

**GOD'S MESSAGES
BIBLE
COMMENTARY
SERIES**

VOLUME 9

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.
(Nehemiah 8:8).

**COMMENTARY
ON THE BOOKS
OF
JAMES, I & II PETER,
I, II, & III JOHN
and JUDE**

BY
LEON D. STANCLIFF

B.A. ~ Speech
M.A. ~ Bible, Physical Science
Ed.S. ~ Education

Murfreesboro, Tenn.

2000

2000
Printed in the United States of America

A Product Of
Sain Publications
P. O. Box 616 • Paducah, TN 38478
931 ~ 363-6905

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Dedication

This volume of the Bible Messages Commentaries
is dedicated
To:

Brother and Sister Harvey W. Clark
who made innumerable contributions
both to the Kingwood Heights Church of Christ
and the East Main Church of Christ,
where he served as an elder.

Brother Harvey Clark was the Director
of the Murfreesboro School of Bible & Preaching
for a period of seventeen years.
Under his leadership I was privileged to
teach many dedicated younger preachers.

The preparation of those lectures
caused me to gain added understanding
of the Holy Scriptures
and encouraged me to begin organizing
these commentary notes.

Only the God of heav en knows
the full contribution of this man
to his brethren and His Lord.

Sister Gladys Clark stood faithfully at his side
giving tremendous help, and getting little glory.

~ Leon Stancliff

Introduction

The Author:

Verse one of this epistle tells us it was penned by a person known as James. There are three prominent “James” mentioned in the New Testament. We have James the son of Zebedee. We have James the son of Alpheus, sometimes called “James the Less”, and who was one of the twelve apostles. Then we have the James whom Paul called “the brother of the Lord.”

The writer could not be James the son of Zebedee. He was executed by Herod before this letter was written. Most conservative students of the New Testament believe the James who wrote this epistle was the brother of Jesus Christ; that is the son of Mary. James prominence in the first century church can be seen in the record of the Jerusalem conference found in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. There James and Peter were in the forefront of the discussion as to the responsibilities of the Gentiles who had become Christians.

The Nature of the Book:

The contrast between the book of James and the books of Romans and Galatians, written by Paul, is very sharp. In Romans and Galatians Paul presented highly logical arguments showing the need for, and the structure of the plan of salvation. The book of James is almost completely given to the practical

application of Christianity.

Paul had explained that we are saved by faith, and not by works, lest any man should boast. James would agree. However, he would point out that a faith which does not produce fruit is a dead faith which saves no one.

To Whom Addressed?

This book is one of seven which are called “General” epistles. These letters were written to the churches in general, rather than to particular churches or individuals. The “twelve tribes of the dispersion” would be Jewish Christians who had been scattered abroad among the various nations. We can note here the difference between James concern for the Jewish Christians and Paul’s emphasis upon the Gentiles.

Date of Writing:

The book was very likely written late in the life of James, after the converted Jews had time to move out from Jerusalem and Judea to Syria, Asia Minor and Europe.



**The Book Of
James**

Chapter 1

JAM 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

If the James who wrote this letter was the brother of Jesus Christ, why did he not identify himself as such in this verse? I think there is good reason. It was not his fleshly relationship with the Lord which was of the greatest importance. It was the fact that he was his servant. Most brothers in our time will recognize the uniqueness of this arrangement. My own brothers in the flesh would not relish being referred to as my servants. There was a time in the life of Christ that his brethren thought he was mentally off balance. However, we find that by the time of the gathering in the upper room, recorded in the first chapter of Acts, the brethren of the Lord were present and recognized his divinity.

As mentioned in the introduction, the twelve tribes scattered abroad appear to be the Jewish Christians from the twelve tribes. These Christians had been forced to leave Jerusalem because of the terrible persecution visited upon them by unbelieving Jews. They were very much in need of just the type of comfort and instruction provided by this letter. There is a very faint possibility the twelve tribes here are to be identified with the twelve tribes discussed in the seventh chapter of Revelation. I believe, however, that the twelve tribes of Revelation are the citizens of spiritual Israel who remain alive on earth after the vast multitude of their brethren

have passed on into eternity. This would include the church on earth as a whole, rather than only the Jewish portion of it.

