over the woman. This is evidenced in that it was to Adam that God first turned even though Eve was the initial and chief offender. Also Adam was reprimanded for listening to the voice of his wife. He was meant to teach her. However, Eve's status after the fall was more subservient than before. Part of her punishment was that "he shall rule over thee" (Gen 3:16).

While the husband must have dominion, he must not disgrace this position of authority. The example of Christ is unimpeachable in every context. While superior to the ecclesia, he does not mock or belittle it. Instead of fierce reprisal for mistakes, his methods are the gentle rebuke so evident in his first advent and forgiveness for the repentant that continues even in our day.

Despite the weakness of the woman, she has the same spiritual rights. She is a fellow-heir of the grace of life. The transgression of Eve does not place a life sentence on the faithful sister. She will be made equal unto the angels and human gender distinctions will no longer dominate her life. The curse of Eden will be removed for ever.

Peter concludes this section with reference to prayer. A scripturally based and balanced household will create a spiritually harmonious household. Hard-heartedness in a husband caused by a lack of compassion or understanding not only upsets the delicate human relationship of marriage, but also the relationship with God expressed in prayer is subject to serious impediment (1John 4:20).

²⁹ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p265

Our relationship with God can never be right when our relationships with our fellow-men are wrong. This is the message Peter accentuates in the following section.

Principles of a Life in Christ

3:8-12

Back in 2:11 we commenced a section which we entitled, “The Pilgrim Life in Relation to Others.” The expression “Finally” (*to de telos* - now the end) draws us to the conclusion of this wonderful passage of Holy Writ. Peter closes with a crowning consideration. He moves away from specific ecclesial members and provides a general, summarised statement of Christlike character. 3:8-12 applies to every baptised individual. There is no exemption or exception. While husbands relax during 3:1-6, and freemen during 2:18-20, nobody can relax now.

3:8

What is presented in 3:8, as well as the next verse, is a beautiful summary of the ethical and spiritual qualities required of all members of the true ecclesia, particularly in their relations with one another and in their attitude to those, in the faith or not, who are hostile towards them.

This verse lists five desirable characteristics, each described by words which in all but one instance, are only found here in the New Testament.

“of one mind”

Homophron is only found here in the New Testament and not in the Septuagint. The expression is correctly translated in the AV and possesses the connotations of “minding the same things” (Stibbs), and “agreeing” (Vine). Brethren are required to have the same perspective. They should be united by a common interest and outlook. They should mind the things of God and thus imitate the mind of Christ (Phil 2:2,5).

It is sobering to note that Peter places ecclesial unity at the forefront of this general summation. How destructive to an ecclesia’s and an individual’s spiritual progress are disagreements between members or factions, especially when such are sourced in trifles light as air (e.g. personality clashes, petty squabbles, semantic nit-pickings). Brethren of Christ cannot live the life required by Christ unless they are at one with their fellow brethren and sisters. The mind of Christ must dominate each individual for the ideal ecclesial environment.

As Brother Mansfield continues, “When that is achieved, there will be found a glorious unity, with each member co-operating to the good of the other. Members will not become argumentative for the sake of argument, they will not be lifted up with pride, nor be concerned with personal aggrandisement, but will be concerned with the welfare of others,

‘rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep’ (Rom 12:15-17; 1Cor 12:25-26). Happy is the ecclesia whose members are moved by these considerations.”³⁰
“having compassion one of another”

Sympathees is only found here in the New Testament and nowhere in the Septuagint. The Greek is similar to the English, “sympathy”, and has the meaning of “suffering together”; that is having responsive fellow-feelings. It obviously flows on from the preceding characteristic. Those who are united by a common spiritual bond, should be sensitive to or moved by the same spiritual emotions.

A related word is used in Hebrews 4:15: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of (*sumpatheo*) our infirmities.” Christ has this great bond of sympathy with us because he had his own personal experience with human infirmity (Heb 2:10; 5:7-9). Yet he was without sin. If a sinless man is sympathetic to the weakness of sinful mortal saints, how willing we should be to step outside of selfish considerations and identify with the pains and sorrows of others. Sympathy comes to the heart when Christ reigns within the heart.

“love as brethren”

Philadelphos is only found here in the New Testament and not in the Septuagint. However, related words such as *philadelphia* and *phileo* are throughout the New Testament. The implication of *philadelphos* is that we love one another because we are now related as fellow-members of God’s family. The net of the gospel brings together people from varied backgrounds (e.g. race, status, temperament, taste). Brotherly love, or love based on the common unity of the gospel, will overcome such potentially divisive elements.

It must! The Scriptures are disarmingly definite. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another” (John 13:35). “We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1John 3:14-16 NKJV). “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also” (1John 4:21).

“pitiful”

Usplanknos is only found here and Ephesians 4:32 (“tenderhearted”). The word is best rendered as “compassionate” (Alford). Being pitiful or showing compassion is unfortunately equated, in today’s society, with being insipid. The harsh realities of life have caused many, and to some degree ourselves, to become hardened, if not immune, to the sufferings of others. Our sensitivity can be blunted by the graphic media portrayals of the world’s and society’s problems. Even tragedy in ecclesial circles can be comfortably passed off after a moment’s sorrow. Surely a sign of the times. Surely, this is not good enough.

³⁰ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p130

There must be a strong element of compassion running through every member of the brotherhood. Such an element is not a sign of weakness but an imitation of the very emotions displayed by Christ (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13). What is significant to note is that in all the instances where Christ feels compassion for an individual or a multitude he follows it with a relieving action. Perhaps this is how *usplanknos* varies from *sumpathees*. To be genuinely sympathetic is to share in the feelings of those who are under trial. Active compassion is the logical and correct progression, whereby we attempt to alleviate the afflicted one's suffering.

The classic example of sympathy without subsequent relieving compassion would have to be that of Job's friends. Their genuine sympathy was undoubtedly in evidence as these three great men of the East sat with the hideous looking Job for seven days in, what we would know as, the local rubbish dump (Job 2:11-13). But their subsequent dialogue with Job only exacerbated his agony to the point where he is compelled to declare, "Miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2).

"courteous"

Philophron is unique to this verse, but is possibly incorrect. Most other manuscripts have *tapeinophron* which, if it is correct, is also unique to 3:8. Nestle, Alford, CompB support *tapeinophron* which means "humble-minded." The alternative, *philophron* ("friendly"), seems to lack intensity in the context of this verse.

Humility is a distinctive biblical quality. It is the right disposition before God as we are weak, dependent and finite creatures. Christ had such a disposition throughout his mortal sojourn (Matt 11:29). It is this spirit which God looks for and rewards (Isa 66:2,5).

3:9

Peter now indicates the negative side of godly living; what not to do and how to act towards the unfriendly. The overriding principle is the example of Christ as the terms used in this verse appear to be directly drawn from the spoken word of Christ.

Firstly, there should be no retaliation - "Not rendering (*apodidomi*) evil for evil, or railing for railing." *Apodidomi* means "to give back in return, to render as due" (Stibbs). In other words, we should not treat others as they treat us. We should never respond with evil deeds or words in even the most difficult or justifiable circumstances. Not only is this the instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 5:38-39) but also the example he established (Isa 53:7). A similar injunction occurs in Romans 12:17 and 1Thessalonians 5:15.

How does one respond to unjust treatment? "But contrariwise blessing" or as Alford translates, sharpening the contrast, "nay rather on the contrary, blessing." Again Peter draws on the teaching of Christ (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:28 - "Bless them that curse you"). Rather than retaliate in kind, there should be a positive expression in word and deed of active goodwill. As Paul described his apostolic behaviour: "Being reviled, we bless" (1Cor 4:12). The word for "blessing" (*eulogeo* - from which we gain the English, "eulogy") includes the "ideas of speaking well of those who speak ill of us, showing them attentive kindness, i.e. bestowing blessings upon them, and praying God's blessing upon them" (Stibbs).

Peter continues by providing two very sound reasons why we should react as instructed. Firstly, we “were called to this” (NKJV) and secondly, we may benefit from such behaviour.

In his first reason, Peter sends us straight back to his comments in 2:21. 2:21 not only states that we are called to suffer (see notes 2:21) but that this calling is in imitation of the example of Christ. 2:21 places the emphasis on endurance of unjust treatment. 3:9 shifts the emphasis to the active response of good for evil. Christ endured horrendous suffering yet manifested positive virtues while under this extreme provocation. Observe his healing of Malchus (Luke 22:51), his request for the forgiveness of those who crucified him (Luke 23:34) and his care for his mother (John 19:27).

In following Christ’s example, by living in accordance with our calling, we shall enter into blessing, both now and in the future. Now we enter increasingly into the enjoyment of God’s blessings of forgiveness and goodwill if we learn to extend similar forgiveness and goodwill to others (Matt 6:12,14-15; Luke 6:38). However, the fullness of God’s abundant blessings will be granted after the resurrection (Luke 14:14). At that time there will be blessing, honour and glory to the Lamb (Rev 5:12-13) and all those privileged to be with him (Rev 7:12-17).

3:10-11

3:10-12 are directly quoted from Psalm 34:12-16. Peter is citing this Psalm with a particular purpose in mind, just as he had with the example of Sarah in 3:6. This Psalm, a Psalm of David, was written at a time when David was going through one of the most traumatic periods in his eventful life. King Saul was fanatically obsessed with the quest for the death of David. David was always but one step ahead of Saul and he despaired that he would survive. After fleeing to the sanctuary, if it could be called that, of Philistia, David responded to an extremely desperate predicament by feigning madness before Abimelech in order to escape danger. In writing this Psalm, after such an astonishing incident, David recognised, more than ever before, that only with Yahweh’s aid would he find a haven from Saul. The Psalm reinforces the axiom that Yahweh will ultimately save those who trust in Him. David’s personal experiences demonstrated this principle and he writes this Psalm, in an easy-to-remember acrostic format, so that its readers will learn to appreciate its message. Included in this Psalm are such beautiful passages as: “The angel of Yahweh encampeth around about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that Yahweh is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him ... Yahweh is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit ... Yahweh redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.” (Psa 34:7-8,18,22).

What a glorious Psalm! Peter says to his readers, “Do the same. Develop and exhibit the same attitude, the same conduct, when under pressure.” David learnt his lesson after making a dangerous mistake. He learnt the hard way. It need not be the same for us. We can learn from the experiences of David and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter establishes the groundrules for “he that will love life and see good days.” This is not referring to those who are having a good time. It is a reference to those “who desireth to love life and to see good days” (Alford). In other words, if you want to love life and see good days then do the following. This introductory phrase has a dual application. The first and most obvious is the kingdom age, when life will have its fulfilment and days will always be good.

The second application is to our mortal sojourn. If we strive to love (*agape*) life, we are desiring a life dedicated to God's service with its associated behavioural outcomes, particularly to our fellow-men. It is a life given over to lofty ideals, far higher than those which man normally aspires to. Peter's point is that if we want such a life then here are some groundrules to help us in our endeavour. If we want the kingdom we have to follow them.

3:10 dedicates the first groundrule to speech. We are to refrain from evil speaking. The implication of "refrain" is to abstain from something for which we have a natural tendency (Alford). Not only that, we are to speak no guile (*dolos* - see notes 2:1). By implication, we are to speak in all honesty; without deceit. Again we have this word *dolos*. In 2:1, the believers were to have laid aside "all guile" (*dolos*). No *dolos* was found in Christ's mouth (2:22). Peter has taken us back to the pivotal section of the epistle, 2:21-25: The Example of Christ. And what an example! As Isaiah 53:9 states, "neither was any deceit in his mouth." Christ's speech was open and sincere at all times. How effectively do we control our tongue?

3:11 provides two more groundrules for those who seek the kingdom. The first of the two, again with a positive and negative aspect, is "he must turn from evil and do good" (NIV). As with the first groundrule, the exhortation is to turn aside from that which comes naturally. How easy it would have been for David to slay Saul when he had him at his mercy in En-gedi (1Sam 24:4-7). But he didn't. How astute was Saul's reaction to this gracious act when he exclaimed to David, "Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (1Sam 24:17). What of Christ's example in relation to this groundrule? Peter sums it up in four words: "Who did no sin" (2:22).

What is also interesting is Peter's use of the word "good" (*agathos*). It is the same word found in 3:10. The lesson is simple. If you want to see good days then do good.

The final groundrule is to "seek peace and pursue it" (NIV). By inference we could say that it also states that we should flee from strife. "Peace" (*eirene*) takes us back to the introduction of the epistle. As we wrote in our comments on 1:2, peace equates with harmony. It is not merely absence of conflict. It refers to harmony restored between God and man through Christ. In the example of David, we see one who was constantly striving for harmony with God. Even in his youth he was a man after God's own heart. David wrote, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psa 119:97). There lies the example as to how we can go about striking up harmony with God and His son. As in the example of Christ, we must commit ourselves "to him that judgeth righteously" (2:23). Christ concentrated on His Father's word and will. He submitted to that will because God is always righteous.

The only way we can discern the will of God is to read His word.

3:12

Peter commenced this impressive section back in 2:11. In our journey through the section we noted how Peter supplies essential principles for godly living. In this final sub-section he exempts no-one from the requirement to live after Christ's pattern and uses the penultimate verses to outline groundrules which are applicable to all. He concludes the section with a tight, dichotomous summary of the outcomes for those who strive to impart those groundrules into their lives.

Yahweh's eyes are ever on the righteous. He does not forget them in that they will never be blotted out of the book of remembrance. He exercises active oversight and care over them. Not only is this a source of overwhelming comfort, it can be a source of great fear. We must always be aware that we live in the sight of God and we should work accordingly.

Yahweh also hears our prayers. He is alert to hear and heed our supplication or request; our confession of need. As Brother Mansfield writes, "In times of stress or difficulty, instant relief can be obtained by turning to God in prayer. Not that the trouble is necessarily removed, or the problem solved, but great comfort and help are derived in sharing trials with God. Strength will be obtained to surmount them, even though they may remain."³¹

On the other hand, He sees, and will show His judgment and punishment towards "them that do evil." God remembers their deeds and rewards them, as Psalm 34 continues where Peter left off, by cutting "off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Psa 34:16).

³¹ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p132

Christ's Suffering and Ours

1 Peter 3:13-22

This section is obviously connected to 3:12 and springs out of any alarm that may have been caused by Peter's allusion to those who do evil. The lifestyle that Peter has presented is, without a doubt, difficult, contrary to normal human conduct and potentially painful. Peter does not tell them that it will be easy but proceeds to reinforce his message by stressing righteous behaviour, restating the example of Christ and declaring the magnanimous reward available to them.

Suffering for Righteousness' Sake

3:13-17

Peter also attempts to soften the blow a little. While the persecution of Peter's readers was to increase, it would not be unbearable. If they persist in doing good, then the most important things in their life will not be harmed. If suffering does affect them, they should regard it not as their unhappy lot, but as an added privilege. It is certainly not an occasion for alarm, distress or departing from the gospel. Instead they should have Christ in their hearts and be ready to profess their hope. Under no circumstances should they deserve the suffering they receive. They should be so placed that the injustice of their sufferings, coupled with their consistent good conduct, may put their critics to shame.

3:13-14

Peter commences this section by saying, "Besides, who is it that will harm, damage you?" (Selwyn). If they live the way they should, their suffering should be small. And this correct lifestyle is to "be followers (*mimetees*) of that which is good." Many texts state that *mimetees* is actually *zelotes* (e.g. Nestle, Selwyn, CompB, Alford). Most translations prefer *zelotes* including Latin versions such as Douay and Knox. If *zelotes* is correct then the reading becomes far more intense. Instead of being imitators we should become, or have become, zealous devotees of or enthusiasts for good (Stibbs). *Zelotes* is used to describe Jewish fanaticism for the law (Acts 21:20 - a fanaticism Paul once shared: Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14), and the zeal of the Corinthians to acquire spiritual gifts (1Cor 14:12).

Our redemption from sin and death should make us passionate lovers of goodness (Titus 2:14). Just as the Zealots of Christ's day were fanatical patriots who were pledged to the liberation of their native land from the Roman oppressors, we should love goodness and hate evil with the same patriotic intensity. If we fall in love with goodness then the wrong things of life no longer hold a fascination and an attraction to us. Such zeal should have been with us from the moment we embraced Christ as our saviour. "If ye be" should possibly be "you have become" (Selwyn). The tense is aorist (Alford). If we do not have this zeal then we must singlemindedly develop it for our spiritual survival and eternal prospects.

In being devoted to good, we may not receive unjust treatment. Certainly magistrates, if they are doing their duty, exist for the commendation, not the persecution, of those who do well (2:14). God can also deliver the good as Peter's experience proved (Acts 12:11). But, it is

not possible to assert without reservation that followers of Christ, zealots for good, will be free from opposition and persecution. History does not permit such a conclusion. Indeed, Christ warned his disciples that they might be persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matt 5:10-12).

3:14 takes up the challenge of 3:13. Peter states, "But (*alla*) and if ye suffer" *Alla* is more emphatic than the normal word for "but." It "is used to mark opposition, interruption or transition" (Bullinger). The overriding mood is that Peter interrupts his positive expressions with a hypothetical case. While persecution was present it was not at a pitch whereby their spiritual welfare was endangered. Such a risk was unusual at this point in time. But what if this risk became common? What if they were being physically harmed despite their consistent good conduct? Does 3:13 express the ideal and not the reality?

The point of 3:13, when interpreted in the light of 3:14, is that the pathway to glory could very well be through a valley of suffering and submission to evil which develops characters well pleasing to God. Whatever happens cannot harm us vitally. Persecution, trials, infliction of wrong, scourgings, imprisonments, death, all contribute to our ultimate joy, which will be eternal, if we suffer according to the will of God.¹

There seems to be little doubt that in 3:14 Peter is recalling the words of Christ: "Blessed (*makarios*) are they which suffer for righteousness' sake" (Matt 5:10). The second half of the verse is a citation, of sorts, from Isaiah 8:12: "... neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid." Both citations are of great significance.

What better example did he have than Christ? "Happy" (*makarios*) is a special word. *Makarios* is one of the three Greek words which connote happiness but *makarios* speaks of a higher state than the other two words. It means to enjoy, or to prospectively enjoy, a special divine blessing or favour (Selwyn). Christ's blessings far outstripped the unbelievable sufferings he had to undergo. Even Peter rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41).

The context of Peter's citation from the Old Testament was also relevant to Peter's readers. The most evil king to sit on Judah's throne was regnant. Ahaz was an absolute infidel who cared nought for God's word. The Assyrians were posing an enormous threat to national and personal security. Everything was going awry. But God says to anybody who cared to listen, "Don't fear what others fear, fear God." Why? Because He is a sanctuary (Isa 8:14).

The context is strikingly similar to Peter's time. The Emperor in Rome was about to turn on the Christians of Rome. The Jews were a constant menace. Their neighbours were given over to pagan rituals. As the remnant in the days of Ahaz, the ecclesia of Peter's time, while not being viciously persecuted, were hemmed in on all sides. Pressure was present and likely to be exerted with a little more force. Nobody was going to escape scoffing of some kind, but for the true saint suffering cannot touch the things which matter most of all.

The following exhortation, a variation on Isaiah 8:13, suits the situations confronting all ecclesias in all times, but is especially relevant to the ecclesia of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in AD60.

¹ JARVIS, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 69 (1932) p24

3:15

Peter continues his citation from Isaiah 8 when he begins 3:15 with, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” However, most versions translate this phrase differently as the weight of both Greek and Latin texts is against the AV rendition. The altered, and most probably correct, sense is, “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (Marshall, NIV, Wey etc).

What does it mean to sanctify Christ as Lord? “Sanctify” (*hagiazō*) is derived from *hagios*, the common word for “holy” (see notes 1:15-16). *Hagiazō* means to “acknowledge as holy” (Selwyn), “to make, render or declare sacred or holy, consecrate” (Thayer). We acknowledge that Christ is holy or different because of what he achieved. The Christ we are called upon to consecrate as Lord, although guiltless, suffered for the salvation of mankind. The reverence and honour we give Christ is not merely a devotional love, but inspired by a correct understanding of his accomplishments. This allusion anticipates the lofty thoughts of 3:18.

Christ’s death and resurrection elevated him to a majestic status and opened the way for our redemption. He is Lord because God is manifested in him in glorious, immortal substance. He was given, by God, a name above every other (Phil 2:9). Without a doubt, this name is the Yahweh name. Paul is quoting from Isaiah 45:23-24 where the name to which every knee should bow (Phil 2:10) is the name of Yahweh. Jesus Christ is the extension of Yahweh Himself in the work of salvation (John 14:9; Heb 1:2). This is not to say that the Father is no longer supreme. Philippians 2:11 continues, “That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Brother Sargent in his comprehensive consideration of the opening petition of the Lord’s prayer: “Hallowed (*hagiazō*) be thy name” (Matt 6:9), concludes by writing, “When Christ is perfected by resurrection, the Name of the Father includes also the name of the Son in Whom He is manifested - a truth illustrated by a remarkable phrase in Peter’s first letter: ‘Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts’. Peter is adapting Isaiah 8:13, which he has quoted in the last words of the previous verse; and he boldly applies to the Messiah the words originally used of the Lord of Hosts. But his context also recalls the Sermon, and he may, by a double allusion, have the first petition of the prayer in mind as well.”²

This sanctification is to take place in our hearts. As Sarah, within herself, called Abraham “lord” (3:6), we as potentially the Bride of Christ must now, during our time of preparation, recognise, within ourselves, that Christ is Lord. We do this by heeding the word of his Father, living a life in accordance to his Father’s will, and by constant communication to the Father in prayer. In short, we follow the example of Christ. Just as a fledgling athlete studies and copies the techniques of great champions, we zealously pursue the conquering style of our champion, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter continues by giving us some insights as to what this entails. We must be ready to give an answer for our faith, possess a deportment which is characterised by meekness and fear, have a good conscience and display good conduct. In the context of Peter’s generation, notwithstanding its application to today’s generation, it was inevitable that the believers would be called upon to make a defence of their faith to a hostile and suspicious world. If

² SARGENT, *The Teaching of the Master*, p213

they had sanctified Christ in their hearts this would not present as a serious challenge; a challenge capable of dislodging them from the way of the gospel.

When this challenge came they had to be ready. They were not to invite trouble by antagonising those who could physically harm the ecclesia, but they had to be prepared for whatever they would be confronted by. “Ready” (*hetoimos*) is derived from the Greek noun *heteos* which means “fitness.” *Hetoimos* means to be “prepared” (Thayer, Vine) as opposed to the other Greek adjective for “ready” (*prothumos*) which means “predisposed, willing.” The difference is important. While we may be willing to give an answer, willingness can be easily embarrassed when we do not possess sufficient ability to give an answer. This ability is only derived from constant consideration of God’s word, and practise in sharing it with others. There is a immense gulf between an obese person who is keen to reach fitness and a formerly obese person who has actually achieved physical fitness through regular exercise and judicious food selection. Let us not only be willing. Better to be willing *and able*.

The answer must be one of “reason” (*logos*). Selwyn translates “reason” in 3:15 as “a rational account of.” The believer must be able to intelligently and temperately discuss his actions and beliefs. To do so we must know what we believe. We must have thought it out. We do not want to be in the same situation as many who call themselves Christians today; blissfully ignorant of their Church’s doctrines, dependent upon a college-trained minister, content in their misguided belief that God is with them. Not good enough. We must be ready always and to every man. A more general and comprehensive parameter could not be established. Not that we are to harangue people we have captured at bus shelters or on railway platforms. The exhortation is to be always ready. There is a time to speak and we should be on the alert for that appropriate time.

And when we do speak, it is to be “with meekness (*prautees* - see notes 3:4) and fear”(*phobos* - better rendered as “reverence” - see notes 1:17). JB translates the phrase as, “with courtesy and respect.” We speak without arrogance or self-assertion. As Barclay writes, “His defence must be given with gentleness. There are many people who state their beliefs with a kind of arrogant belligerence. Their attitude is that anyone who does not agree with them is either a fool or a knave. They seek to ram their beliefs down other people’s throats, and bludgeon others into accepting their beliefs ... His defence must be given with reverence. That is to say, any argument in which the Christian is involved must be carried on in a tone and in an atmosphere which God can hear with joy.”³ The spirit of presentation can sometimes have a more lasting affect than the reasonable account. Many can be carefully convinced of the truth, few are bullied or belittled into accepting it.

One wonders if Peter had his own denials of his Lord, crudely stated and motivated by terror, in mind when he wrote 3:15. Peter’s development is our encouragement to continue despite our shortcomings.

3:16-17

3:15 supplies two ways we can emulate Christ; being ready to speak up for the truth and doing so with courtesy and respect. 3:16 supplies two more; having a good conscience and good conduct.

³ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p273-274

This good conscience is such that it is able to shame those that falsely accuse us. The conscience itself shames nobody as it cannot literally be seen. But the conscience is manifested in the behaviour of its bearer. As NKJV translates 3:16, “having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evil doers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (see also Rom 2:15).

What does Peter mean by a “good conscience”? The implication is consistency. If the believer’s conscience is clear towards God he will be consistent in living a blameless life. A good conscience is the possession of a person who does things good and pleasing to God, even though they may not please man. The conscience of a saint also provides a powerful fortifying motive for the patient endurance of injustice. With it a saint can cope with evil speakings (*katalaleo* - see notes 2:1) and false accusations (*espeereazo* - only here and Matt 5:44; Luke 6:28 “despitefully use”). *Espeereazo* is a strong word meaning “to insult; to treat abusively, use disrespectfully; to revile” (Thayer). The weak conscience, the mind not set on things spiritual, will wilt under such an onslaught. “Their conscience being weak is defiled” (1Cor 8:7).

With the time we have remaining before Christ’s return we should purge our conscience “from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14) so that each of us may be able to declare at the judgment, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1), and our Lord agrees.

If we possess this good conscience our life will be characterised by good conduct. The persecutions brought upon us by man are, by definition, unjust. Peter concludes this passage by referring to the principles he so eloquently expressed in 2:20 and applies them to all the saints. He is also preparing the way for another consideration of the Christ-example. The point is simple. If a believer is compelled to suffer unjustly then he should consider it part of God’s will. And he is not alone. He is walking in the shadow of the sufferings of his Lord and Saviour. There is no glory in taking punishment manfully when one has done wrong. It is the patient, uncomplaining submission to unjust suffering, or suffering when one has done well, that is acceptable to God.

In reviewing 3:15-17 we observe that Peter has left no stone unturned. His outline of the faithful servant of Christ, the one who has sanctified Christ as Lord in his heart, encompasses speech, demeanour, thought and conduct.

Christ’s Suffering and its Consequences

3:18-22

To most Christian commentators this section is, at best, confusing. Barclay declares it “one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament.” Another member of the clergy is compelled to write that, “No one has yet given even a plausible exposition of these difficult passages.”⁴ The difficulty lies in the fact that Christian commentators are operating from an extremely faulty doctrinal base. To a Christadelphian, using the Bible as his guide, this section is not only intelligible but greatly uplifting.

⁴ Cited by WALKER, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 44 (1907) p452

Peter repeats key issues - Christ's suffering, Christ's work in the atonement, the transformation of those who were once disobedient. The pattern of Christ is again to the fore with great emphasis being placed on the glory he has been elevated to. Christ's suffering was but a prelude to an awe-inspiring triumph. If we follow his example we too will gain the victory.

3:18

Peter commences by reiterating an earlier statement; Christ suffered for sins. 2:24 shows clearly that the sins Christ took to the cross were not his own, as he was sinless, but ours. Christ, in doing so, is the supreme example of suffering and in 3:18 a specific aspect of that suffering is underlined - he suffered once (*hapax*). *Hapax* is used in similar context in Hebrews 9:26,28: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once (*hapax*) in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself ... So Christ was once (*hapax*) offered to bear the sins of many." Peter is referring to the final, all-conquering crucifixion of Christ, of which he was a witness.

Christ's death on the cross was the single act whereby in bearing the sins of many, those who associate with him can be saved from the permanent effect of sin.

How could one who did no sin suffer once for sins? Brother Roberts explains this apparent anomaly: "Christ could not righteously die if death had no dominion over him, and it could not have this dominion except through Adam, through Abraham, David, and his mother, for he had no sin of his own: it was the sin of others that was on him. It was his mission to take this away: how could he do this if it were not on him? 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all', a figure of speech, because God proposed to forgive us all for Christ's sake. Still, in this very real sense, our sins are considered as being laid on him, and the beginning was made by making him of the same death-inheriting nature from Eden. The whole process was conducted in harmony with God's plan of righteousness in every item. The plan required that the sufferer, while himself in the channel of death so far as nature was concerned, should himself not be a sinner, that he should be the Lamb of God, without spot, undefiled. Such an one could only be provided by what God did. God went out of His way to provide such a man. The man produced through Mary, by the Spirit of God, combined the two essential qualifications for a sacrifice; he was the very nature condemned in Eden, and therefore wrong was not done when he was impaled on the cross. 'It pleased God to bruise him'. Would it please the Lord to do iniquity? Nay. Therefore it was right. But how could it be right unless he were the very condemned stock?"⁵ The essential basics of the atonement are simple: God is always just; Jesus was obedient; both were motivated by a love of humanity and especially a love of righteousness; man can be saved only by association with Christ.

This association is unambiguously expressed in the ordinance of baptism; an ordinance which is compulsory for salvation. We are baptised into his death (Rom 6:3). We declare our inadequacies before God and zealously strive to do His will. But as we cannot gain, in similar fashion, the victory Christ gained, we depend on God for Christ's sake forgiving those who have declared allegiance to Christ. Therefore Christ suffered for our sins, that by his offering we might be saved. "The just for the unjust."

⁵ ROBERTS, *The Blood of Christ*, p17

Note how precise is Peter in his exposition of doctrinal matters. Christ is the just, we are the unjust. Christ was righteous in character, we are not. Christ had a capacity to maintain sinlessness which we do not have. Brother Roberts explains, “He was the same stuff (as mortal man) especially organised and specially used, having the same inherent qualities tending to temptation and death, but qualified to overcome both by the superior power derived from his paternity.”⁶ Indeed we are, in comparison to Christ, the unjust. In recognising our standing, rather than being discouraged, we should be encouraged to cleave to Christ because it is only through him that we can be brought close to God. Christ put to death the flesh and was quickened by the Spirit to achieve the reconciliation of the unjust to God via a process whereby God’s righteousness cannot be questioned.

Brother Roberts summarises the outcomes of Christ’s work when he states, “What is the result then? This: that God is pleased, the sin-and-death law of our race being carried out upon His hereditarily-mortal but righteous though law-cursed Son, to raise him for his righteousness sake; and then asks us to look to him to whom He has given the power of dealing with the rest of mankind. If we bow down to Him, and recognise our position, He is pleased, for Christ’s sake, to forgive us. He is not obliged to forgive us ... Christ’s birth and death is the arrangement of His own mercy. We cannot claim it; it is all of grace: not of works lest any man should boast.”⁷

What a splendidly compact verse of Scripture. After declaring in 3:17 that we must acquiesce if it is God’s will for us to suffer, Peter proclaims the suffering of Christ. A suffering:

- which was epitomised in his death on the cross,
- which was for the sins of others, who are, in the eyes of God and by comparison to Christ, the unjust,
- that such might be brought to God, having been separated from Him by sin.
- This death destroyed his flesh, an act which climaxed a life of putting the flesh down, and
- enabled him to be quickened by the Spirit at his resurrection and, by extension, completely transformed and clothed in the Spirit after his resurrection.
- The instruction, by inference, is that we pursue the example of Christ, always cognisant of our position before God, by dying to the flesh and living to the spirit.

3:19⁸

Every book of the Bible has at least one controversial verse. 3:19 is the verse of 1Peter which confounds most commentators. The interpretations of Christian commentators are difficult, convoluted and wrong. Two of the most common are:-

- i) Between his death and resurrection Christ in his human spirit went to preach to certain spirits in prison in the world of the dead, and

⁶ ROBERTS, *The Blood of Christ*, p27-28

⁷ ROBERTS, *The Slain Lamb*, p21

⁸ See Appendix 3 for a detailed dissertation of this wrested f., scripture. The article is reproduced from WALKER, *The Christadelphian Shield*, p22-25, which was republished in *The Christadelphian*, Vol 62 (1925) p4-6. See also ABEL, *Wrested Scriptures*, p113-114.

ii) Christ in the Holy Spirit preached through Noah to the people before the flood.

i) is outrageously heretical and completely out of conformity with the rest of the Bible. ii) when understood from the correct perspective has some elements of soundness about it. The reality is that 3:19 is neither difficult nor complicated. The context supplied by 3:18 and 3:20 dictates the meaning. The rest of Scripture tidies up any confusion. Rather than spend time determining what 3:19 does not mean, we will attempt to simply outline what it does mean.

Firstly, the “by which” of 3:19 takes us back to the word “Spirit” in 3:18. Christ taught by the Spirit. Christ’s life was impressively tied up with God’s Spirit. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20), anointed at his baptism by the Spirit of God (Matt 3:17), preached with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14) and was raised from the dead and quickened by the Spirit (3:18). And this same spirit was in the prophets (Neh 9:30). Peter provides a valuable insight into the work of the prophets by saying that the “Spirit of Christ” was in them (1:11). As we explained this Spirit was that which taught of Christ (see notes 1:11). Therefore, the first point which should be understood is that Christ by the Spirit preached to the spirits in prison. The second point, essential for an understanding of 3:20, is that the Spirit of God was also in the ancient prophets or preachers.

But who or what are the “spirits in prison”? The context again provides the clues. 3:20 says the spirits in prison were “sometime disobedient when once the longsuffering of God, waited in the days of Noah.” As Brother Roberts writes, “Now who were the disobedient in the days of Noah? The men who were contemporary with him. Hence ‘spirits’ and ‘men’ are in this case equivalent.”⁹ This equation is confirmed by John (1John 4:1-3) and Paul (1Tim 4:1).

But how were these men deemed to be in prison, especially during the time of Christ’s preaching on earth? Luke records the words of Christ when in the Synagogue at Nazareth he read from Isaiah 61:1-2: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). He followed that reading by dramatically affirming its fulfilment in himself: “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:20). In Christ’s generation he preached to the captives, to the spirits in prison. One might be physically wealthy, content, free, healthy in sight and body, but be spiritually poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind and bruised. There is no record of Christ preaching in a literal prison. No, Christ preached to those in bondage to sin and death (Eph 2:1).

The equation that “prison” can, depending on its context, refer to “death” or “the grave” is confirmed by Zechariah 9:11 and Isaiah 51:14 (see also Isa 42:6-7; Psa 68:18 for other examples of this imagery).

In paraphrasing and expanding 3:19 we can arrive at the following: “By which Spirit, in evidence with the ancients, Christ preached, in accordance to his Father’s will and in fulfilment of prophecy, to free the captives held in the prison house of mortality; sin, the grave, death. This preaching, as highlighted in the following two verses, was not unique to Christ; it was fulfilled and perfected by him.”

⁹ ROBERTS, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 29 (1892) p340

3:20

Peter now takes a substantial leap backwards in time from Christ to Noah. Peter's divergence from Christ to Noah maintains the message as there are striking parallels between the two dispensations. There was preaching in Noah's time and preaching in the apostle's time. Both spoke of the judgment to come. Both generations were disobedient. Yet there was salvation in both, by water in both.¹⁰

“Peter is not teaching that Christ preached to these unyielding spirits of Noah's day, but rather that Noah's days were typical of Christ's (see Luke 17:25-26), and even as people were unyielding at the time of the flood to the warning voice of Noah (2Pet 2:5), so they were also at the first advent of the Lord.”¹¹

By extension, Peter's day was not unlike Noah's. Some thirty years after Christ's death the world had deteriorated to greater depths. The earth was filled with violence. The Roman world was a sink of iniquity. Nero was a monster whose influence degraded the Empire and turned it against Christ's servants. Noah suffered and was delivered. Christ suffered and was glorified. Peter's readers would also suffer for the hope that was with them. Our generation is that of the last days. May it be that we can rise above the squalor of the world and be strengthened by the sufferings we receive so that we may be present in the kingdom with Christ, Noah and the faithful of Peter's day.

3:20 also focuses on the character of God during these times of appalling abjection and godlessness. Sometimes in being quick to note God's destructive powers of judgment we overlook the prelude to such judgments. In the days of Noah, God was longsuffering (*makrothumia*) and He waited (*apekdekomai*).

The idea of *makrothumia* is “patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others” (Lightfoot). While God cannot be harmed of men, He suffers when he observes the iniquity of man. Despite this suffering, God is prepared to be longsuffering. God's longsuffering patience is designed to give men time to repent. As Genesis 6:3 states, “And Yahweh said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also in flesh: yet his days shall be on hundred and twenty years.” This teaching can be found in 2Peter 3:5-9 as well as Acts 14:16; 17:30; Romans 2:4.

As well as suffering long, God “waited eagerly” (Selwyn) or “was holding forth a welcome in the days of Noah” (Roth). God is keen that sinners repent. But in the days of Noah, as it is in our days, flesh is generally indifferent to the appeal of God's grace. God gave them one hundred and twenty years of God's Spirit being uttered by Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Opportunity was afforded to three generations. In the early days of Christianity the manifestation of the Holy Spirit gifts was, at the most, three generations. Even within the first generation, doctrinal and moral error was present. By the third generation it was rampant and the ecclesia was exposed to vicious judgments from Roman authorities.

3:20 presents clear themes to be observed of Noah's day:

¹⁰ ROBERTS, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 29 (1892) p341

¹¹ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p137

- the iniquity of the people of Noah's day,
- the longsuffering of God,
- the conduct of Noah in his preaching (3:19) and preparation for divine judgment,
- Noah's actions condemned the world but saved his family, and
- Noah's work was not without benefit to himself.

“The example holds good for today, when another ‘end’ is in view. ‘As it was in the days of Noah’, is the familiar description of these last days, with a corresponding sequel of judgment. These things were written for our sakes that we might be forewarned and encouraged to hold fast.”¹²

3:21

Peter, after outlining that the world in its disobedience was destroyed because of its indifference to the preaching of the Spirit-driven Noah, declares that Noah, by heeding God's requirements, was saved along with his family. He then, by analogy, applies those events to his readers who all have hope of salvation, through the waters of baptism, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Brother Carter beautifully clarifies Peter's intent when he writes, “The ark was the means of safety to Noah and his house when others were destroyed. This suggests the reference to the means of salvation then available, again by water. Peter does not trace out any parallel with the ark; his interest is confined to the significance of baptism. ‘The like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us, or RV ‘which also after a true likeness doth now save us, even baptism’. Noah and his family reached salvation in that day of judgment by the water, out of which they emerged to begin a new world. So a baptised person begins a new life in union with the risen Lord. At the flood an immoral evil world was destroyed; it came to an end. So in a man's life at baptism he becomes dead to his past ways which were evil in God's sight.”¹³

The water of Noah's day and the water of baptism are both, at the same time, waters of death and life. Just as the flood destroyed that which God abhorred, baptism is an ordinance whereby the recipient acknowledges that flesh is evil and only worthy of death. Noah, a preacher of righteousness but still a sinner enslaved by mortality, was covered by the waters of heaven and by association with the ark emerged to new life. Baptism while acknowledging the rightness of God to put to death sinners also associates the emerging saint with the resurrected Christ and the forgiveness of sins; both at baptism and prospectively (Rom 6:3-6).

Baptism saves us by the resurrection of Christ. As 1:3 states, “God ... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (NKJV). Peter in 3:21 is again emphasising the outstanding significance of Christ's resurrection (see notes 1:3,21). Without it we are doomed to eternal death. Baptism would be a meaningless ritual. If there had been no resurrection there would have been no justification and no hope (Rom 4:25). Our faith would be vain and we would still be in our sins (1Cor 15:12-13). But Christ

¹² CARTER, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, p139. See also THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p120

¹³ CARTER, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 93 (1956) p302

did rise and our hope, via baptism, is with him. Because of Christ's resurrection and our association with it, we participate in a new God-given life (1:22-23).

Such a response manifests the inner sincerity of the baptised individual. This is Peter's point in the parenthetical section of the verse. Baptism is not the washing of a dirty body; it provides the means whereby we can develop a clear conscience before God.

The Greek word for "answer" (*eperoteema*) only appears here in the New Testament and is a source of some variance among lexicographers. Some have it meaning "enquiry" (Alford), "pledge" (Selwyn), "a demand or appeal" (Vine). Thayer provides a multiple-choice meaning of, "1. an enquiry, a question ... 2. a demand ... 3 ... earnest seeking i.e., a craving, an intense desire." Thus we have a number of concepts, all having advocates.

Brother Carter, in attempting to reconcile these variations, writes, "Even amidst the variety of explanations, it is clear that Peter is emphasising the inner sincerity of those seeking baptism. They are seeking God, questing for Him; the confession of their faith out of a good and honest heart is assurance that the baptism betokens a spiritual reformation; it is the expression of a good conscience and at the same time a seeking for the conscience void of offence that comes with the forgiveness of sins for which a person is baptised. The baptism is 'a pledge to God proceeding from a clear conscience' - the undertaking that union with a risen Lord means a walking in newness of life."¹⁴

Peter's message in the parenthetical section of 3:21 is straightforward. He is repudiating any inference that the efficacy of baptism lies in the cleansing power of the water. While the use of water is essential, the efficacy lies in its ritual significance as a death with Christ, whose blood makes the baptised person "perfect as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb 9:9).¹⁵ Christ's redeeming work, particularly his death, which we associate with in baptism, must affect the conscience of all sincere believers in him. Baptism to be effectual, requires belief of the gospel on the part of the subject of it combined with a genuine outworking of its principles in newness of life.

3:22

3:22 appears to be an afterthought. Peter in mentioning Jesus Christ, in the context of baptism and resurrection, is prompted to round off his thoughts with a seemingly unrelated description of Christ's present glorious status. 3:22 is not an afterthought nor is it inappropriate in its context. Peter's conclusion to this section completes the grand picture of Christ up to the time of writing. Christ's suffering, death, resurrection and mission have all been presented. This verse declares his ascension to and role in heaven.

He has ascended and is on the right hand of God. Christ derived great benefit from his redemptive work. Nobody redeemed by Christ's work will acquire as great an honour as he received. Because he did his Father's will; because he suffered, did no sin and died in the way his Father prescribed, God gave him a name above all others, made him greater than the angels and elevated him to His right hand. Christ "sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark

¹⁴ CARTER, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 93 (1956) p303

¹⁵ BARLING, *Redemption in Christ Jesus*, p43, or *The Christadelphian*, Vol 83 (1946) p147

16:19); an expression which means that his exultation is permanent and irrevocable. He is secure in the good pleasure of His Father and God.¹⁶

Concomitant with this exultation, “angels and authorities and powers” were made subject to him. The angels of heaven as well as the powers on earth are subject to him. Evidence is easily obtained to prove that even the angels became subservient to the glorified Christ. Christ sent an angel to John on Patmos (Rev 1:1). When Christ returns he will be accompanied by angels (Matt 25:31; Mark 8:38).

But who are these “authorities and powers”? “Authorities” (*exousia*) refer to those who exercise power. It would relate to those, such as magistrates, who have power of judicial decision. This would also include government officials and rulers. “Powers” (*dunamis*) has reference moreso to “inherent power” (Thayer). *Dunamis* in this context would probably refer to governments who rule by right. For example, Emperors ruling by hereditary right, and government systems that have been in place for many years. Peter is saying that both governments and their officials, the system and the people, are subject to Christ. Christ knows what they are doing. Nothing can happen to his true ecclesia without him permitting it.

Peter was fully aware of this phenomenon, because not only had he gained from Christ’s overshadowing care, Christ directly told the apostles, “All power (*exousia*) is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt 28:18).

Why is Peter compelled to inform his readers of this? Two reasons are feasible. Firstly, Christ has achieved insurmountable blessings because of his actions in fulfilling his Father’s will. While the saints will not receive identical blessings, nonetheless the pattern of Christ extends to the reward on offer. After declaring the inviolable necessity of baptism and the likelihood of suffering, Peter’s description of Christ’s blessings should serve as a powerful influence to good. There is a vital commonsense in developing a good conscience.

Secondly, but no less important, Peter is demonstrating that one of the rewards of association with Christ is the cessation of man’s dominion over the saints. No more persecution. Powers and authorities will be subject to them. In the interim they are subject “to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (1:13-14). This will be reversed in the kingdom age (Dan 7:25-27). Christ’s victory can be theirs and ours.

¹⁶ NORRIS, *The Gospel of Mark*, p175

Living to God

1 Peter 4:1-11

A Further Call to Holy Living

4:1-6

4:1-2

Peter follows his comments on the work and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ with a practical application of the doctrine of redemption. His opening expression: “Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh”, takes us back to 3:18. 3:18 not only states that Christ suffered for our sins but that he was “put to death in the flesh.” He did not endure pain only. He was actually put to death.

Peter picks up this powerful reality of Christ and challenges his readers to do likewise. If we are to benefit from Christ’s work then we are challenged to arm ourselves with the corresponding mind and to spend our lives in a way that is dramatically different to what we intended before the excellence of Christ impressed us.

3:18-22 speaks of Christ’s death, resurrection and glorification. It informs us that we can be associated with Christ through baptism; an ordinance which puts us within the ambit of salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But Peter wants us to be sure that we do not consider our salvation to be limited to baptism alone. Nobody can be initiated into Christ by baptism and share in the benefits it brings without recognising its application to his or her on-going conduct. Baptism puts to death the old man and its recipient commences in newness of life. His life is now devoted to doing God’s will. This requires a life that does not indulge the natural appetites and a life that strives to overwhelm personal sin.

Peter describes this renewed life in a militaristic way. We are instructed to “arm yourselves (*hoplizomai*) likewise with the same mind (*ennoia*).” *Hoplizomai* is only found here in the New Testament and it contains the idea “to put on as armour” (Selwyn). This armour is the *ennoia* of Christ. *Ennoia* (only here and Heb 4:12; “intents”) “denotes purpose, intention, design” (Vine). It is the intention of a true saint to put on as armour a life of suffering and death. What an astonishing paradox. Man naturally strives to avoid suffering and death. A soldier wears armour in order to live; to survive the battle unscathed. But the saint in living a life in Christ should find himself living a life of Christ. The principle of thought and feeling being expounded by Peter is that of voluntarily putting on a dying life as an armour. This then finds expression in the meek and courageous spirit of the spiritual life.

A spiritual coward flees from the fight of faith. Even in his dying life the believer is a soldier. And in being a soldier, the saint having “ceased from sin”, is the servant of a new master.

The expression “for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” has flummoxed most commentators. Again, as in 3:19, this is due to their lack of understanding of the truth of God’s message. However, after a superficial reading it does seem a bit perplexing. Does it

mean that those who associate with Christ cannot sin? Perhaps it only refers to Christ. While its original application is to Christ, the expression, as clarified by 4:2, is referring to those who associate with Christ in baptism. Its language is similar to that of the great picture of baptism as presented in Romans 6. Baptism is very much an act of sharing or association. We associate with Christ in his death and resurrection. Symbolically, we die to sin and rise to newness of life, to live to righteousness. Peter extends it by declaring this newness of life to be a suffering in the flesh and a ceasing from sin.

Do we literally cease from sinning? The word for “ceased” (*pauomai* - rendered “refrain” in 3:10) refers to a willing cessation, not a forced cessation (Vine). In other words, it is not automatic upon baptism to stop sinning for ever after. It is a decision on the part of a baptised person to serve a new master; his previous master being sin.

Brother Carter explains, in his exposition of Romans 6, “The likeness of Christ’s resurrection is the newness of life in which the baptised one then walks. In that new life he knows, not simply as a fact but as a matter of experimental knowledge, that his old self was crucified with Christ. ‘Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin’ (Rom 6:6). The body of sin is sin’s body - the body subject to the motions of sin. This was done away, rendered impotent, paralysed, in the sense that sin’s supremacy was broken, so that sin is no longer served as a master.

“.. All - heart, soul, mind and strength - are to be used in God’s service. ‘For sin shall not have dominion over you’. It shall not enthral. There may be temporary victories by sin, but its old supremacy is broken. The reason given seems strange. ‘For ye are not under the law, but under grace’. But Paul knew. Law, as the condition of man’s life, forged again the shackles of sin. But grace - that forgives, and a man who falls starts again, and in the issue grace triumphs where law would fail.”¹

But what does this breaking from the bondage of sin entail? 4:2 provides a most succinct answer. The baptised will conduct their lives not by sharing in the haphazard lusts which dominate the secular world, but under the guidance of a single principle, namely the will of God. It is interesting to note the contrast between the two phrases; “lusts of men” and “will of God.” One pronounces that there is only one God and His people are subject to His singular will. By contrast, sinners are distracted and pulled this way and that by the multiple lures which ensnare them. According to Selwyn, “lusts of men” is a wider term than “fleshly lusts” (2:11) and includes all forms of individual desire such as spring from covetousness, envy, pride, and even fashion. In other words, everything that is of the world and outside the will of God (1John 2:16).

If we are resolved, by our baptism, to live according to God, then His will is our law, His son’s life is our example and His word is our guide. For Peter’s readers, this concept is the stark antithesis of their pre-conversion outlook and activity, as described in 4:3-4.

4:3

Peter neatly divides the earthly life of the true Christian into “the time past”, before his conversion, and “the rest of his time in the flesh” (4:2), after his conversion. In the latter

¹ CARTER, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, p68-69

period he ought to be given over to the will of God. In those pre-conversion days life was sufficient “to have wrought (*katergazomai* - “to have worked out” Marshall) the will of the Gentiles.” They were content in the deliberate purpose of living a godless life. They were once godless men; they had little care for the future and were entirely wrapped up in satisfying immediate desires.

Peter next explicitly and bluntly describes, in the “catalogue” method so often used by New Testament writers (e.g. Luke 21:34; Gal 5:19-23), what their previous life included. These forms of licentious indulgence and improper religious practice were activities which Peter’s readers once walked in (*peporeumenos* - “walking as ye have done” Alford). Peter’s readers were obviously drawn from varied and, with some, very unsavoury backgrounds. Some of the forms of evil Peter associates with their times past were of such depravity that they would have been considered extreme even by liberal Roman standards. Peter’s timely reminder would have jolted his readers into reconsidering the great blessings a life in Christ has given them. They had left the world. By doing God’s will they increase the distance between themselves and the world. What were the sins that filled their catalogue of former activities?

“*lasciviousness*”

Aselgia - “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence “(Thayer), “open outrages against decency” (Stibbs). According to Lightfoot, a man “does not become *aselgia* until he shocks public decency.”²

“*lusts*”

Epithumia (see also 1:14; 2:11; 4:2) - “strong desire of any kind” (Vine). In this context, evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity.

“*excess of wine*”

Oinophlugia (only here in the New Testament) - “habitual drunkards” (Selwyn), “overflowings of wine, i.e. occasions of debauchery” (Stibbs). The word is used in the Septuagint in Deuteronomy 21:20. God’s punishment for such is death. Such was not tolerated in Israel. God does not change. The punishment may be delayed but, without repentance by the offender, the punishment is the same.

“*revellings*”

Komos - “a revel, carousal ... a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honour of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of their male and female friends; hence used generally of feasts and drinking-parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry” (Thayer). Are late night drinking-parties in evidence among Christadelphians, particularly Christadelphian young people, today?

“*banquetings*”

² Cited by SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, p211

Potos (only here in the New Testament) - “a drinking, carousing” (Thayer), “drinking-parties” (Selwyn, Stibbs). What must be evident to all is Peter’s condemnation of the drinking habits of the world. *oinophlugia*, *komos* and *potos* are all characterised by drinking, whether for religious, recreational or licentious purposes. True, Peter is censuring excessive drinking, but the Christadelphian must be very careful about consuming alcoholic beverages. That glass of wine at the family meal, the nip of Brandy to calm the nerves, the tot of whatever to help get to sleep can so easily represent the thin edge of the wedge. We cannot in any way underestimate the effect social, albeit in moderation, drinking can have on observant, especially young, minds. While drinking in moderation is not condemned, we must be extremely careful of the repercussions of the actions we take. Not only of the repercussions to others, but to ourselves.

“*abominable idolatries*”

Athemitos idololatria - *athemitos* means “contrary to law and justice, prohibited by law, illicit, criminal” (Thayer). It is only found elsewhere in Acts 10:28 where it is translated as “unlawful.” So vile are the abominations Peter is alluding to here, they are forbidden by Roman law and thus practised in secret and/or they are contrary to the human conscience and condemned as improper even by human judgment. An inference of *idololatria* is that such is done in the name of religion.

4:4

In times past those who later became the ecclesia of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia worked according to the will of the Gentiles (4:3). They were transformed by the gospel to the will of God (4:2). What did the Gentiles think of this? “They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild profligacy and they abuse you” (RSV).

How reliable is flesh in its vigorous reaction against genuine non-conformity. How pleased is the world when we condone their behaviour by sharing in it. How surprised and cynical is man when a previous confederate decides to commence a new, godly life. How easy it is for a man’s “best friends” to suddenly ridicule his newly adopted puritanism.

John, in a beautiful passage of Scripture, comforts with, “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you” (1John 3:13). It is a situation that is as old as Cain and Abel as Cain slew his brother, “Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1John 3:12).

Peter graphically summarises the will of the Gentiles as “excess (*anakusis*) of riot (*asotia*).” *Anakusis* means “an overflowing, a pouring out” (Thayer) and *asotia* has reference to “profligacy” (Alford, Selwyn) and is associated with drunkenness (Eph 5:18) and the “riotous” (*asotos*) living of the prodigal son (Luke 15:13). Their existence is an excess or overflowing flood of abandonment. Their substance is spent on profligate living. And they could not understand why anybody would have the temerity to turn his back on such a lifestyle! They were “astonished” (Alford) that the ecclesia did not run after, with the enthusiasm of people who run from all directions to see and amazing person or event (Mark 6:33; Acts 3:11), this effusion of prodigality.

Instead, the repentant flee this life to pursue the will of God. Suddenly, the open minds of the “broad-minded” close down. They are only “open-minded” if you are part of their lifestyle.

To reject their ways is to inflame and incur their bigotry. The people they once laughed, drank and socialised with are now the target of their evil speaking (*blasphemeo*).

Such has been the lot of the followers of truth throughout history (2Pet 2:2; Jude :10; Rev 2:9). Christ in his moment of greatest physical weakness was subject to the blasphemy, the evil speaking, of godless men (Matt 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:39); who were incited by those who had earlier charged the sinless Messiah with blasphemy (Matt 26:65). May we never consider that our sufferings are unprecedented. Christ has suffered in more ways and with greater intensity than any of his disciples.

4:5

This verse initially presents as a little confusing. Who is “Who”? Some link “who” with the “you” of 4:4, that is the brethren to whom Peter wrote. Others attach it to the “they” of 4:4, that is the godless people who blasphemed the ecclesia. Both answers could be correct.

If we say that Peter was referring to the brethren we have an easy and convenient solution. It would be as if Peter was exhorting them to cope with the pressure because they will be rewarded at the judgment. This concept is not out of place within this epistle as the same sentiment appears in verses such as 1:7,21; 2:21-22.

However, most modern translations believe 3:5 is in reference to the ecclesia’s mockers, for example:-

“They shall give an account to Him who is ready to judge ...” (NKJV)

“They will have to answer for it in front of the judge ...” (JB)

“But they will have to give account ...” (NIV).

Another factor which supports such an interpretation are the words of Christ in Matt 12:36, which Peter may be recalling: “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Christ says this in the context of “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (Matt 12:31).

The message is clear. They that mock the words and works of righteousness will suffer all the consequences of their unrighteousness. As Peter had declared earlier, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (3:12).

Does this indicate, therefore, that all will be judged? No, because universal resurrection is denied by the Scriptures (Isa 26:14; Jer 51:57; Dan 12:2). What it does indicate is that the gospel was preached to the vast majority of people in the areas of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Not only was a great work achieved by the original missionaries who went there, those who were converted were active preachers themselves. They had been drawn out of a dissolute society, they were zealous to draw out others. Many of those who mocked were, by their knowledge of the gospel, responsible to judgment; not unlike the Pharisees Christ addressed in Matthew 12.

There is no doubt that the judgment of this verse is *the* Judgment. According to Alford the word “judge” is in the aorist sense and means “once for all, decisively.” “Ready” means “to

hold in readiness” (CompB, see also Roth), which counters the inference of the AV that the judgment is immediate. Rather, Christ, on God’s behalf, will judge all who are responsible for judgment at the appointed time.

4:6

For “unto this end” (CompB), the judgment of 4:5, was the gospel preached unto them that are dead. Again we are confronted by a stark piece of scriptural imagery. The dead quite simply, are those who are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). The same imagery is contained in 3:19; “the spirits in prison.” The objective of such a preaching is to make known unto such the purpose of God in all its goodness, in the hope that those who hear may be led to repentance. That is to a completely changed mental attitude, moral disposition, and habits (Rom 2:4).³

The gospel was preached not only to change people’s lives but to enable them to be brought to judgment and to be granted entrance into immortality. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1Tim 1:15) and thereby, by inference, not to eternally condemn or destroy mankind.

Condemnation is the way of mankind, as Bullinger translates the remainder of the verse, “in order that, though they might be condemned according to the will of men as to the flesh, yet they might live according to the will of God, as to the spirit.”⁴ Peter has set up a poignant contrast in concluding this sub-section. Man, after the ways of flesh, will condemn those who strive to walk in the way of God. Christ will not. The critics of the truth are “in the flesh”, the servants of God are “in the spirit.”

To be “in the spirit” is to be “Elect ... through sanctification of the Spirit” (see notes 1:2). It means to be sanctified, consecrated to God through the power of the spirit-word (John 6:63; Eph 6:17; 1John 5:6).

Such a separation induces in the believer a lifestyle modelled on godly principles. As Paul exhorts, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). And what great blessings will be showered on those who do “live according to God in the spirit.”

The saints know that the judgment of God will come, and then the ridicule of vain men will be silenced forever. “I tell you this: there is not a thoughtless word that comes from man’s lips but they will have to account for it on the day of judgment. For out of your own mouth you will be acquitted; out of your own mouth you will be condemned” (Matt 12:36-37 NEB). The blasphemers of Peter’s flock were as wicked as the Pharisees who blasphemed the work of Christ in attributing it to Beelzebub. Before God a man stands or falls by his attitude to Jesus Christ.⁵

Being Good Stewards of God’s Grace

³ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p141

⁴ BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p60-61

⁵ WHITTAKER, *Studies in the Gospels*, p254

4:7-11

After supplying a catalogue of don't's, Peter in this paragraph provides us with a brief, positive indication of the practical demands of discipleship of Christ. This may be summarised as:-

- i) Life should be lived as if the consummation of all things is near;
- ii) Believers ought to be sober and given to prayer;
- iii) They ought to give priority to the fervent, active expression of *agape* love for each other and be willing to extend hospitality;
- iv) They should be faithful in exercising their God-given gifts for the benefit of others, whether in word or deed;
- v) And above all, they should seek in everything to glorify God.

4:7

4:7 commences with the puzzling statement, "But the end (*telos*) of all things is at hand." What does this mean? What is "the end" and how has it "drawn near" (CompB, Marshall)? The first question has a surfeit of answers ranging from AD70 (Mansfield) to perhaps, in their enthusiasm, the New Testament writers were mistaken. As much as I admire Brother Mansfield's work, I cannot equate "the end" in 4:7 with AD70. It is not supported by the context and seems inappropriate to a racially mixed group of brethren living in Asia Minor in AD60. The answer is provided within the confines of 1Peter.

Peter is speaking in the context of the judgment (4:5). His readers also knew that the goal of their calling lies beyond the present world-order and is "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1:5); that is the hope that they "might be found into praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1:7). For the accepted, "the end (*telos*)" of their faith constitutes the salvation of their souls (1:9).

If the end refers to the end of the times of the Gentiles, the judgment and the kingdom age, then how could it be said in AD60 that it was at hand? After all Christ has not yet returned and all the original readers of 1Peter are dead.

The point is that to all believers, in whatever time or situation, the return of Christ draws near. All saints have only a few years to do the Father's will. If they die, their next conscious moment corresponds with the Lord Jesus Christ back in the earth. For them, the time of the end is no longer at hand, it has arrived. For every one of us, the time is near. We cannot, with precision, determine the hour when we will appear before him so, therefore, all our newness of life must be lived as if in the shadow of his return. The same circumstances were true of Peter's flock as they are today. Peter was not about to inform his readers that Christ was not expected for, at least, another 1900 years. Not only would that dishearten them, it would encourage them to relax the principles and doctrines Peter had instilled in them. Instead they were to live as if Christ was at hand. It would only take a persecuting official to cut short the lives of some of their members. Every available moment is precious. For all of us Christ's return is very close. To use blunt language, Christ's return could be a road accident or heart attack away. We cannot afford to be complacent. The time to serve is now.

When we realise that Christ's return is near, we should commit ourselves to a special kind of life. Peter establishes the necessities of godly living. In 4:7 this begins as, "Be therefore of temperate mind (*sophroneo*) and be sober (*neepho*) unto prayers" (Alford).

Sophroneo means "to be of sound mind" (Thayer) and is translated by Selwyn, "keep your heads." Barclay goes so far as to suggest that it means "to preserve one's sanity." Involved in this preservation of one's sanity is self-control and a moderate estimate of one's self (Rom 12:3). A sane individual is not swept away by sudden flights of fancy. He is not given over to uncontrolled excitement, frenzy or conceit. He is not a victim of half-baked, insincere yet sensual religious worship. A disciple of Christ, regardless of whatever adversity may afflict him, keeps a cool head and a balanced mind. *Sophroneo* connotes a steadiness of mind rather than a sobriety of mind. *Neepho* deals with that aspect.

A saint must be *neepho*. *Neepho* is used three times in 1Peter (1:13; 4:7; 5:18) and, as we commented when considering 1:13, it denotes "abstinence from wine" but metaphorically comes to mean "sobriety generally in conduct, speech and judgment" (Selwyn). The disciple has to prevent any inebriating, either literal or spiritual, influence from fogging his mind. It does not mean that his life is to be steeped in gloominess. It does mean that his approach to life is serious and responsible, as he is aware of the possible consequences of his actions.

An alert, spiritual mind is a healthy basis for prayer to God. Prayer to God helps to develop an alert, spiritual mind. Prayer is not the way of the frivolous, yet the frivolous will be sobered if they participate in fervent prayer to the Father. Saints must be *neepho* in their prayers, or as the Jerusalem Bible puts it, "to pray better, keep a calm and sober mind." Even though the Jerusalem Bible has fiddled with the sentence construction, the principle holds true. Brother McClure writes, "Prayer is the closest link we have with God in this mortal age. It is a sharing in common and an expression of oneness of mind. Prayer is an acknowledgment of our belief in God, His existence, His promises, His redemption and His Kingdom. Prayer also acknowledges that we think of God as a person, real and more substantial than we ourselves. He has feelings, understanding and principles. Prayer declares more than anything else that we believe that God is true and that we exalt Him above all things. He is substantial - we are transient."⁶

4:8

An individual may very well follow the injunctions of 4:7 and be soberminded, sane and given to prayer, but in doing so become a prig, not unlike the Pharisees. In 4:8, Peter describes the overall demeanour that should prevail in the life of a saint.

Above all things, says Peter, have fervent (*ektenees*) love (*agape*). Love is the comprehensive virtue that should complete and crown all activity.

It is not some quality which is distinctive from other Christ-like attributes. It should be evident in all our dealings with others and in our relationship with God and His son. This love is to be fervent. In 1:22 Peter commends his readers for their *philadelphia* and encourages them to *agape* one another with a pure heart fervently (*ektenos* - see notes on 1:22). This is not to say that they did not possess any *agape* at all, rather that it had to be

⁶ McClure, *Maranatha*, Vol 1 (1988) p20

fervent. *Agape* will never be perfected in a mortal saint. But it must be developed throughout the life of a mortal saint.

Agape is manifested in many ways. For example, it is not developed at the expense of prayer; it is developed, among other things, by prayer. The only other place *ektenees* is used in the New Testament is in association with prayer in Acts 12:5: “Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing (*ektenees*) of the ecclesia unto God for him.” It would seem more than coincidental that Peter uses *ektenees* in 4:8 immediately after mentioning prayer in 4:7. Peter probably had the incident of Acts 12 in mind as a grand example of the love of an ecclesia for one of its members. Note how Peter says, “have fervent charity among yourselves”, not towards God, although that is essential, as he is pressing the importance of the extension of *agape* to our fellow man. “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth (*agapao*) God love (*agapao*) his brother also” (1John 4:21).

What does it mean when Peter says that love must be fervent (*ektenees*)? Barclay explains that, “*Ektenees* has two meanings ... It means outstretching in the sense of constant and consistent, never-failing. Our love must be the love that never fails. But *ektenees* means more than that. As C E B Cranfield reminds us it describes a horse at full gallop, and it denotes ‘the taut muscle of strenuous and sustained effort, as of an athlete’. Here is a fundamental Christian truth. Christian love is not an easy, sentimental reaction. It demands everything a man has got of mental and spiritual nerve and muscle and sinew. It means loving the unlovely and unlovable; it means loving in spite of insult and injury; it means loving when love is not returned, but is spurned.”⁷ Little wonder that such an intensity of love is one that is developed from strong spiritual stimuli over many years.

Peter continues this brief consideration of love with a citation from Proverbs 10:12: “for love will cover a multitude of sins” (NKJV). How does it do that? The context, as is usually the case, assists our understanding. Peter is talking of love among brethren, so the expression is alluding to the sins of others and how we deal with them. A true disciple of Christ does not telegraph the sins of others. “He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates the best of friends” (Prov 17:9 NKJV). How true is that! As Proverbs 10:12 states in its entirety, “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.” The follower of Christ is ready to forgive again and again. He does not take glee in recounting the offences of others. “Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men’s sins, but delights in the truth” (1Cor 13:5-6 NEB).

Does that mean we should automatically disregard the offences of others, irrespective of their impact on the spiritual well-being of others? By no means. “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jas 5:20). See the point. Our love may be manifest in the difficult and, on occasion, unpleasant task of turning a sinner from his error. In doing so, not only do we save the offender from eternal death, we can deliver our own life (Ezek 3:17-21).

Only those who forgive others may expect to continue to enjoy God’s forgiveness (Matt 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26).

4:9

⁷ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p299

Another of the ways in which love may find actual practical expression is in showing hospitality, and doing so without complaint.

Hospitality (*philoxenos* - from *philoxenia* “love of strangers” Vine) was absolutely essential for the survival of the early ecclesia. The work of the early apostles and preachers was dependent upon the generous hospitality of the local Christian communities. They required a place to stay and the only acceptable domicile was the home of a brother. Public accommodation was notoriously expensive, filthy and immoral. The early missionaries would not have met with the success they did without the private hospitality of brethren and sisters (Acts 10:6; 21:16).

Additional to this was the use of private homes in default of an ecclesial hall (Rom 16:5; 1Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phile :2). According to Barclay it was some two hundred years before an ecclesial hall, by then a “Church building”, was utilised, so the brethren were compelled to use the larger rooms of private homes. Without this service the ecclesia would have had great difficulty meeting for communal worship.

Therefore, in the early ecclesia, hospitality was essential for the spread of the gospel and for communal worship; for the benefit of the world without and the ecclesia within.⁸

However, such hospitality must sometimes have been burdensome, hence the words “without grudging” (*anu gongusmos*). *Gongusmos* is better rendered “murmuring” (as it is in John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Phil 2:14) or “muttering”, and is applied to “secret displeasure, not openly avowed” (Thayer). One could imagine how just when it was considered time to go to bed there is a knock on the door and it is a travelling preacher looking for a place to sleep. Some may have wholeheartedly welcomed the visitor, others may have welcomed him while inwardly grumbling. The apostolic edict is to extend hospitality without unseemly, inner murmurings. Paul takes the principle even further when he writes, “Do all things without murmurings (*gongusmos*) or disputings” (Phil 2:14).

So far we have examined 4:9 in the environment of the first-century ecclesia. What does it mean to us? The lessons must be obvious. The hospitality of times past was essential for the spread of the gospel and the strengthening of the ecclesia. The same applies today. We must show hospitality to all those in the ecclesia, even those who are initially strangers to us, and to those outside of the flock who are seekers of truth.

How hospitable are we to the interested friends that attend our meetings? Many a prospect has been lost through the cool treatment they have received. Do we find that we only associate with a small number in the ecclesia? And are they the ones we invite into our homes and vice versa? Would we ever find ourselves in the ludicrous position where most outside of our clique are unacceptable to us and we are mortified if our daughter announces her undying affection for the son of an unacceptable family, despite his obvious spiritual qualities?

Peter’s advice is to not grumble privately, even if we are inconvenienced. Yet how easy it is to do that, even when the inconvenience is only a creation of our imagination.

⁸ See also Romans 12:13; 1Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2 for other New Testament uses of *philoxenos* and *philoxenia*

The commission of all brethren and sisters is to spread the gospel and to strengthen the ecclesia. Hospitality plays a critical role in both processes. We should do all in our power to live up to our calling.

4:10

When life is governed by the grace of God, there should be no room for grumbling, but only for graciousness. God's grace takes many forms and the saints are its stewards, dispensing its several gifts as each has received them.

Everybody has received *karisma* ("a gift" Alford, Marshall etc - there is no definite article in the Greek). And as Lightfoot writes, "The term *karisma* though sometimes applied especially to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit (such as tongues etc.), is not so confined. It includes all spiritual graces and endowments. The greatest *karisma* of all the Apostle declares elsewhere to be eternal life (Rom 6:23)."⁹

In our generation, with its absence of Holy Spirit gifts, our gifts may be in the form of God-given intellect or talents. It could be the ability to organise ecclesial activities, to speak, to minister to the needs of others, to reveal the intricacies of the Bible. Whatever it may be, the gift or gifts we have are for the benefit of the whole ecclesia. What is also clear is that no particular gift should be elevated above another, or declared unique; it is part of the whole. All members of the community of Christ's disciples are interdependent. As others may need our special talents, we need the talents of others. Nobody should be a Christadelphian guru or hermit. In being so, our enjoyment of the truth and our full appreciation of its applications are stifled. They that fear Yahweh communicate often one to another. God takes pleasure in such activity (Mal 3:16).

The disciple dispenses his gift as a good steward (*oikonomos*). *Oikonomos* is used by the Lord Jesus Christ in a response to a question asked by Peter. Christ initially answers Peter's question with the question, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward (*oikonomos*)?" (Luke 12:42). Jesus continues by providing some maxims for faithful discipleship. The true disciple will be active when his Lord returns (Luke 12:43). The faithless will cause great disharmony in the household (Luke 12:45) and will be severely punished. Why? Because they knew what was required of them and chose to flout it (Luke 12:47). Christ concludes his answer to Peter's question with the powerful principle, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

Peter takes hold of these principles, initially addressed to him by Christ, and gives them a general application. No disciple is exempt from this application. God expects us to use the gifts He has so graciously given us.

Perhaps this could lead to self-aggrandisement. Maybe we could glory in our special skills, lording it over the flock. To do so is to misunderstand the point of *oikonomos* - the steward.

"In the ancient world the steward was very important. He himself might be a slave, but his master's goods were in his hands. There were two main kinds of stewards, the *dispensator*,

⁹ LIGHTFOOT, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, p148-149

the dispenser, who was responsible for all the domestic arrangements of the household, and who laid in and divided out the household supplies; and the *vilicus*, the bailiff, who was in charge of his master's estates, and who acted as landlord to his master's tenant. The steward knew well that nothing of the things over which he had control belonged to him; they all belonged to his master. In his administration of them his one duty was to consult his master's interests, and in everything he did he was answerable to his master."¹⁰

The disciple of Christ, no matter how talented, must be under the conviction that everything he possesses belongs to God. He is to be a good steward of the manifold graces of God. He is answerable, in the way he uses the gifts he has, to God. He must strive to use them in the service and interests of the ecclesia. What are some of these special talents? The following verse identifies two of the most prominent in the ecclesia, both then and now.

4:11

Peter now focuses his attention on the two great activities of the ecclesia; preaching and practical service.

The first - "If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles (*logion*) of God." Selwyn translates the latter part, "a spokesman of God's holy words." When we look back at 4:10, we see how the gift of eloquence is, as all special talents, a gift of God. This gift must not be abused. It is part of the manifold grace of God. The speaker is not to be a purveyor of his own notions, or the propagandist of unscriptural, man-made theories. He is to be a transmitter of the Scriptures of truth; the words of God. The preacher must not be setting forth his own competence or importance, but regard himself as acting from resources which are not his own.

This was the principle which governed the teaching of Christ (John 7:16-18), who solemnly observed, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory."

Are you a speaker? If you are, ensure that you follow the example of Christ. How readily can the work of the platform be abused. How easy it is to use the platform for the "indirect", yet so obviously direct, assault on an individual or group represented in the ecclesia. Issues which should be dealt with on a face-to-face basis (see notes 4:8) must not be exploited by the "parliamentary privilege" of the platform. The use of the platform to promote personal crotchets or to gain an advantage over another is to engage in a work that is barren; unproductive of fruitfulness to God. As Brother Tennant writes, "He is an exhorter and should strengthen the ecclesia. True he will sometimes sound a clarion call, a warning in times of danger, but he will not pronounce judgment on members of the ecclesia. There is another who shall do that."¹¹

Further, Peter says, "If any man minister (*diakoneo*), let him do it as of the ability (*iskus*) which God giveth (*koreegeo*)." *Diakoneo* is used generally of all the ecclesial ministrations or specifically of the administrations of alms and attendance to bodily needs. According to Thayer, *diakoneo*, in the context of 4:11, means to take care of the poor and the sick. In

¹⁰ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p303

¹¹ TENNANT, *Ye Servants of the Lord*, p47

providing this service, the minister does so in humble dependence upon God. God bestows the “strength” (*iskus*).

Koreegeo was a word used in ancient times signifying the supply of means to furnish a chorus for public performances (Alford). In this verse it carries the sense “to equip”, “to furnish for the public good” (Stibbs). The minister in being aware of the origin of his ability will be preserved from pride. The inculcation of this spirit of dependence upon God should inspire humility in mind and vigour of service.

Speaking and ministering, in fact everything performed in the service of the truth, are done “in order that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (Marshall). The objective of teaching is not to promote the qualities of the orator, but to bring men closer to the word of God. The service of the faithful minister is not to enhance his standing in the community, but to turn people’s thoughts to God.

Brother Mansfield says, “This statement sums up the doctrine of God manifestation. When a person uses the natural ability that he possesses to the glory of the Father, he reflects God in action. Humble acts of generosity and good can accomplish this (Matt 5:46-48); the knowledge of God’s love in Christ can induce it (Eph 3:17-19); the disciplining of the lusts of the flesh will reveal it (1Cor 6:20; 10:31); imitating Christ will manifest it (John 17:22; 13:31).”¹²

“To him be the glory and power for ever and ever” (NIV). To whom is this doxology ascribed? Is it to God or His Son? Most commentators assign it to Christ. An examination of the construction of the verse as well as the use of the word *doxa* (“praise”) throughout 1Peter would present the same conclusion. *Doxa* is used of Christ (1:11,21; 4:13), and of the saints at Christ’s return (1:7; 5:1,4). The term “for ever and ever” is literally translated as “unto the ages of the ages” (Alford, Roth, Marshall) and, when considered in the light of *doxa* in 1Peter, could be attributed to the reign of Christ on earth. Christ is already in glories, but this will be openly manifested on the earth with the kingdom age. He will have glory and strength (*kratos* - “manifested power” Vine). Although all praise and dominion is God’s, Christ is the object of His manifestation and thus entitled to *doxa* and *kratos*.

Peter concludes this section with “Amen” - so let it be. It is more than just a conclusion. It is a heartfelt, apostolic endorsement of all that has gone before. It is as if Peter wants his readers to pause and meditate on the power and implications of the words that preface “Amen.” If they fully comprehended what Peter has written thus far, they will be able to more adequately deal with the fiery trial that will soon confront them; a fiery trial Peter warns them of in the next verse.

¹² MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p143

The Fiery Trial and How to Bear It

1 Peter 4:12-5:11

As Partakers of Christ's Sufferings

4:12-19

The "Amen" of the previous verse coupled with the affectionate "Beloved" that introduces this section seems to indicate that Peter wrote 1:1-4:11 with the objective to prepare his readers for the news that commences at 4:12. Much has been written by Peter of submission, suffering, well-doing, Christ's example, godly living and the great privileges and glory they have in responding to God's call the way they did. They are a special people who must live a special way. They are different. They are holy. And because of their non-conformity with the carnal ways of man, combined with their evident growth in numbers, they underwent a certain degree of persecution. This persecution, while unpleasant, was not overly severe. In fact, after reading verses like 2:14 and 3:13, it would appear that life was bearable.

This was soon to change. The trial that would come upon them would be of an intensity they had never previously experienced. For Gentile brethren this would come as an unprecedented shock. While Jews would have to be the most persecuted people of all time, Gentiles do not count persecution as part of their heritage.

Peter has laid the foundations for the sombre message that fills this segment. He now takes hold of all those earlier concepts and attaches them in a very real way to the problems that would soon assail the ecclesia; problems that threatened to comminute the ecclesia.

4:12

Before Peter announces the fiery trial that will cloud the ecclesia, he gently reminds them of his feelings towards them. They are his "Beloved" (*agapeetos*); a term which he also used in 2:11. Peter knows their history and their future. It is as if with quiet resignation to their fate he expresses his love for them.

He instructs them to "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial (*purosis*) which is to try (*pirasmos* - see notes 1:6,7) you." According to most translations this sentence should be rendered in the present tense, as if they were, at that time, under going extreme persecution. However, I believe that the AV and NKJV are more likely to be correct. The rest of the epistle does not support the opinion that they were undergoing present, severe trial. The epistle's construction would indicate that 4:12 is introducing a different trial to all that went before. The word *purosis* denotes "a burning" and is only found elsewhere in Revelation 18:9,18 where it is used to describe the desolation of the Roman system. The conflagration that will destroy Rome and her harlot system is no mild rebuke. It signals the end of that system. The *purosis* that assaults the ecclesia is severe enough, if the ecclesia is unprepared, to pulverise it.

What is this trial? To be relevant, it has to occur within the lifetime of the recipients of 1Peter. Nero's persecutions, the first emperor-driven persecution of believers, would seem to

be the most appropriate. At the very least, Nero's persecution was the starting point for government-endorsed persecution. However, we need to keep in mind that Nero did not directly persecute the brethren of Asia Minor. Nero's cruelties only occurred in the district of Rome. But what he did do was indirectly, by his example, approve the persecution of Christian communities. Local governors could now, if they chose to do so, act unrestrained.

Also within the lifetime of many of Peter's readers was the persecution instigated by Domitian (AD 90-96). This persecution was capricious, sporadic and centred in Rome and Asia Minor. Disciples were persecuted for refusal to offer incense to the genius of the emperor. John's exile to Patmos (Rev 1:9) was during the reign of Domitian.¹

Whatever persecution is being referred to, and we cannot discount local, unrecorded pogroms that may have sprung out of the gross cruelties actuated by Nero nor can we restrict *purosis* to a single specific persecution, Peter instructs his readers to "think it not strange (*xenizo*)." *Xenizo* means "to surprise or astonish by the strangeness or novelty of a thing" (Thayer). As we mentioned earlier, Gentile believers would have been particularly unaccustomed to religious persecution. They would have possibly regarded suffering subsequent to repentance as a strange misfortune which seemed to contradict the blessings held out by the gospel.

To Peter such persecution was inevitable. If his audience had diligently read and comprehended all that he had written thus far, they would have been drawn to the same inescapable conclusion. Their difference to the world confronted the world. The goodness of Christ's followers would offend many. Holiness was, and still is, considered a handicap by a carnal world.

What they were experiencing and would experience has been the lot of pursuers of righteousness since the death of Abel.

4:13

The sufferings of Peter's readers, although not of the same intensity as the incomparable sufferings of Christ, are incorporated within Christ's suffering. And because of this, instead of complaining, they should rejoice (*kairo*). They are partakers of his suffering. In doing so, they may also be partakers of his glory and thereby "glad (*kairo*) with exceeding joy (*agalliao* - see notes 1:6,8)."

The response of the believers to suffering should not be bewilderment or resentment, but joy. And this joy is not some single, isolated reaction, but a continuous attitude and activity. Persecution is a sharing in, a fellowshiping of (the word for "partakers" - *koinoneo* - is the verb of the usual Greek word for "fellowship"), the sufferings of Christ. When a person has to suffer for the truth, he is walking the way Christ walked (John 15:18-21), and is carrying the cross of Christ (Luke 9:23). The measure in which we fellowship Christ's life of suffering will, in some respects, determine if we fellowship his glories (Rom 8:17).

Those who are privileged to suffer for Christ's sake (Phil 3:10) have opportunity of a privileged share in the outworking of God's age-long purpose; they are on the sure road which leads to eternal glory (2Tim 2:10-12) and exceeding joy.

¹ WALTON, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, f., Chart 10

Note how Peter adds a qualifier on the second use of *kairo*. *kairo* is the standard word for “rejoice.” To rejoice during and after suffering is unnatural and only possible when considered in the context of being a sharer of Christ’s life. But we do not live for the sole purpose of suffering. We do not find fulfilment in this present life, especially via a deliberately provoked martyrdom.

This was not the way of Christ. On a number of occasions he avoided potential trouble because it would have hindered his work (Matt 12:15; John 7:1; 10:39; 11:54). Our suffering is but a preparation for the time of our physical and spiritual fulfilment. The joy that comes from suffering unjustly is not comparable to the “exceeding joy (*agalliao*)” the redeemed will possess in the future age.

Agalliao, as we outlined in 1:8, means “to exult, to leap for joy.” It is never associated with suffering but is linked to the receipt of God’s abundant mercy. In no way will this be more evident than the receipt of eternal glory at the feet of Christ.

So to suffer with rejoicing now is the way to prepare to rejoice with exultation (1:7; Rom 8:18,28; 2Thess 1:4-7). If we remember this then anything we must suffer and sacrifice for the sake of Christ becomes a blessing and not a punishment.

4:14

Peter continues by bringing the principle of suffering for the name of Christ even closer to the present. The gist of 4:13 is that present suffering can lead to future glory. 4:14 says that present suffering brings present glory.

He commences the verse with a citation from the words of Christ in Matthew 5:11 when he says, “If ye be reproached (*onidizo*) for the name of Christ, happy (*makarios*) are ye.” *Onidizo* is probably better rendered “reviled”, and was experienced by Christ during his crucifixion (Matt 27:44 “cast”; Mark 15:32). *Makarios* is normally translated “Blessed” and means, as it is rendered here, “happy.” Peter’s message is, “Happy is the man who remains steadfast under trial” (Jas 1:12 NEB). He is happy because of the future blessings that are held out to him. He is happy because he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41). And he is happy because “the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon” him.

What is this spirit of glory? How does it differ to the spirit of God? A number of commentators (e.g. Selwyn, Stibbs, Barclay) equate “the spirit of the glory”, as it should be translated, with the Shekinah glory of the Old Testament. While it does not specifically mean this, the overriding concept of the Shekinah is certainly appropriate. The Shekinah represents the visible part of divine majesty. Throughout the Old Testament, the Shekinah occurs as the glowing luminous glory of God in visible light (Exod 16:7; 24:16; 29:43; 1King 8:10-11). When Peter wrote, this glory resided in Jesus Christ. The immediate context bears this out: “That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (4:11); “when his (Christ’s) glory shall be revealed” (4:13). Therefore, the “spirit of the glory” refers to Christ as he is the very manifestation of the glory of God.

In fact, there is no difference between “the spirit of the glory” and the spirit “of God.” Selwyn paraphrases this part of the verse as, “the Presence of the Glory, yea, the Spirit of God, rests upon you.”

This spirit rests (*anapauo*) on the faithful. *Anapauo* carries with it the meaning “to refresh” (1Cor 16:18; 2Cor 7:13), “to be granted rest so as to recover one’s strength.” This is exhibited in Christ’s comforting words to those who would follow him, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (*anapauo*)” (Matt 11:28).

How would this spirit refresh them in their present and prospective calamities? The only way they could manifest this spirit was to understand what it was. This understanding is only derived from contact with God through His word and prayer. To engage in these activities and to outwork them in our lives with alacrity, will refresh us during periods of trial. To ignore God, His Word and His son will make our trials utterly unbearable as we will not experience the refreshing that God offers.

I believe the concept of the spirit of the glory resting on us has another inference. As we have already concluded, the spirit of the glory refers to Christ as the visible part of divine majesty. We also can be manifestations of God’s glory both, in a partial way, at the present time, and in perfection, at that great day of God Almighty. This, despite our problems, should make us extremely happy.

You may have noted that the Shekinah, in most instances, is limited to the houses of God; the tabernacle of the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem. Those buildings, in which the Shekinah dwelled, were a visible presence of God’s majesty. Today God’s house is the ecclesia (2:5). We are the visible presence of God’s majesty to the world. This presence should not be housed in an offensive building (4:15). Rather we should “glorify God on his behalf” (4:16).

In the future, the glory of God will appear as the multitudinous Christ (Ezek 43:2). It will be revealed in majesty, honour, mighty power and perfection. Not only is refreshing gained from the consideration of God’s word but also the contemplation of its magnificent fulfilment. The happiness of those in that day will be “exceeding joy” (4:13).

The remainder of 4:14 - “on their part ... he is glorified” - is omitted by all texts exclusive of the Received Text used by AV, NKJV and Green (CompB). While I am a strong adherent to the Received Text, it would appear that this deletion is correct. Alford, who wrote some time before the RV of 1881, affirms that most, if not all, of the ancient versions omit this section. It is not found in the Latin (Knox, Douay). Its inclusion is not misleading or erroneous in content, but it does seem to interrupt the flow of thought.

4:15

As we have noted in the preceding verses, when God’s elect endure undeserved suffering for the name of Christ, they experience fellowship with Christ and bring glory to God. Therefore, as is abundantly clear, the saints should not earn suffering because of personal iniquity. Not only would their deeds be sinful but they would bring dishonour upon themselves, the ecclesia and God. The good works of others, the undeserved suffering of their fellows, would be undermined by their example. How deplorable is the situation when an attempt to preach the truth is virtually extirpated by, “I know a Christadelphian named [insert name] and he’s [insert negative trait/s].”

This was a problem which plagued the early ecclesia. As Brother Thomas writes, “Thus Milner observes, ‘many heretics, who wore the name of christians, were guilty of the most detestable enormities; these were indiscriminately charged by the pagans on the christians in general’. And again, ‘the abominations of heretics, whom ignorance and malice will ever confound with real christians, furnished the enemies of Christ with some tolerably specious pretensions. Probably these were exaggerated; but whatever they were, the whole Christian Name was accused of them’.”²

Peter is repeating his message of 2:20 and 3:17. He constantly reintroduces subject material. He does not simply state his point and move on. Rather, he brings it back again and again so that the message is not glossed over and forgotten. On this occasion he provides some examples of the types of suffering that is deserved, and therefore should not be demonstrated in a disciple’s life. Peter lists them in a descending order of severity:-

- i) Murder - “No saint would do that!”
- ii) Theft - “A definite sin, although sometimes the temptation is present.”
- iii) Evil-doing - *kakopoyos* (2:12,14; 3:16) - “Yes, that can be a problem, but I’m always on my guard.”
- iv) Being a busybody - *allotrioepiskopos* (only here in the New Testament) - “What, surely being a meddler doesn’t rank with murder?”

It is as if Peter has delayed the knockout blow. While the other three accusations could, by and large, be discounted, that of being a busybody would have stuck fast to many. *Allotrioepiskopos* means “one who takes the supervision of affairs pertaining to others and in no wise to himself, (a meddler in other men’s matters)” (Thayer). Thayer states that in relation to 4:15, Peter “seems to refer to those, who with holy but intemperate zeal, meddle with the affairs of the Gentiles - whether public or private, civil or sacred - in order to make them conform to the Christian standard.” Vine sheds further interesting information on this word when he writes that it “was a legal term for a charge brought against the Christians as being hostile to civilised society, their purpose being to make Gentiles conform to Christian standards.” In other words, suffering as a busybody was to suffer as a consequence of unwise and improper interference in other people’s lives.

The follower of Christ is compelled to conform to Christ and thus bring his conduct into line. This does not empower him to interfere in the lives of others, particularly non-Christians, to make them change their lifestyles. To do so is to put the cart before the horse. Before a person can or will change his life, he needs to be enlightened. A meddling busybody, while zealous for the truth, will only antagonise those he is trying to save. I suppose a simple example would be to tell an interested friend, on his first visit to a Christadelphian lecture, to get his hair cut. While this is unlikely to happen, one can imagine what effect this possibly well-intentioned advice would have on the visitor.

We may not be a murderer or a thief or even an evil-doer. We must ensure that we are not busybodies. The early ecclesia was accused of such. Perhaps it was one of the few accusations that carried an element of accuracy. But as Selwyn puts it, “Tactless attempts to

² THOMAS, *Eureka*, Vol 1 p282-283

convert neighbours, or to improve those who are already converted, are faults not confined to the Church of apostolic days.”³

4:16

While it is without merit that we suffer as evil-doers or busybodies, it brings glory to God when we suffer as Christians. “Christian” is only found some three times in the New Testament. Acts 11:26 testifies that it was a nickname given to the disciples of Christ by Gentiles in Antioch. Its appearance in 4:16 associates it with persecution and suffering. Apparently it was a term of scorn and this may be implied in Agrippa’s reaction to Paul in Acts 26:28. It was not until the second century that the title was accepted by believers as a title of honour.

However, by the time the fiery trial of 4:12 was upon them, the very fact of being known as a Christian was enough to single out an individual for maltreatment and possibly official persecution. It would be a simple matter to deny allegiance to Christ to avoid such difficulties. Peter himself was guilty of such behaviour (Matt 26:69-75). But to suffer because of a refusal to disassociate from Christ, is to display a conviction that should not bring shame (*aiskunomai*). Instead, God is glorified “in this matter” (NKJV).

Paul beautifully exhibits the mind of the true Christian when he writes, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed (*aiskunomai*), but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Phil 1:20). John extends the application by saying, “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed (*aiskunomai*) before him at his coming” (1John 2:28).

The overall picture is uplifting. If we endure, without shame, suffering as a Christian we will give God the glory (*doxaso* - see also 4:11 where humble service glorifies God), our lives will be full of glory (*doxaso* - 1:8), and others, by heeding our example, may be similarly blessed and glorify (*doxaso*) God in the day of visitation (2:12).

What may seem an incongruity - suffering without shame - is but a trifle when compared to the glory the faithful will receive at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:7; 5:4).

4:17-18

These verses present a few problems. Peter states that the time or season for judgment of the house of God has arrived and that if it begins with the godly, what shall be the end for the disobedient? What is this time of judgment? How does it extend to incorporate those who obey not the gospel? Several answers have been suggested, so I hope that the solution offered in this commentary is acceptable.

Firstly, the context is clear. The ecclesia was about to enter a period of fiery trial (4:12), in which the faithful will be sharers of Christ’s sufferings (4:13).

³ SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, p225

Secondly, this is extended into the time of the judgment at Christ's return. As Brother Walker writes, "This passage ... (also) looks forward to 'the end of all things' (4:7), when 'the righteous shall be saved' and the ungodly and sinner condemned. These last belong to 'this present evil world', upon which the righteous are to 'execute the judgments written'. The rejected will be dismissed from the presence of the Judge into this 'outer darkness' to meet the fate decreed."⁴

Thirdly, both present and future are combined in these verses. Now is the time to receive trials and persecution, which are obviously permitted by God, in order to be prepared for the judgment of that final day. Not only is this consistent with Peter's words in 1:7, it is a principle that is found elsewhere in Scripture (Mal 3:1-6). While Christ's coming to save God's people is assured, it will occur after preparatory judgment and purification of them has taken place.

But woe unto those who obey not the gospel of God. They may escape the present judgment yet "what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Note the selectiveness of Peter's language. He is not referring to the great mass of humanity who live in ignorance of the gospel. No, it is those who have heard and obey not the gospel; the responsible, whether baptised or not.

As Brother Thomas clearly outlines, "But illuminated sinners and Sardian saints are obnoxious to a perdition arrived at in different ways. These are they 'who obey not the Gospel of the Deity' (1Pet 4:17), or disgrace it; and who come forth to *anastasis* of judicial condemnation. These two classes are punished on the principle that 'it is better not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them' (2Pet 2:21). In the apostolic age, this holy commandment was delivered with power descending from heaven; but now, there is no such sanction confirming a faithful teacher's exposition of the word. Nevertheless, if a sinner come to the understanding of the truth, the result being the same, he is held accountable. An enlightened sinner cannot evade the consequences of his illumination."⁵

For some reason Peter does not provide the gory details of divine, judicial condemnation. He obviously believed that his readers were fully cognisant of them. Paul removes any mystery when he exclaims that those who obey not the gospel will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of power" (2Thess 1:9).

For Peter's readers a gentle reminder was sufficient at this point in time. He confirms this reminder with a citation in 4:18 from Proverbs 11:31: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (LXX)

The word for "scarcely" (*molis*) means "with difficulty, hardly" (Thayer). It reveals two points of interpretation, both of which are acceptable. Firstly, it teaches that it is only through difficulty in the life of a saint that salvation is attainable. This concept is one of the main injunctions of 1Peter.

⁴ WALKER, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 56 (1919) p486

⁵ THOMAS, *Anastasis*, p35

Secondly, survival at the judgment is not assured. Even those considered righteous by their peers will scarcely, if at all, survive judgment. The judgment will not be easy for anybody let alone the ungodly and the sinner.

With that Sword of Damocles hanging over our heads, we should “suffer according to the will of God” (4:19). God permits suffering so that the saints may be disciplined and ultimately saved in the day of Christ.

Peter presents three classes of people in 4:18 who are responsible to resurrection and judgment: “the enlightened sinner, who rejects the truth; the ungodly, who disgraces it; and the righteous, who do it.”⁶ It is unmistakable which class we should belong to. While the righteous are scarcely saved, the ungodly and the sinner will be blotted out. Salvation may be difficult to attain but is inexpressibly glorious upon bestowal. Rejection is easily gained but hopelessly tragic upon receipt.

4:19

Peter concludes this sub-section with a beautiful verse of comfort and encouragement. This is necessary after the depressing circumstances of the previous two verses. After repeating the threat of the judgment and expressing the difficulty the righteous have in surviving it, he exhorts, “Therefore, let even those who are suffering according to the will of God, commit their lives in doing good to a Faithful Creator” (Diag).

Peter is not instructing them to start committing their lives to God (otherwise they could not be already suffering according to His will), but to continue in well-doing and to strive to be even closer to God. The term translated in the AV, “commit the keeping of” (*paratitheemi*) is a vivid, technical word for “depositing money with a trusted friend” (Barclay). In ancient days there were no banks and few secure places to deposit money. So, before a man went on a journey, he left his money with somebody he could trust. Such a trust was regarded as one of the most sacred things in life.⁷ This term of great trust is identical to that uttered by Christ in his final prayer on the cross: “Father, into thy hand I commend (*paratitheemi*) my spirit” (Luke 23:46). What greater example is there than this? Even as he gasped his last, Christ unhesitatingly committed and entrusted his life to God. He was convinced that God would not fail him. And this during dreadful suffering in accordance to his Father’s will.

Peter emphasises the constancy of God by declaring Him “a faithful creator (*ktistees*).” How is God faithful? The apostolic announcements are very clear: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Cor 1:9); “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1Cor 10:13); “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Thess 5:24); “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” (Heb 10:23); “He is faithful and just to forgive our sins” (1John 1:9).

God is faithful and God is the Creator. Peter describes this aspect of God with a word found nowhere else in the New Testament. He does so to reinforce the fact of God’s ability to fulfil

⁶ THOMAS, *Anastasis*, p35

⁷ BARCLAY, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p310

His word by implying that as Creator He has the power which is able, and the love which is willing, to care for those entrusted to Him.

Such a description would have impressed the Gentile disciples. Their God is the Creator. Paul stressed God's work in creation to the Gentile audience at Athens (Acts 17:24) deeming this one of the best ways to highlight the superiority and power of the true God.

God created the heavens and the earth! Think about it. Can we appreciate the magnitude of God in that oft-repeated statement? Dare we doubt God's ability to complete His purpose (Num 14:21; Isa 43:7)?

Be ye holy, for God is holy (1:16). Be ye faithful, for God is faithful. Let us continue in well-doing.⁸

As Elders Providing an Example

5:1-4

In chapter 5 Peter seems to veer from the way he was travelling. After carefully preparing his flock for the troubles which lay ahead, Peter singles out a select minority, the elders, and personally addresses them. Why? The elders were responsible for the oversight and guidance of the ecclesias in the various provinces to which Peter was writing. If any group should provide the example of triumphing in the face of peril it was them. If they were to fail many others would deviate off course and crash like a rudderless ship.

Being an elder is a responsible, difficult and humbling vocation. Flesh, being the deceiver it is, can present eldership as responsible, difficult and self-aggrandising. Peter's words provide the correct perspective and correct function of the elder. He explains the objective, motive and manner of the role of the elder. The elder must be devoted, zealous and lead by example. There is no place for domineering self-assertion.

Peter commences this section by calling himself a fellow-elder and concludes by restating the example of Christ. He also commences by referring to Christ's suffering and concludes by restating the glory that is ours because of his suffering. The elders must be aware that, in all things, they are answerable to the Chief Shepherd and he will personally reward faithful discharge of duty with eternal glory.

If any be an elder, or aspire to be such, 5:1-4 is compulsory reading. It challenges the normal approach that humanity adopts in positions of responsibility.

5:1

Peter now turns his attention to the elders (*presbuteros*) and exhorts (*parakaleo* - see notes on 2:11) them from the context of the statements in the previous section. The RV indicates this when it translates the opening line, "The elders therefore among you I exhort..."

⁸ *Agathopoiya* - only here in the New Testament but closely related to *agathopoyeo*, which is a key word in 1Peter found in 2:15,20; 3:16,17, and *agathopoyos* in 2:14.

“The word ‘elder’ can relate to age, but is applied frequently in the New Testament. as a title for those who manifested maturity in the word and experience and so were appointed to oversee the Ecclesias. Timothy was an elder, though he was comparatively young in years. Elders were ordained to their positions by the Apostles (Acts 14:23), who had spirit guidance in such matters. Such elders were expected to care for the Ecclesia in instruction of both doctrine and ethics. On the other hand, those appointed to attend to the business of an Ecclesia were elected by vote, as in the case of the seven brethren referred to in Acts 6:3.”⁹

The role, but not the authority, of the first-century elder can be equated to that of the arranging or serving brethren of the latter-day ecclesia. Although there is now no direct spirit intervention in the selection of such brethren, selection by ecclesial vote should be based on sound Biblical principles. Brother Roberts excellent little book, *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias* should be consulted by all prior to the important task of selecting “elders.”

Brother J B Norris sheds further interesting light on New Testament elders and their twentieth-century counterparts when he writes, “It is, then, evident that the work of New Testament elders was that of oversight, superintendence, guardianship of the flock entrusted to their care and solicitude for the poor and afflicted brethren. The term *presbuteros* = elder, was the title of their office, the term *episcopo* = oversight, the nature of their work. In this oversight the elders were assisted by deacons, as to-day arranging brethren are aided by the faithful ministrations of visiting brethren and sisters, room attendants, table stewards and ecclesial sub-committees”¹⁰

These elders, both then and now, Peter beseeches or exhorts. Although he had the authority of an Apostle (1:1) he does not command. He communicates as “the fellow-elder (*o sumpresbuteros*)” (Diag mg, Selwyn, Green mg, Nestle). Peter makes no claim to superiority. He, who was among the chiefest of the apostles, uses a term that expresses empathy in feeling and duty. He knew the measure of their responsibility at first hand and identifies himself with them. They may not have been apostles but they had similar functions of ecclesial care and administration.

Peter also uses the definite article before *sumpresbuteros*. He was the fellow-elder. He abided by the principles that governed eldership (5:3). His humility was an example, and certainly a reflection of the great example (5:4). The title may also indicate that he had been in their midst on earlier occasions, as if he wants the elders of Asia Minor to call to memory the time he had with them, the way they made their decisions and how he guided their deliberations.

Peter, after stating his personal attachment to them, now declares his personal link with Christ. He witnessed the sufferings of Christ. He had seen what very few, if any, of his readers had seen. And he was affected by the witness of those sufferings like no other man.

Although Peter was transformed by the witness of the risen Lord, he was utterly humbled and humiliated by his witness of the suffering Messiah (Luke 22:62). Perhaps this is why Peter is emphasising the sufferings of Christ. It was that, above all else, which made him realise how

⁹ MANSFIELD, *From James to Jude*, p150

¹⁰ J B NORISS, *The First Century Ecclesia*, p83

insignificant he was. The one who sliced a piece off the ear of Malchus with a wild swipe of his sword was reduced to tears when he realised the folly of his pride and cowardice. He was no longer the one who had, even in the upper room, entered into disputes over who was the greatest of Christ's disciples (Luke 22:24). No, Peter was an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ. The relevance of this theme would not have been lost on the elders. They were to endure hardship; hardship which would bewilder some (4:12), especially the Gentile brethren. But Peter had seen the crucifixion of Jesus. Their sufferings, while a fellowshipping of Christ's (4:13), were no facsimile.

The final phrase in 5:1 - "and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" - has been approached from different angles by various commentators. Does it express Peter's confidence at being approved at the judgment? Is it in reference to unique events in the life of Christ that Peter witnessed? Does it allude to the glory of Christ's resurrection of which Peter was an eye-witness (Acts 1:22)? All these options are possible but not tolerable within the context of 5:1.

Of the first option, Peter could have had confidence in being a member of the kingdom because Christ had informed him that he would, after much tribulation, be accepted at the judgment (John 13:36; 21:19). However, the Greek construction would possibly indicate that this interpretation is not appropriate to 5:1. Selwyn translates the phrase as, "who have also had experience of the glory that is to be revealed." The verse is expounding the concepts of "witness," "suffering," "glory."

Peter seems to be saying that he witnessed the sufferings of Christ and shared in the glory. It would be somewhat incongruous if he were saying, "As a fellow-elder, an eyewitness of Christ's sufferings and a certified member of the kingdom, take my advice and feed the flock." The empathy of "fellow-elder" would virtually be negated by such an approach. No, Peter expresses his empathy as a fellow-elder and declares that his humble station is as a result of him witnessing the great work and glory of the Chief Shepherd.

In what sense was Peter a sharer in that final glory? Christ's glory was exhibited in his resurrected being (1:21) and this was indicative of the glory that will be revealed to all the faithful at his appearing (4:13). Peter had the great blessing of seeing the resurrected Messiah; he whose presence portrayed the final glory. Peter also had a special privilege in sharing with James and John the image of the transfigured Christ. There is no doubt that the transfiguration greatly impressed Peter as he unequivocally alludes to it in 2Peter 1:16-17. Peter was an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ whose "face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as light" (Matt 17:2). Surely this will be the face and the raiment the faithful will see when God's glory is personified as Christ the King.

Yet, the real lesson Peter was taught from the transfiguration was via the heavenly voice: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt 17:5). Christ is above all, including the elders of the ecclesia. Peter had, in the transfiguration and the resurrection of the Messiah, received previews of Christ's glory as it will be revealed at his appearing.

5:2

In 5:2-3 Peter outlines the duties of elders primarily via six points arranged in three pairs, each containing a negative and positive injunction.

The overall principle is that elders are shepherds who feed (*poimaino*) the flock of God, taking the oversight (*episkopeo*) thereof. Peter's charge to the elders derives a special poignancy from the charge he himself had received from Christ (John 21:16). Just the recollection of that experience would have humbled Peter. He was, in his own eyes, an elder attempting to fulfil the commission his Lord gave him when he had been unable to declare his *agape* love for Jesus. This was his opportunity to respond to the love Christ had showered on him; by feeding the flock his Lord has placed in his care. The charge to the elders of the Asia Minor ecclesias was delivered with the same objective. As elders they were to show their love for Christ by tending God's sheep.

The Greek word for "feed" includes "the whole of a shepherd's care of his flock, and not feeding only" (Selwyn). It is rendered by other versions as "shepherd" (NKJV, Roth, Marshall, NIV, JB) or "tend" (RV, Selwyn, NEB). And the flock which they oversight is not their own, it is God's. As Brother Booker writes, "The true ecclesial shepherd, then, must do the works of his master:

1. He must feed others first (Ezek 34:2).
2. He must strengthen the diseased or weak (Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:4; Rom 15:1).
3. He must build up what is broken (Ezek 34:4).
4. He must seek what is lost (Ezek 34:4,11,16; Matt 18:12; Luke 15:4-7).
5. He must assume a personal responsibility in the face of a threat.
6. And he must be prepared to protect the flock at all costs: 'Take heed to all the flock ... remember that I warned you' (Acts 20:28-31)."¹¹

Such a *modus operandi* is foreign to human nature. "Well knowing the presumption, pride, and arrogance of the flesh, the spirit commanded them especially to feed the flock, and not to fleece it; to oversee it willingly and of a ready mind, but not for the sake of compensation; and to be examples to the flock, and not to lord it over the heritages."¹²

Having broadly outlined the role of elders, Peter now sets down, in a series of contrasts, the perils and privileges of eldership. And, it should be observed, everything which Peter says here is applicable not just to elders, but to all forms of religious service.

In the first of the three dichotomies, the elder is to accept office not under coercion, but willingly. The Greek word for "by constraint" (*anankastos* - only here in the New Testament), means "by force, unwillingly, by constraint" (Vine) and has been translated "by way of compulsion" (Marshall).

Peter is not teaching that a brother ought to eagerly grasp at eldership without a self-examining thought. The sense is that, out of necessity, certain brethren must take on special duties. And when they do, they render the service willingly and faithfully. He who has irresponsible zeal for an official position in the ecclesia is by no means ready and does not

¹¹ BOOKER, *Biblical Fellowship*, p13

¹² THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p160

appreciate the service he has to carry into effect. The example of Moses comes to mind. From one who “supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver” the children of Israel (Acts 7:25), he became, forty years later, a most reluctant leader: “Who am I ... that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exod 3:11). Yet, despite his reticence, he accepted his calling and performed in accordance to God’s will. He was finally ready for God’s service because he understood the enormity of his task.

Peter’s point is that there is a significant difference between a man who does his work for no other reason than he has to do it, and the man who does it willingly, as being in God’s service.

Most versions add the words “according to God” (*kata theon*) after “willingly.” The weight of textual evidence supports such an inclusion. It does not make a dramatic difference when these words are included but they do provide a sparkle of religious emphasis. Service is to God; in accordance with His purpose and after His example.

The second of the three pairs reveals that an elder is a shepherd “not for filthy lucre (*aiskrokerdos* - only here in the New Testament), but of a ready mind.” Peter’s message is simple. No man should accept ecclesial office or render service for what he can get out of it. His desire must be ever to give and not to get.

Aiskrokerdos means “making a shameful profit” (Barclay) or “from eagerness for base gain” (Thayer). Peter is forbidding the sordid love of gain, not the request for fair remuneration. This was an especially sensitive issue that raised its head on a number of occasions, particularly by the enemies of Paul. Paul was forced to repeatedly defend himself against those who accused him of *aiskrokerdos* (Acts 20:33; 2Cor 12:13-17; 1Thess 2:9). While Paul was blameless, others were susceptible to the temptations of using their status for their personal, material gain (1Tim 3:3,8; Titus 1:7,11).

The elder must act out “of a ready mind” or “with enthusiasm” (Selwyn). Their enjoyment and willingness exists in feeding the flock and not in the pay-off. Their work should be a service of sheer delight and job satisfaction.

5:3

The final parallel is the most difficult to live by. An elder may be willing and eager in his task; he may not be motivated by dishonest gain or because he has to do it, but he adopts, despite all good and scriptural intention, a domineering approach. This is not acceptable. As NKJV translates, “nor as being lords over those entrusted to you.” Elders must not take on the attributes of a petty tyrant to those who are allotted to their care.

The Greek word for “being lords over” (*katakuriuo*) is used by Christ in Matthew 20:25 and Mark 10:42 of the ways of Gentile lordship. The elder in an ecclesia, he who will be great among the brethren, shall be their minister. “And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:44). In doing so he is a disciple of the greatest man of all, the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 10:45).

It seems highly likely that Peter had Mark 10 in mind as he wrote this verse. Christ finished his dissertation on those who aspire to prominence with a reference to his own example. Peter states the opposite of *katakuriuo* as “but being examples to the flock” (NKJV). The elder is to be a role-model for others to copy. The only way elders can be patterns of good works is by them emulating the example of the Lord Jesus Christ; who is again reintroduced in the following verse. In doing so they would be leading and guiding, not by decrees and imposed discipline, but by deeds and self-discipline. While God is their guide, they do not have God’s power. While servants of God, they are also servants of the ecclesia.

As Brother Roberts writes, “The appointment of brethren to certain offices is not the appointment of men to exercise authority, but of men to serve ... All official brethren are serving brethren; but there are necessarily different sorts of serving brethren, such as managing brethren, presiding brethren, doorkeeping brethren, etc., but ALL are brethren. It is important to keep this feature constantly in the front. Christ places it there: ‘One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.’ This feature, with many other beautiful features originally appertaining to the house of Christ, has disappeared from the religious systems around us bearing the name of Christ. Having returned to it, let us hold on to it. There must be no authority, only service. The spirit of appointments involves this. The ecclesia does not appoint masters, but servants.”¹³

Do the principles contained on Brother Roberts’ comments, soundly based on Scripture and first published over a hundred years ago, exist in the conduct and oversighting of Christadelphian ecclesias today? Every serving brother should assess his attitude and manner against the maxims of 5:2-3.

5:4

Peter now reintroduces the concept of Christ as the Shepherd (see notes on 2:25) and provides further insight by calling Jesus the “chief Shepherd.” This recapitulation and enhancement is included to:-

- i) Emphasise the position of Christ in ecclesial administration,
- ii) Repeat the example of Christ; this time specifically for the elders to emulate, and
- iii) Provide additional incentive for faithful service.

Christ is the Chief Shepherd. The elders were shepherds of the flock and answerable, in the way they tended the flock, to the Chief Shepherd. As Freeman notes, “Where the flocks were numerous and a large number of shepherds were necessary, one was placed in charge of all the others.”¹⁴

Therefore, in being the Chief Shepherd, Jesus has established the required methods of operation and demeanour of those shepherds who are subordinate to him. We have already noted in our comments on 5:3 how that “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). One who wants to be great in the divine sense must do so in the spirit of the Chief Shepherd. “This is to do a service to, to care for the needs of others, freely undertaken indeed, but representing a willing

¹³ ROBERTS, *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias*, p13-14

¹⁴ FREEMAN, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p469

subordination to what others require ... This is not only a path to greatness: it is greatness itself in God's sight, the greatest example of which was provided by His Son, whose ministry culminated in giving his life a ransom for many."¹⁵

The pursuit and emulation of the Christ-example is not only great in God's sight, it will be rewarded with "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." While the goal of that reward should shine brightly it will only be achieved after much tribulation. Christ is now the Chief Shepherd, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Previously, he was the smitten Shepherd (Mark 14:27); the Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11,17). Elevation only occurred after tribulation and self-discipline. It is only after strenuous and diligent effort that the athlete wins the crown. By being partakers of Christ's sufferings we shall eventually fellowship the glory of his revelation (4:13). The shepherds answer to him now. They may be rewarded by him at his appearing.

The crown they receive, unlike the crown of laurel or bay leaves, is *amarantinos* (see notes on 1:4); made of amaranth, a flower which never faded and was everlasting. Athletes strove to obtain a corruptible wreath of fading laurel leaves but we, all of us, not just elders, an incorruptible (1Cor 9:25). The gift of glory, which is eternal life, is an unfading wreath; unfading because it derives from God, "who only hath immortality" (1Tim 6:16).

Brother Carter concludes our consideration of this verse when he states, "In the context he (Peter) probably uses the word 'glory' of the Lord Jesus. 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you' (4:14). The spirit of Christ, in whom God's glory was revealed, was to be exhibited in their lives. 'If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf' (4:16). That glory thus rendered at the present time is the basis upon which the glory to be revealed will be shared, as Peter says, 'When his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy' (4:13); and again, he speaks of himself as a 'partaker of the glory that shall be revealed' (5:1). There is an evident connection between the fact that the glory of God is now manifested in the life of the believer, fitting him for the crown of glory which will be bestowed. What is that glory which is the crown? Is it not the revelation of the character of God in exulted and immortal sons of God?"¹⁶

As the Flock in Humility

5:5-11

5:5

After the important and specific considerations of humble leadership, Peter promptly balances the picture with a reference to those who are younger and then moves his readers into a general application of the practice of humility.

In fact, it would appear that 5:5 would be better divided. The first segment addressed to younger people and the second with its universal application.

¹⁵ NORRIS, *The Gospel of Mark*, p100

¹⁶ CARTER, *The Christadelphian*, Vol 79 (1942) p35

The first segment demonstrates the balanced style which pervades this epistle. Peter has just finished a four-verse dissertation on the role of elders. They are to be examples to the flock, to feed the flock, to be willing and zealous, and not to be mercenary or tyrannical. However, an unwelcomed reaction to such instruction would be younger or less experienced brethren taking advantage of elders, particularly those who have possibly been chastened by 5:1-4. Instead of respecting their attempts to faithfully fulfil their role, they harass, ignore, undermine, even abuse those selected by the ecclesia or, as in Peter's day, by the Spirit to be their overseers. While elders are far from perfect (especially those of today as they are not Spirit-gifted), if they abide by the principles of 5:1-4, they should receive the co-operation they require to effectively manage the ecclesia.

Sometimes this may mean submitting to their decisions even if we disagree with them. This is evident in Peter's reiteration of the word *hupotasso* ("submit"). It is the same word used of believers to civil authority (2:13), servants to masters (2:18), wives to husbands (3:1), and the world to Christ in the kingdom age (3:22). True, arranging brethren are selected by ecclesial vote, but if ecclesial members are dissatisfied with what has transpired they have the ability, if they choose to exercise it, to elect different "elders" when the next opportunity arises.

Most commentators state that the sentiments of this first segment can also refer to the submission of younger members to brethren who are older than them. Some go so far as to say that "the reference here ... is to age and not official rank" (Selwyn). Younger people are easily tempted to unhealthy self-assertion. Unfortunately, this behaviour is being increasingly exhibited by the young, even the very young, and is, I believe, directly attributable to the environment that surrounds them, including parental guidance.

Does our meal-time conversation contain disparaging remarks about certain ecclesial members? Do we think it funny or cute when a child of ours is "smart" to a brother we may not think highly of? Are our jesting comments about the inadequacies of others interpreted literally by the young minds that hear them? We may blame the school system or other children for our child's disrespectful behaviour, yet how readily do we fail to note the destructive effect that we, as parents or youth-leaders, can have with our potentially deleterious example?

Submission to, or at least respect of, those senior in years is a principle found in the Law of Moses (Lev 19:32) as well as the writings of Paul (1Tim 5:1). A society where "a youth can insult his elder" (Isa 3:5 JB) is one in collapse.

In 5:5's second part Peter ensures that everybody is covered. While elders should feed the flock of God with all humbleness of disposition and the younger should be subject to those whose age and experience exceeds their own, "Indeed, all of you should wrap yourselves in the garment of humility towards each other" (NEB). Nobody is excluded. Humility is incumbent on all members of the ecclesia.

The AV's inclusion of the phrase "be subject" is not supported by other versions and, according to the Companion Bible, is omitted by "the texts." This makes sense as the word for "subject" is *hupotasso* and it would be impossible for everybody to be subject, or to rank under, everybody else. How could masters be subject to slaves, or husbands to wives, or

elders to younger, without contradicting the clear instruction of this epistle? However, what does apply to all is the aspect of humility.

“Humility” (*tapinophrosunee*) means “having a humble opinion of one’s self; a deep sense of one’s (moral) littleness; modesty, humility, lowliness of mind” (Thayer). People who have *tapinophrosunee* are aware of their true condition; “of absolute dependence, of having nothing, but receiving all things of God” (Trench). Humility should be exhibited by all, and was exhibited by the greatest of all men; “for I am meek and lowly (*tapinos*) in heart” (Matt 11:29).

And this humility should be tied on as an apron (*enkombō-omai* - see Moff, Barclay). *Enkombō-Omai* is only found here in the New Testament and describes anything which is tied on with a knot. It was commonly used of protective clothing such as a slave’s apron. For example, when guests arrived at the house of a friend, a servant, after donning an apron, washed their feet so that any defilement of the journey might be removed and the guests would then sit down wholly clean. There was that time when Jesus girded himself with a towel and performed the servant’s role in washing his disciples’ feet, to the astonishment and dismay of Peter (John 13:3-10).

As Brother Carter writes, “Peter might well remember for, appalled at the idea that the Master he loved should wash his feet, he had said to his Master, in a tone that implied that he did not know what he was doing, ‘Lord, dost thou wash my feet?’ The Lord had replied with an emphasis on his own knowledge and Peter’s lack of it, ‘What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter’. Then had Peter wanted hands and head as well as feet washed, impulsively passing to the other extreme, and unmindful of the fact that he knew what he was doing.”¹⁷ Peter now understood. He is no longer the disciple disputing with the other disciples his rank in the kingdom of God. He is no longer perplexed by his master’s example. Humility is not a vice, a despised attribute to be avoided. It is a strength that expresses itself in service and self-sacrifice.

Jesus Christ girded himself with the apron of humility and so must his followers. The exhortation is to not merely feel humble but to be humble; to serve others, to fit in with the arrangements of others, to co-operate. There is no place for the proud in God’s plan, only the humble. Peter clinches his argument with a quotation from the Old Testament: “The Lord resists the proud; but he gives grace to the humble” (Prov 3:34 LXX).

This citation from Proverbs gives the simple reason why we should clothe ourselves with humility. The points we score against our fellows through our pride and arrogance register as refusal points in Divine reckoning. Our prospects for refusal at the judgment seat of Christ are increased. All of us will do well to remember that God watches how we act and will treat us accordingly (Psa 18:25-27). To the humble God grants favour, both now and especially so in the coming age.

It is interesting to note that while *enkombō-omai* predominantly alludes to garments worn by servants, it can also refer to a long, flowing garment of some dignity; a sign of honour and pre-eminence (Selwyn, Barclay). Christ was once the suffering servant, the wearer of the slave-apron; he who washed his disciples’ feet. Now he wears the garment of honour and pre-eminence. He will soon be manifest as King over all. Similarly, we must wear the

¹⁷ CARTER, *The Gospel of John*, p146

garment of humility before we can have any opportunity of entering God's kingdom and taking on the garment of pre-eminence. "Whosoever therefore shall humble (*tapinoo*) himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:4).

Therefore humble (*tapinoo*) yourselves ..." (5:6 NKJV).

5:6-7

Peter gives further scope to his teaching on humility. 5:6 is really a statement of the obvious. If God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble then obviously we should be humble. Not simply to be passive blocks of humility but "allow ourselves to be humbled" (Selwyn). We need to actively co-operate with God's requirements.

Even more importantly, we should understand that the humility demanded is humility before the mighty hand of God. We are not talking about some sort of optional extra. Our attitude, our persistent activity of submission, must be generated by an awareness of God's sovereign and providential power. All things are under His mighty hand. By it we are either extinguished or exulted.

The phrase "the mighty hand of God" is common in the Old Testament and is often used in connection with the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt (Exod 13:9; Deut 9:26,29; 26:8). God's power was exhibited in great strength. By it He saved His people and destroyed the proud. By it He achieved what no human being could possibly do. God's hand is mighty (*krataios* - only here in the New Testament); powerful in effect, forcible (Bullinger). The saint should take the only sensible option and submit to it. God's hand is on the destiny of His people. As it was for Israel so it is for the saints. As the Israelites were delivered and exulted, so also the true disciples. But their exultation will be to eternal glory.

The disciple of Christ follows the example of his Lord and hearkens to his words. There is little doubt that Peter is recalling more than the experiences of Israel. After all Israel had failed miserably despite the work of God's mighty hand. Christ taught that "he that shall humble himself shall be exulted" (Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). And, as Peter clarifies, it will be accomplished in God's "due time." In other words, not when we think it appropriate but at God's own wisely appointed time.

As the disciple waits for this time of exultation, he may be assailed by persecution, suffering, anxiety. What is he to do? He is to cast all his cares upon God, because God cares for him (5:7). What a beautiful verse! Peter picks up the words of Christ and those of the Psalmist to construct this sensitive verse: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psa 55:22 LXX); "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow" (Matt 6:34 NKJV).

The Greek word for "care" (*merimna*) means "anxiety" (Thayer, Stibbs) and has reference to "anxiety about things pertaining to this earthly life." Troubles may beset us, and they are not always easily thrown off, but we must not allow ourselves to be burdened down by anxiety. Even when problems are present we ought to be able to reduce the anxiety which they cause. We should still maintain steadfastness of mind towards God. We can still call on God for help. We still have hope of everlasting, perfect life in the kingdom. Yet, anxiety afflicts all. The solution is to cast (*erirripto*) our anxiety on God because He cares, or has regard, for us.

Erirripto is a vigorous word which suggests effort. Its only other usage is in Luke 19:35 where the disciples enthusiastically cast their garments upon the colt Jesus was to ride into Jerusalem. Our action is to be swift, decisive and humble. As Brother Sargent writes, “This act of confident trust is in Peter’s mind the sequel to ‘humbling yourselves under the mighty hand of God’; it is the product of a childlike humility, whereas the effort to carry the burden ourselves is the expression of human pride. In such an association of ideas do we not catch the unmistakable echo of the ‘Chief Shepherd’ of whom Peter has been writing? ... The thought is common to Jesus and to Peter that those who are the object of God’s guarding care have no need to carry a load of anxiety: ‘He careth for you’, says Peter (using a different word which means ‘He makes you the object of His interest’), and in so saying he is drawing out in plain prose the thought which is poetically implied in the Sermon”¹⁸ on the Mount.

5:8-9

Throughout this section Peter instructs and explains. In 5:5 he exhorts that they be clothed with humility “because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (NIV). In 5:6 they are instructed to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand “that he may exult you in good time.” In 5:7 they are told to cast their anxieties on God “because he cares for you” (NIV). And in 5:8 they are encouraged to be sober and vigilant “because your adversary” seeks to devour. There is a reason for everything. Peter does not bully. He instructs and explains. Surely an example for any who are overseers, as an “elder” or a parent, today.

Peter’s readers have been told in 5:7 to cast their burdens on the Lord. However, this does not permit them to be indulgent or careless. True, they can have confidence but there is still a need for them to be sober (*neepho* - see notes 1:13; 4:7) and vigilant (*griegoreo*). We do not sit back and do nothing. No, the saint acts in self-control and steadfastness. He is alert to God’s requirements and the wiles of his opponents. While we trust in God we must display effort in living a life of Christ.

Perhaps Peter is recalling that night of darkness when the power of this world took the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. Remember Christ’s disappointment when “he cometh unto his disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch (*griegoreo*) with me one hour? Watch (*griegoreo*) and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:40-41).

Maybe Peter is recalling the crucial issue of the parable of the virgins: “Watch (*griegoreo*) therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt 25:13). In that parable all the virgins were asleep but only five were ready. The watching is not necessarily one of determining the precise moment of Christ’s return and being awake. No, it is the vigilance of keeping our lamps prepared and filled with oil. Brother Carter writes, “Be on the alert, not so much in looking for the coming one, as in recognising the need for being ready to meet him when the call comes. The preparation is continuous, calling for patience and perseverance.”¹⁹ The foolish virgins ran out of oil and were unable to enter the marriage. The door was shut. The disciples, including Peter, failed to watch with their Lord. They were weak and very nearly overwhelmed. Peter’s readers if they relaxed their vigilance would be consumed by their enemies. Even if they died while maintaining their

¹⁸ SARGENT, *The Teaching of the Master*, p247-248

¹⁹ CARTER, *The Parables of the Messiah*, p179

stand for Christ they would be victorious. They will enter in with him to the marriage (Matt 25:10).

Peter describes their enemy as “your adversary (*antidikos*) the devil (*diabolos*), as a roaring (*oruomai* - only here in the New Testament) lion.” “Christian” commentators have a field-day with this expression, claiming it supports the doctrine of a supernatural being, a rebel angel. Such an interpretation is totally outside of the realm of scriptural truth. A simple analysis of the Greek tidies up any misinterpretation.

Antidikos means “an opponent in a lawsuit” (Stibbs, Thayer), *diabolos* “a slanderer, or false accuser” (Stibbs, Thayer), *oruomai* is an onomatopoeic word for “howl or roar” (Vine), and “lion” is used elsewhere to describe a Roman tribunal (2Tim 4:17).

Therefore, there is little doubt, that the adversaries the saints were soon to be confronted by were the persecuting civil authorities already prophesied by Peter in 4:12. In order to impress on his readers “the ferocious spirit that impelled the enemy, he compared him to a roaring lion, walking about, on the look out for prey. ‘Resist him’, says he not by wrestling with flesh and blood in personal combat; but by continuing steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are inflicted in the world upon your brethren’.”²⁰

5:9 reads a little awkwardly in the AV. The NKJV translates the verse, “Resist him, stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” They were not alone. Others were undergoing similar trials. All had to resist the adversary. This is only possible if all remain steadfast (*stereos*) in the faith. Resistance is not characterised by physical power but by having flint-like resolution, by being “firm, solid, compact, hard, rigid ... strong ... immovable” (Thayer) in the definite Christ-like faith.

They, as we can be, were being placed in circumstances, by their enemies, designed to make them deny their faith. In this they would be sharing the sufferings of the brotherhood throughout the world. Peter reuses the Greek word *adelphotees* (see notes 2:17) in order to stress the single brotherhood. They were all in it together. Peter and Paul would be dead within ten years as a result of the tribunal of Nero. The ecclesia in Jerusalem would witness the destruction of the Jewish state by Roman hands. Roman believers would be viciously persecuted by the maniacal Nero. But the solid wall of faith must not be broken, despite the immediate outcomes.

Their sufferings “were being accomplished (*epitaleo*)” (Alford). Note the present continuous tense. Their afflictions are being completed or perfected. In other words there is an intended purpose in them that is yet to be finalised. That purpose will be perfected at Christ’s return (5:10). Their sufferings were not in vain.

5:10-11

In concluding his epistle, Peter presses home his point of the previous verse and indeed the primary emphasis of the whole epistle. There is, as it were, a law of suffering in the life of a disciple. After a disciple has undergone unjust suffering God will restore, establish, strengthen and settle him.

²⁰ THOMAS, *Elpis Israel*, p98

Peter also repeats other thoughts. God is the God of all grace. He has grace sufficient for every occasion and need. He can be counted on to complete their salvation (1:5-6). “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1:2): “the grace that should come unto you” (1:10): “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:13): “heirs together of the grace of life” (3:7): “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (4:10): “God ... giveth grace to the humble” (5:5).

The first proof of God’s grace to Peter’s flock was that God “hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.” What a powerful statement! Firstly, God had called them - an expression found throughout 1Peter (1:15; 2:9,21; 3:9). Secondly, it was a select calling by or “in Christ” (NIV, RV, Marshall, Roth). That is, their calling was within the strict confines of redemption in Christ Jesus. It is only through the work of Christ and their association with it can they, as the expression includes, enter into eternal glory. Nothing else is sufficient. God’s grace is tied up with it. Their calling is tied up with it. And their eternal glory is dependent upon it. Not only is their eternal glory dependent upon Christ’s work, it also relies on the extent to which they are prepared to associate with Christ’s work. Many wish to share his glory. But Christ’s glory was subsequent to his life of dedication and suffering (1:11). Thus to share first in the suffering is as much a part of the calling as it is to ultimately share the glory (1:6-7).

Peter, as a matter of obvious logical sequence, concludes his exhortation and encouragement with “after ye have suffered” It is as if suffering is inevitable in the life of a saint. But it is only for “a while” or “a little while” (JB, NIV, RV). What a contrast! The future glory is eternal. The present suffering is just a little while. The prospective glory should encourage all believers to view suffering in its correct perspective (1:6-7).

Furthermore, suffering is to the present benefit of the saints. Peter uses four words to describe the personal benefits that can be gained from sufferings.

“perfect”

Katartizo - “To render fit, sound, complete ... hence a) to mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair, to complete ... b) to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust ... c) ethically, to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what one ought to be” (Thayer). Simply stated, quoting Brother Carter, “The perfecting of the saints is therefore the fitting or equipping of the saints for service.”²¹

Suffering, if it unjust yet accepted in humility, can add to a person’s character that which is lacking. It can repair, rather than expose, deficiencies. It adds a greatness which the world considers as weakness.

“stablish”

Steerizo - (“strengthen” Luke 22:32 - Is Peter recalling the commission given him by his master?) “To fix, make fast, to set” (Vine), “to make as firm and solid as granite” (Barclay). Suffering should make a saint firm and solid in his convictions. If it doesn’t then he will not

²¹ CARTER, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, p109

suffer as his vacillation and compromise will relieve him of the attention a life of Christ attracts from a persecuting world.

“strengthen”

Sthendoo - (only here in the New Testament) “to make strong” (Thayer), “to fill with strength” (Barclay). Suffering strengthens the saint just as regular training strengthens the athlete. A life without effort and discipline becomes a flabby one. Trials will make a saint strengthened in his conviction and more inclined, if he is faithful, to strengthen himself in God’s word. Nobody really understands how precious his faith, his calling, is until it has been tried in the sufferings of affliction.

“settle”

Themelioo - “to lay the foundation, to found ... metaphorically, to make stable, establish” (Thayer).

Suffering makes us aware of the foundations of our faith. When despair hits us we can either wallow in it or rise above it by considering Jesus Christ and him crucified, and by being propelled into contemplating that we “might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1:7).

What a magnificent verse! By it Peter summarises his first epistle. God Himself is an abundance of grace. He is the One who has called them, and us, unto eternal glory. The sufferings, those brief mortal sufferings of the saints are preparation for that time of eternal glory. By them we can repair our deficiencies, firm our resolve, strengthen our understanding, and ground our faith on sure foundations. Peter’s readers would have no doubt as to what was required of them. Nor should we.

“To him be glory and dominion for ever.” In 4:11 this doxology is ascribed to Christ (see notes 4:11). Now in the conclusion of this epistle it is ascribed to God. All glory, all dominion is derived from God. He has the mastery and the power. It has always been with God and will always be with God.

“Amen” - so let it be. This emphatic endorsement of all that has gone before concludes the main portion of this epistle.

Concluding Greetings

1 Peter 5:12-14

5:12

Peter probably at this point took the pen himself and added his closing postscript. As the Jerusalem Bible translates, “I write these few words to you through Silvanus.” This Silvanus, undoubtedly the Silas who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (ironically after Paul refused to take Mark - see notes 5:13), was the bearer and possibly the scribe of this epistle. He was “the faithful brother” both in the eyes of Peter’s readers and Peter himself. The unfortunate translation, “as I suppose”, is better rendered, “as I consider him” (NKJV) or “as I account him” (Roth) or “as I hold him” (NEB). Peter is not venturing a hesitant expression of opinion, but indicating his firmly established regard for Silvanus’ character and work.

Brother Mansfield summarises Silvanus’ character and work when he writes, “When Barnabas, refusing to capitulate to Paul’s demand that Mark be left home, took his cousin and departed unto Cyprus (Acts 15:39), Paul chose Silas and left for Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:40). Silas, or Silvanus, signifies ‘Woody’. He was a distinguished member and prophet of the Ecclesia in Jerusalem (Acts 15:32), and was chosen as a delegate of that Ecclesia to travel with Paul and Barnabas to report the results of the Jerusalem conference to the Ecclesias affected by it.

“Although Silas was a Jew, he was also probably a Roman citizen (Acts 16:38). He was a congenial, faithful, cheerful companion, as is indicated by the way he joined Paul in singing hymns in the prison at Philippi (Acts 16:23-25). He was with Paul in the midst of the riots of Thessalonica where the Jews made certain false accusations regarding the Truth to the authorities. The authorities knew they could not move against Paul and Silas because of their status as Roman citizens, and therefore took security of Jason and other brethren. Paul realised that if he remained in Thessalonica the authorities would move against those members of the Ecclesia in their power, and therefore left with Silas for Berea. Here, again, agitation on the part of the Jews who came from Thessalonica, forced Paul to leave, though Silas remained with Timothy (Acts 17:1-14). Later, both Silas and Timothy followed Paul to Athens (1Thess 3:1-2) to report on the condition of the Ecclesias to the Apostle. Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica, and Silas possibly to Berea, after which they both again met up with Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5). At Corinth, Silas assisted the Apostle in the work of the Truth (2Cor 1:19). Much later, he joined with Peter, acting as his scribe, or bearer of his epistle (1Pet 5:12).

“Wherever we read of Silas he is active in work, enthusiastic and cheerful in demeanour. As such he greatly helped Paul, as, indeed, all such characters help the Truth in every age.”¹

Peter continues by stating that he has written briefly. In other words the epistle is a condensed version of all that Peter could have written. Obviously Peter places complete

¹ MANSFIELD, *Guide Book to the New Testament*, p139

confidence in Silvanus being able to accurately enlarge, by word of mouth, on any areas that the epistle's readers wished to discuss.

Peter next declares his objective for writing this epistle. The twofold objective of this brief epistle was to exhort (*parakaleo* - see notes on 2:11) and testify (*epimartureo* - only here in the New Testament). He wished to call them aside to instruct and comfort them as well as "to bear witness upon, to testify emphatically" (Bullinger) of the true grace of God. There is no doubt that Peter achieved his objective. His epistle is gentle yet powerful, comforting but not lacking in instruction. And he provides a superabundance of evidence of the grace of God. He stresses God's grace to them as well as the great work and testimony of the Son of God.

Christ's witness to the elect of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia is emphatic, conclusive and indisputable. God's grace is comprehensively interwoven in it.

Finally, to reinforce his message, Peter instructs his readers, "Stand fast in it" (RSV, NIV, Barclay). Not that they were absent or had departed from God's grace. No, they were in the presence of God's grace at this point in time. Peter is imploring them to stay right where they are.

5:13

5:13 is more accurately translated, "She who is in Babylon², elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son" (NKJV). There is no Greek word for "church" to be found in this verse and some believe that "she" is an individual, possibly Peter's wife. However, most commentators agree with the AV interpretation. It was quite intelligible for Peter to use such a metaphor as the ecclesia is represented as a bride in a number of places, including the words of Christ (Mark 2:19) and John the Baptist (John 3:29).

Another factor that lends support to the "she-ecclesia" connection is the term "elected together (*suneklektos*)."² It is not hard to detect *eklektos* within that expression and we may remember the earlier usages of *eklektos* in 1Peter. It is used in 1:2 and 2:9 of the ecclesia, and in 2:4,6 of the Lord Jesus Christ. While it is used elsewhere of specific individuals (e.g. Rom 16:13), *eklektos* is only used in 1Peter of the ecclesia and Christ; the bride and the bridegroom. It seems only fitting that Peter, in stressing the testimony of the whole brotherhood (5:9), as it were the worldwide ecclesia, emphasises the unity of the brotherhood even though Babylon is many hundreds of kilometres from Asia Minor. They shared the same calling - "*suneklektos* with you" - and send greetings to their fellow-brethren in Asia Minor.

Greetings were also sent by Marcus, presumably the Mark who is mentioned in Acts and in some of Paul's epistles. Like Silvanus, he was probably well-known to Peter's readers, and the appellation "my son" would indicate that Peter was primarily instrumental in Mark's spiritual birth and/or development.

² See "INTRODUCTION - Time and Place of Writing" for a detailed discussion on where the "Babylon" of 5:13 is situated.

Mark is one of the most interesting characters of the New Testament and his history can possibly be traced back to the gospel records. By way of digression, Brother Mansfield's summary of the life and character of Mark is reproduced in full in the ensuing paragraphs. "Because of the way in which Mark overcame his very natural shortcomings, he is one of the most encouraging characters of the New Testament. The manner in which he vindicated himself, in spite of the refusal of Paul to tolerate his presence on the second missionary journey, provides an incentive of courage and faith for all who fail in similar manner as he did earlier.

"Mark is not directly mentioned in the Gospel narrative, but there is very strong evidence to suggest that the nameless 'young man' of Mark 14:51 who followed Jesus when he was led away to the high priest, but who fled naked when the soldiers endeavoured to apprehend him, was Mark. Most likely, the last supper was held in the upper room of the house of Mark's mother which was in Jerusalem, and was a meeting-centre for the disciples after the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 12:12). It could have been that when Judas led the band of soldiers to the house, their entrance awakened Mark, who roused from sleep, hastily followed them as they left to seek Jesus, not stopping to dress properly, but merely casting a linen cloth about him.

"Later, the home of Mark's mother became a centre where believers gathered, and the first time Mark is directly mentioned by name is in connection with a remarkable prayer meeting that had been convened in view of Peter's imprisonment. This was held in 'the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark' (Acts 12:12).

"Mark was his Roman name, whilst John was his Hebrew name. The first signifies 'A Large Hammer', the second, 'The Grace of Yah'. Barnabas, the early associate of Paul, was cousin to Mark (Col 4:10 RV). In him Mark had a staunch and gifted friend and counsellor (Acts 11:24).

"Mark's conversion was through the instrumentality of Peter, for the Apostle speaks of him as 'Marcus my son' (1Pet 5:13). He was evidently associated with Peter in the work of the Truth, and this fact shows that the young disciple (as he was when we first met him) rendered valuable public service to three outstanding men: Paul, Peter and Barnabas.

"Mark became an attendant of Paul and Barnabas when they set out on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), and these two great men, so diverse in their characters so united in their desire to serve, must have exercised a formative influence upon the young disciple. But Mark became homesick. He heard of the persecution of the believers in Jerusalem, and perhaps feared for his mother. Or else he became overawed by the driving enthusiasm and determination of Paul. Whatever it was, Mark was guilty of vacillating, and turned back (Acts 13:13).

"Paul had no time for weaklings in such a service. Therefore, on the proposal to undertake a further tour, he refused the plea of Barnabas that Mark should go with them (Acts 15:38). So sharp was the contention that the two friends divided their activities, never again to associate together as they had previously.

"Under the guidance of Barnabas, however, Mark won his way back into apostolic esteem, and ultimately became a valued colleague of Paul (Col 4:10-11; Phile :24). Among the final

words recorded by Paul in Scripture is an unstinting testimony to Mark's help in the preaching of the Gospel (2Tim 4:11).

“As the ministry of Mark was peculiarly a Gentile one, he is recognised by his Gentile name. Writing specifically for Romans, who stood for power, Mark presented the life of Christ from the standpoint of service. It is suggested that he was greatly influenced by Peter in the writing of his Gospel, and if that be so (as seems likely), we have in Mark the Gospel according to Peter; and in Luke the Gospel according to Paul.

“The life of Mark shows the value of a Godly mother, Godly associates, and Godly faith and courage. Even though he did wrong in leaving Barnabas and Paul, the influences that moulded his character, moved him to rehabilitate himself and so vindicate himself. ‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith’.

“We do not read of Mark expounding the Word, or performing a miracle, but always as ministering to others. In this he beckons all young believers to give themselves to humble, dedicated service, realising that such will never fail to ultimately receive its reward.”³

5:14

In 5:12 Peter sends his final greetings; his reason for writing the epistle and an expression of encouragement. In 5:13 the greetings of others, the ecclesia at Babylon and the well-known disciple Mark, are expressed. In 5:14 Peter concludes the whole epistle by reminding his readers how they should greet each other.

They should “Greet (same Greek word as “saluteth” in 5:13) one another with a kiss of love” (NKJV). The kiss was a customary greeting of both Jewish and early ecclesial society. It was a greeting of welcome and respect. Peter's message is simple and twofold: continue with this custom, but, ensure it is a kiss of *agape*.

In stating this, Peter is drawing on two powerful incidents in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both incidents directly impacted on Peter. Firstly, Jesus castigated Simon the Pharisee for failing to give a kiss - “Thou gavest me no kiss” (Luke 7:45). Simon's love was significantly less than that of the woman whose sins were many - “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved much” (Luke 7:47 NIV). Such strong words would not have been forgotten by the impressionable Peter. Nor did he forget the night when he witnessed the kiss of Judas. Not a kiss of love; a kiss of deception (Mark 14:44-45).

But what does this mean to us? We must be constant and genuine in our love towards each other. An outward show, without a genuine feeling whereby we are willing to sacrifice and give for the spiritual enhancement of others, is almost as hypocritical as the kiss of Judas. No, ecclesial activity must be characterised by sincere *agape* love (see notes on 1:8,22; 4:8). If it is then the brotherhood is at peace or in harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ and his Father.

“Peace be with you all in Christ Jesus.” Peter commenced his epistle with peace (1:2), he concludes with peace. To be at peace is to be in harmony or at one. And that harmony

³ MANSFIELD, *Guide Book to the New Testament*, p33-34

should be a unity with the risen Lord, who constantly greeted his, at times, frightened disciples with “Peace” (Luke 24:36; John 20:19,21,26). He was raised up from the dead and given glory that our faith and hope might be in God. For we were as sheep going astray but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Amen.

APPENDICES

Living Stone and Dead Men (1Peter 2:5)

Thoughts of a Stone - Carver

The hand that wrote the words that follow has long since ceased to wield the hammer and chisel of his craft. He was a workman who had no need to be ashamed of his work upon the stones he loved and so skilfully fashioned, stones which still form part of one the noblest shrines of Britain - the great cathedral at Lincoln. He found "sermons in stones" as this essay shows, and he worked these things into the fabric of his own life. His fellows looked upon him as "a dreamer of dreams", but these dreams were not airy nothings to vanish "leaving not a wrack behind." The great pile upon which he worked during his lifetime will pass away, but God's word will not pass away.

Our brother who worked in stone had no doubts of the building of the great temple seen by Ezekiel, and the writer of these words of preface has heard him say that he would be content to be a stone-carver in that great day and receive his inspiration for the work as Aholiab and Bezalel did for their work on the tabernacle.

C A Ladson

"Lively Stones" (1Peter 2:5)

The subject of "lively stones" is a most interesting one if we answer to the description of those "scattered strangers" to whom Peter wrote, who were also "elect" and desirous of "the sincere milk of the Word." That being so, perhaps a few thoughts on the subject from one whose craft brings him in contact with the natural article every day will prove beneficial. Let us then follow the subject from the quarry to the building, and applying it as a symbol obtain the full meaning intended.

The plan of the future building has been already formed in the architect's mind. The general character and feature of the work is there, although some of the minor details may be left to be worked out when they are arrived at. The quarry or quarries have been selected and the master-builder or his deputy orders what stones are required. The quarry as a rule is situated on a mountain side, and the stones are detached by blasting, or wedges are driven into prepared grooves by sledge hammers and the stone is forced out. Having been "scabbled" or rough dressed into shape it is placed upon the "banker" or stone bench ready for the work to be put upon it by the mason in preparing it for its place in the building. We will leave it there for a short time while we look at the application.

The architect is God. The plan and character of the future building have already been evolved in His mind. He has made it known in His Book. Worked to a scale, everything is

proportionate. The order for the stones has gone forth, their qualities and character are readily determined. They are easily discerned from the following testimonies.

The order:- “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:16). “The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come’” (Rev 22:17). “To take out from among the gentiles a people for his Name” (Acts 15:14).

Their character:- “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2). “In every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35).

The quarry is situated in whatever part of the mountain of humanity there is a brother or an ecclesia proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom and calling men and women to become fellow heirs, with Christ and his brethren, of the promises of God and therefore a constituent part of what the apostle calls “God’s building” (1Cor 3:9). As in the natural so in the spiritual: the harder the stone, the more power will be needed to dislodge it from its surroundings. In the case of particular stones a powerful blast is required, an example of which we have in the Apostle Paul, who was struck blind with the power which removed him from the quarry to the bench, from the persecutor to the persecuted. “He who persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed” (Gal 1:23). In other cases it is the slower, quieter, but none the less powerful influence of the spoken Word which instils itself in a person’s mind and gradually forces him out of touch with his present native surroundings. This is illustrated by the proverb “A word spoken in season, how good it is”, being in fact, “Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

The chief corner stone is altogether different in the quarrying from any of the others, though the labour placed upon it afterwards is the same. “It is cut out of the mountain without hands” (Dan 2:45). “Being born of the seed of David according to the flesh”, but by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon his mother Mary (Luke 1:35). Thus he was constituted “Son of God” being loved by his Father “before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

It is noticeable at this point that the stone having been detached from the mountain-side does not form part of it. It is in the quarry but separated from it. Thus it illustrates the words of Christ: “In the world but not of it” (John 17:14). Upon us there is a work to be performed, a process which shall add beauty to the finished stone, a work which would be altogether wasted if an attempt were made to do the same with the ponderous inert mass lying in the quarry. It is a distinction to be noticed, else we may wonder how it is that we are receiving cuts and blows and being turned about, while the great mass lies silent and still as if content with its lot. The one is being prepared for a place in the building where it will be an object of beauty, to be admired by all by and by; the other will be presently a place to tip rubbish when all the stones necessary for the work have been removed.

We might lay it down as a cardinal point that no stone just quarried and being only rough dressed is fit for a prominent place in the building. It does sometimes happen that one or two will be wanted, but never for a front position or a prominent place. This touches an important point. There are some who seem to think that having been “quarried”, i.e. come out and been baptised, that is all-sufficient. If that were so the symbol would simply be inapplicable. They have only been “rough dressed”, only prepared for the intricate work which shall be wrought

upon them. In other words, they have just commenced to “work” out their own salvation “with trembling and fear.” Without the subsequent labour involved they would have no beauty, but would remain a rough, shapeless mass, having the merest outline of that which it was intended they should be. It helps us to realise the force of the apostle’s description of “a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth” (2Tim 2:15). This brings us to the work the stone receives while on the “banker”, which we proceed to consider.

Besides the hammer, mallet, and chisels, which are used for dressing off the superfluous stone, there will be required a square, a straight-edge and the moulds showing the exact shape which the stone must be when finished, and without which it would not be possible to work it to the required shape. Great care is exercised by the workman to see that the stone is worked true, quite square, and without any twist or warp. Look at the method. Take, for example, an intricately moulded stone forming part of a doorway in a large building. The requisite dimensions, with the moulds or patterns and the general instructions, have been given to the mason. The bed - the surface on which the stone will lie in the building and which is the same as it lay on in the quarry - is first dressed off to a smooth, plane surface; then the face - that which faces you - is smoothed off exactly square to the bed. Then the joints are worked, taking care to keep them square to the face and bed. After that to the other bed, which must be quite parallel to the first one. The moulds are then “scribed” on and the superfluous stone is dressed off to a smooth, fine surface. Great care is taken that the corners are not knocked off, and that the “arris”, a term applied to the edge formed by the meeting of two plane surface, is not chipped or bruised in any way. The quality of workmanship will be shown in the way the work is finished, and the better the craftsman the more highly will the work be got up. Thus the character of the man is exhibited in his work.

Now look at the “living stones” whose type we have been considering.

We have seen them quarried and they stand waiting to be worked. There is a lot of unnecessary material upon them. It must be removed. Its removal will involve hard work, hard labour, and many hard blows. But we do not mind. Every blow has a purpose, every one an effect, and with patience the work will assume the required shape. When we look at our characters it is not difficult to find the superfluous which must be removed - pride, vainglory, boasting, covetousness, etc.; and the removal of these will leave the others standing out in projection and clearly defined - truth, righteousness, meekness, mercy and faith. True it will require much hammering, but what of it? Look at the characters already formed. Behold the Apostle Paul, who was the “offscouring of all things” (1Cor 4:13). Where was his pride who “counted all things but loss that he might win Christ?” Where was his covetousness who, though one of the chief apostles, “was not meet to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God?” (1Cor 15:9). Where was his vainglory? Look at Peter, who in the hour of trial denied his Master and repenting with tears of bitterness, wept over the event which formed the grave of his pride and boasting.

David too, hunted for his life and enduring privation and suffering, commits his way to Him who guides all things well. He endures the hammering, it is preparing him for a kingdom - a kingdom of that age as well as the one to come, so that he could say “It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa 119:71).

Study of the lives of these men will reveal the constant application of the rule while the hammering process is going on. Paul recognises this when, writing to the Galatians, he says

“As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). Above all there is no “twist” about them. All is in perfect harmony and quite true.

One word about the edges and corners. It is a grave mistake for brethren to say “we want the corners rubbing off.” We do not. In yards where good workmanship is found, if a man knocked a corner off he would be discharged. Quite right. Why should the stone be marred? Why should the edge be chipped? Follow that plan out and in a short time we have a piece of work that might be anything from a boulder to a cobblestone. In which case the apostle would have said “lively boulders” or “lively cobbles” and not “lively stones”, thereby implying workmanship and that of the best. Clearly defined is what the work must be, with the line of demarcation distinctly shown. Was it not so in the characters of the men we have been considering? Is there any doubt as to whether Paul followed Christ or the world? Does Peter ever appear hazy about the resurrection of Christ? Does David seem lukewarm in the service of God? There is only one answer. We are not in doubt as to the character of these men. Their opponents understood them; so do we. Here is the lesson: Edges sharp, corners sharp, mould well cut, angles clear. Then we shall be like Corinthian brethren who were “apostles known and read of all men” (2Cor 3:2).

The stones must next be transferred to their place in the building, where they are placed in the position for which they have been prepared. They are fixed with cement which acts for two purposes: It binds the stones together and it acts much the same as a cushion, evenly spreading the weight of the stones and superstructure above over the whole surface. In looking for the meaning we do not need to go far. Love is well typified by the cementing material. A careful study of 1Corinthians 13 will easily convince on that point. It is one the most important things in connection with the erection of the fabric, absolutely necessary. John’s statement will bear quoting here: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.” “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him” (1John 4:7,16). Its working is seen more particularly in the direction indicated by the Psalmist: “Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them” (Psa 119:165).

It is shown in existence before the stones are laid in the cementing material which binds the particles of sand together to form the stone. “Herein was the love of God manifest that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). It is shewn while the building is in course of erection in the “loving of one another” and “bearing one another’s burdens.” It is still there when the building is complete, when the redeemed sing and shout, for “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4).

But where does the symbol exhibit the counterpart of the unfaithful? Certainly not in the scaffolding, as some would have us suppose. It is true that the scaffold rises with the building and rests on it, but no one with the slightest knowledge of building operations would mistake the scaffold for a part of the permanent structure. Putlogs are let into the walls to carry the planks on which the builder works, but the veriest tyro would not suppose the putlog to be a part of the building. Yet the symbol has a place for the unfaithful in more ways than one.

When the stone leaves the quarry it may appear sound and free from all defects, but the working will prove that. After working at it for some time the mason finds a clay-hole or a

vent, or a flaw, and the stone is quite spoilt. No one knew of it, and the stone appeared to be quite sound, but as soon as it was worked then the flaw appeared. It is condemned and thrown away. No one needs the architect to condemn it. We all know, it is so self-evident. Or again, during the erection of the building there is a pillar or part of a wall built up for the purpose of getting the rest of the work true; when that is accomplished it will be taken down again. A case in point is a pediment. It is wide at the base and terminates in a point. How is it to be plumbed?

Like this: A pillar is built at each end, properly coursed, and the line is stretched through and the body of the wall built, gradually diminishing until it reaches the apex. What is the pillar called? A "dead man." A significant name truly. It is a dead man in a live, growing building, being built up with it and forming part of it, but when the fabric is complete it will be taken down and carted from the site. Only the builder knows of it, although it may become more apparent as the building nears completion, but I call to mind a case where a clerk of the works was deceived by seeing a "dead man." He knew it was not on the plan and formed no part of the elevation, and demanded in no uncertain terms what it was. "A dead man, sir!" That was sufficient, he knew then. Here is a real danger. For stones to be in the building, to be used for the purpose of getting the rest of the work true and to be there till completion, all taken together might seem to indicate that here was a part of the plan and design and that it was right and satisfactory. Yet how different the matter really is.

In applying this part of the symbol we see in the first instance the antitype of the flaw, vent and clay-hole, in those who have obeyed the Truth and running faithfully for awhile afterwards fall away. The Demas class, who love this present evil world. "Those who have trodden underfoot the son of God and put him to an open shame." Several such cases will undoubtedly be recalled with sorrow by brethren of experience. In each of these cases there will appear a flaw in the character which will correspond to the flaw, vent, clay-hole found in the stone, utterly spoiling it for the purpose of adorning the building. But it will be patent to all that such is the case, and it will not need the Divine sentence to make manifest their true position.

Of the other class it may be remarked that they are not so easily discerned as "dead men" and in fact will not be made manifest until the completion of the building - the judgment seat. They are those of the Sardis type, "thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead" (Rev 3:1). They have been prominent members of the ecclesia; speaking, lecturing, exhorting, keeping the growing building in line with the word of God; applying the rule here and the square there. But themselves have not been mindful of the example of Paul who kept his body under, lest "when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway" (1Cor 9:27). The idea of a pillar being erected with the building and afterwards being removed is implied in the message to the church in Philadelphia. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Rev 3:12). Those who do not overcome will be the pillars who will go out when they have fulfilled their purpose and the rest of the building is true and in order.

But it may be asked, what is symbolised by the scaffold? To which I would reply, whatever assists the building in its growth, from the foundation to the topstone. Following that idea to its limits we see "the earth helping the woman" (Rev 12:16) exemplified in the history of the Donatists, the Waldenses, and Albigenses; and indeed, in our own case we may say that not our labours, but the sufferings and persecutions of others, who were sometimes far removed

from the Truth, have given us that liberty of conscience and action which we at present enjoy. Turning from the material side to the intellectual we find a whole list of names of men whose labours have assisted brethren “rightly to divide the word of Truth.” King James’ translators, the Revisers, Cruden, Kitto, Calmet, Newton, Paley, Adam Clark, Young, and many others whose names will readily occur to the reader, are men who though often a long way from the Truth in some particulars yet in others have supplied a great necessity, and so have played their part in the purpose of God by the assistance rendered in the erection of a building to His honour and glory.

By way of conclusion and in order to summarise the various ideas put forth in this article there is appended a brief specification, which is as follows:-

SPECIFICATION

The stones to be selected (1Pet 2:9) from the quarry known as the mountain of humanity (Acts 10:35), free from quarry sap (Col 3:7,8), of great durability (Matt 10:22), and good weathering properties (Eph 4:14). The workmanship to be of the best (1Cor 3:13-15) and free from blemish (Eph 5:27). The stones to be well and truly laid (Eph 2:20) with the best cement (Col 2:2,19), according to the instructions of the supervisor (Luke 10:16) under the architect (2Cor 5:18).

Frank T. Grimes

Meditations - No. 35 (1Peter 2:13)

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake”

In order that it may succeed in the struggle to preserve freedom it has been necessary for the State to deprive its subjects, temporarily at least, of all claims to personal liberty. By the recently passed “Emergency Powers (Defence) Act” the Government has secured far reaching powers by which persons may be required “to place themselves, their services and their property at the disposal of His Majesty.” Even existing legislation may be repealed or modified if in the eyes of the Government such a course is necessary. Probably never since representative Government became a reality has the State sought, and secured, such drastic control over the lives, services and possessions of its subjects.

It is true that up to date these powers have only been applied in one or two directions and have not yet had any great effect on individual life and conduct. But indications are not lacking that the range of their application will soon be extended, and it is possible in view of the rapid developments in France and elsewhere, that each one of us may find that they have become a very real factor in our lives. We may discover, for example, that we have no longer any freedom of choice as to the occupation we shall follow; we may be compelled to change our place of abode in the national interests; we may be compulsorily evacuated, or be compelled to billet soldiers or evacuees; our savings or our property may be taken to assist in the financing of the present colossal struggle. In short, we must realise that the State has now complete power over our persons, services and property, and that those powers will be increasingly exercised in the future.

It is important for us to consider the situation arising from these circumstances and the attitude we should adopt thereto as the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the teaching of Christ and his Apostles concerning the demands of the State on the believer? Do they command us to resist or submit to these demands? Their teaching alone must determine our attitude: all other considerations must be subordinated in reaching a decision on this grave issue.

Christ and his Apostles have very direct teaching on this question. Our Lord’s well known and oft-quoted words, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things which are God’s”, make it evident that both Caesar and God have demands upon the servant of Christ which must be faithfully discharged. This declaration of the Master arose on the specific question of the payment of “tribute” (i.e., taxes), to the State; we should be grateful that we have received a clear ruling on this otherwise difficult problem, and that so far as His followers are concerned the matter is finally settled. But the demands of Caesar are not limited to the payment of taxes, and we shall find him insistent in his requirements in other directions. Does Christ give us further help to the solution of this problem?

In his “sermon on the mount” our Lord deals with the question of service compulsorily demanded. In the section devoted to non-resistance of evil he says, “Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matt 5:41). This doubtless has reference to the system of the Roman Government, in operation at that time, of impressing men for service as couriers, or requiring them to provide animals for the purpose of transport and to accompany them on their journeys. Should such compulsory service be resisted by the disciple of Christ? Christ’s declaration is clear: “Do all that is demanded of you - and more!”

When we turn to the epistles of the great Apostles of Christ - Peter and Paul - we find the teaching of Christ on this question reiterated and elaborated. Peter, writing in circumstances in some respects resembling our own to-day, says: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (1Pet 2:13). Here the necessity for submission is not only laid down but the motive compelling such submission is clearly defined: “For the Lord’s sake.” Christ requires his followers to submit, as we have seen: therefore they must obey, for his sake. Peter concludes his admonition on this matter of submission with these words: “For so is the will of God that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” We do well to ponder these weighty words; they may enable us to act wisely in coming days of difficulty, and “stop the mouths” of some who would condemn our attitude towards the State.

Paul’s teaching on this matter is equally illuminating and emphatic. Writing to the Ecclesia in Rome, the centre of Imperial Government at that time, he says: “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 resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God ... Wherefore ye must needs be subject ... for conscience sake” (Rom 13:1-5). Here again submission is enjoined upon the believer and resistance condemned: and the reasons for this attitude are clearly evident - the recognition that God’s hand over-rules in the kingdom of men, and that our submission is therefore not due to cowardice or to fear of consequences, but is for conscience sake.

The same admonition is contained in Paul’s letter to Titus (3:1), where the believers are reminded to be “subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.”

There is thus a clear and consistent teaching by Christ and his apostles on the question of our attitude to the decrees and the demands of the State. We are to render to Caesar the things which belong to him; we are to submit to his ordinances “for the Lord’s sake”; we are to be subject to the higher powers “for conscience sake.” It is worth while to remember in this connection that the Caesars who ruled when this teaching was promulgated were Tiberius, Claudius and Nero!

But it may be urged, “Does this mean that in no circumstances shall the demands of Caesar be refused? Must the powers that be always be obeyed?” There have been those who have so affirmed, and to-day we hear this point of view advanced by some who seek to challenge on religious grounds our refusal to undertake military service. A closer examination of the teaching and conduct of Christ and his Apostles soon answers the question. Peter’s admonition, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake”, might appear at first sight to admit of no possible exception: yet we find Peter himself furnishing a most striking exception thereto. When the rulers in Jerusalem commanded Peter and the other apostles that they should not teach in the name of Jesus, did he obey? Listen to his answer:

“We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). And on another occasion when commanded not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, Peter answered: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.”

Was there inconsistency, then, between the teaching of Peter and his conduct on this question? Surely not. The principle is clear. “We ought to obey God rather than men.” That is the over-riding consideration if the ordinances of God and the ordinances of man are in conflict. But where there is no such conflict, or in the absence of express command of God in the matter, we are required as disciples of Christ to submit to human ordinances. It will assist us greatly in deciding the issue if we keep in mind Peter’s reason for our submission - “for the Lord’s sake.” We cannot submit to any ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake if that ordinance is fundamentally opposed to the Lord’s teaching. That is our answer to those who would urge us to respond to the call for military service by quoting Peter’s words to us. It is “for the Lord’s sake” that we respond.

Up to the present our experience as a Body in relation to the specific demands of the State has been rather on the side of resisting those demands than on the side of obeying them. That is because the most conspicuous demand of the State made upon us has been in relation to military service, and the history of the Brotherhood has shown a determined and consistent refusal extending over three-quarters of a century to undertake that form of service. But we must be very much on our guard lest we allow that experience to blind us to the necessity of recognising that there are other demands of the State which are not inconsistent with Divine commands: that “submission” to human ordinances is required of us as a Christian duty in certain circumstances, just as emphatically as “resistance” to human ordinances is necessary in other circumstances. It would appear that the time has come for our experience in this matter to be enlarged, and that the recent powers secured by the Government will provide ample opportunity for us to carry out that submission to Caesar enjoined by Christ and his Apostles.

There is no inconsistency in submitting to some of the demands of Caesar, and in refusing to submit to others he may make. If we keep in mind Peter’s teaching on the matter we have the guiding principles relating thereto clearly summarised for us. We must guard against taking the false and narrow view that because we have refused to submit in the matter of military service our duty is to refuse to submit in all other cases. Such an attitude leaves no place for the application of those commandments to which we have referred earlier in this article.

We doubtless find that many of the demands of the State will be irritating and inconvenient to the natural man, and there will be an immediate impulse to protest, to grumble, and even to resist. It is essential that we should keep a vigilant watch upon this natural reaction to govern our actions. Conscience and convenience belong to very different categories in life, and we must not allow the latter to usurp the place of the former.

There is no doubt that the future holds difficult and anxious times for us, and that we shall need all the direction, encouragement and help possible. We have the assurance of Divine strength and guidance upon which we may implicitly rely. It is necessary that we should play our part too. The Brotherhood has shown in the past, and is showing at present, that it can resist the demands of Caesar when these are contrary to the commandments of our Lord. It may be that we are now called upon to submit and serve, equally for the conscience sake. Our readiness to do so was clearly stated to the Government during the last war, and has been

again indicated in a letter to the late Premier. Our declaration to the State in 1916 is worth quoting to-day: "Taking the Bible alone for our Guide, we will serve to the utmost of our power for conscience sake, as we can, if need be, resist unto death from the same motive."

The days which lie ahead may demand the fulfilment of that pledge. God and the State may become the two dominant forces in our lives; and our greatest problem may be that of carrying out satisfactorily the command of Jesus: "RENDER THEREFORE UNTO CAESAR THAT THINGS THAT ARE CAESAR'S; AND TO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S."

F W Turner

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN SHIELD

Pages 22-25

“The Spirits In Prison” (1Peter 3:19)

The passage is wrested in the attempt to prove the conscious existence of the dead as “disembodied spirits”, the doctrine of purgatory, or “the larger hope”, and the descent of Christ into “hell” in the interval between his burial and resurrection. Let us consider Peter’s words in the light of the Scriptures; and first as to

Spirits.

This word never signifies disembodied persons in the Scriptures. It is applied to the angels: “Who maketh his angels spirits” (Heb 1:7); “ministering spirits” (Heb 1:14). But the angels are bodily beings possessed of the divine nature. And Christ promises that the redeemed shall be like them (Luke 20:36). Jacob wrestled with one (Gen 32:24); and others ate and drank with Abraham (Gen 18:8). But the “spirits” of Peter’s allusion were not angels, nor even good men, but “disobedient.” Concerning such John said: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world ... every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: (1John 4:1-3). These were “seducing spirits” (1Tim 4:1), but by no means disembodied. Neither were those to whom Peter alludes in this place. Consider further the

Prison.

This is not the so-called “placed of departed spirits”, “purgatory”, or the hades of rabbinical and anti-Christian superstition, but simply “the grave”, whether watery or earthy. This is the real meaning of hades as used in the Scriptures, and as a matter of fact, the word is very properly translated “grave” in 1Corinthians 15:55: “O Grave, where is thy victory?” As to the “prison”, the spirit of God in Isaiah speaks beforehand of the Christ, saying: “I, the Lord have called thee in righteousness ... to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Isa 42:6,7). See also Isaiah 49:8,9: and especially chapter 61:1, which the Lord Jesus quoted as concerning himself in the synagogue at Nazareth: “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Again, in Zechariah 9 a passage also appropriated by Christ, the word of God by the prophet says of him: “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech 9:11). That is the grave, whence obedient believers are liberated by Christ who is “the resurrection and the life”, and who says: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (*Hades*, the grave) and of death.” He was himself let out of this “prison” by God, who raised him up and “loosed the pains of death” (Acts 2:24); like Jonah, who was let go “out of the belly of hell” (Jonah 2:2), that is, out of his living grave, and became the “sign” of the resurrection of Messiah. The Psalmist also prays: “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name” (Psa 142:7). See also Psalm 16, David’s prophecy of the resurrection of Christ, whose body, though entombed, was not suffered to see corruption.

The Spirit of Christ in the Preacher.

It will be observed that Peter does not say that Christ himself went and preached to the during the time that he was buried, but that “by the spirit ... he went and preached unto the ... disobedient ... in the days of Noah.” This was ages before Christ was born, and Peter’s words are only intelligible upon the basis of a right understanding of his doctrine concerning “the spirit of Christ” in the prophets (1Pet 1:11). Foreseeing the end from the beginning, God, by His spirit, made the prophets speak as though they were Christ, thus: “Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me” (Isa 8:18, compared with Heb 2:13). “A body hast thou prepared me” (Psa 40:6, with Heb 10:5). “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; my flesh shall rest in hope” (Psa 16:9,10, with Acts 2:27-31). Literally, there was no “flesh” and “body” of Christ in existence when these things were spoken, yet “the spirit of Christ” thus spoke, for God “calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Rom 4:17). It is therefore not strange that Peter should say that by the spirit Christ preached in the days of Noah, especially as he had before him the divine word in Genesis 6:3, which thus alludes to the crisis: “The LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” Noah was the “preacher of righteousness” (2Pet 2:5); “by faith ... by which he condemned the world” (Heb 11:7).

The Death State.

“The spirits in prison”, were not living when Peter spoke, but dead. He further alludes to such in 4:6, “Them that are dead”, although the allusion here is to the righteous dead and not to the “disobedient” dead. But both alike are “spirits in prison”, and in that “prison” “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom” (Ecc 9:10), for “the dead know not anything” (Ecc 9:5). “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psa 146:4). “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence” (Psa 115:17). “They that go down into the pit (the prison, the grave) cannot hope for thy truth” (Isa 38:18,19). They are in “the dark ... the land of forgetfulness” (Psa 88:10-12). Christ never preached to such. The spirit of Christ in the prophets preached to men in the flesh contemporary with the prophets; and Jesus preached to living men and women in his day. It is to be remarked here that Peter does not say that Jesus preached to the disobedient spirits of Noah’s day, and especially when he was dead and buried, and his “thoughts perished”! It is only false doctrine that has invented such an unscriptural conception.

Christ and Peter on the Days of Noah and of Christ’s Second Appearing.

Peter follows Christ in the beautiful passing comparison of the passage under consideration. Christ compared his preaching with that of Noah.

Noah Preached.

“Disobedient spirits” spoke evil of him, judging after the flesh. They were drowned - imprisoned in a watery grave. Noah was saved in the ark - by water. The Lord shut him in.

Christ Preached.

Disobedient “spirits” (Matt 12:43-45) spoke evil of him. He was evilly intreated and “put to death in the flesh.” He said, “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son

of Man be” (Matt 24:37). The generation that rejected and crucified him was judged like Noah’s contemporaries (read 2Pet 3). In prophetic language, “the end therefore was with a flood” (Dan 9:26). Meanwhile Christ was saved from “the floods of the ungodly” (Psa 18:4; 32:6) like Noah in the ark. In baptism and sacrifice he “came by water and blood ... And it is the spirit that beareth witness” (1John 5:6).

Peter And The Brethren Preached.

They, like Christ and Noah, “suffered for righteousness sake.” Disobedient “spirits” (1John 4:1-3) spoke evil of them. They looked for “the end of all things” (1Pet 4:7) when Christ shall “judge the quick and the dead” (1Pet 4:5). They hoped to be saved then in God’s ark - that is, Christ, into whom they had been introduced “by water”, and the Lord had shut them in, For “as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). Therefore, just as Noah and his family were “saved by water”, so, says Peter, “baptism doth also now save us.” “Few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” in Noah’s day! The rest of “the world of the ungodly” became “spirits in prison.” This is the substance of the analogy briefly traced by Peter in this place, and the lesson to us is obvious. Shall we be found “in Christ” when he is revealed from heaven “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel”? (2Thess 1:7).

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