JAM 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Is it really a joy when one is tempted? At the time, it hardly seems appropriate to describe it as a pleasant experience. But, James will go on to explain why he speaks of it in that manner.

What a vast array of temptations rise up to challenge the faith of the Christian! All of them fall into two main classes. There are the temptations growing out of lust, and the temptations growing out of pride. These have been the Devil's tools from the beginning. He uses them very skillfully. We have to look carefully to see why James would picture meeting temptation as a positive experience.

JAM 1:3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

God desires a tried faith. The time will come when the faithful saints will be glorified and will be living together in heaven. Have you ever wondered if those in heaven could rise up in rebellion against God and be driven out from his presence again? I am convinced the answer to that question lies in the fact that every glorified saint will have had his faith tested thoroughly during life on earth. Those in heaven will have already demonstrated their

willingness to love and obey their heavenly Father. In addition, the Devil will have been subdued and cast into the lake of fire. He will have no access to them after the judgment.

James sees a series of steps toward maturation of the Christian. This all begins with the trying of our faith. Such trials develop patience, which is certainly one of the fruits of the Spirit of God.

JAM 1:4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

The word “perfect” is used twice in this one verse. We need to examine the term carefully. It carries a little different meaning than that to which we are accustomed. The first occurrence of the term in this verse is **teveleon**. The second is **teveleioi**. Both of these are forms of the Greek word meaning “complete”, “perfect” or “mature.”

To a certain extent, the verse explains itself. The perfect work of patience is to bring about such a condition in the Christian such that nothing is lacking in his holy character. Such a Christian will be constantly moving from glory to glory as he grows toward the image of God provided by Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated such patience. Every disciple should rejoice in following his footsteps.

JAM 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

It will, of course, require a supply of wisdom to make the proper choices when our faith is being tried. It is altogether too easy for a man to believe he is making the proper choices when he is not. I point you to the case of Saul of Tarsus, who acted in all good conscience, even while persecuting the followers of Christ unto death.

But God will supply that needed wisdom if we earnestly seek for it. Any man who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be heard and will be guided in that direction. I once heard a very strong sermon presented by a preacher who used John 9:31 in an attempt to prove God does not hear the prayer of an alien sinner. I took issue with him after the sermon and a friendly debate followed. During the debate I used this verse. I also used two cases from the New Testament to show God hears any man who is seeking wisdom.

The first case was that of Saul. This man was actually fighting against Christ with all his might. But God knew Saul was doing his best to find the truth and follow it. Because of that, he sent Ananias to tell him what to do to be saved. The second case was that of Cornelius. Cornelius also was a devout man, spending much time in prayer. God informed him that he had **heard** his prayers. Peter was then sent to present the truth Cornelius longed for.

The sinner of John 9:31 is the man or woman who rejects the knowledge of God. It is the one who does not desire the truth. God will not give wisdom to that man because he had already proven he would abuse wisdom when it was provided. My friend, if

you will honestly seek the Lord, he will show you the way.

JAM 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

That request for wisdom must not be hypocritical. It must be made in trusting confidence that it will be provided. If the response does not immediately appear in the form one expects, the seeker must not conclude God does not care. Very often we judge matters from our finite human vantage point. As a child sometimes asks for that which must be withheld for the moment, weak and frail men sometimes pray for that which God must dispense in his own way and in his own time. The man who doubts God will be an unstable man.

JAM 1:7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

What does it mean to ask in faith? These present verses indicate such asking is done in purity of heart and willingness to follow the truth when it is made available. If one is minded to accept only that part of the truth which appeals to him, he will find his prayer has fallen upon deaf ears. We cannot close our eyes, stop our ears and harden our hearts, and then plead for God to tell us that which will sooth our itching ears.

JAM 1:8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

The double minded man is the one who will believe whoever has talked to him last. He will say one thing at one time and take a completely opposite position at a later time. Logic and truth are twisted and distorted to fit the occasion. You cannot depend upon such a person. If you try to teach him, you will become exasperated. He will appear to have learned the truth you have taught. Then you will find he has done no such thing. If you lean upon such a man for advice or support, you will find you have placed your weight upon a broken reed which will collapse and injure you.

God has no intentions of casting his own pearls before swine. If you desire wisdom from him, you need to handle it with care when it is given to you!

JAM 1:9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

God is both willing and able to lift up the down trodden. The man who has little in the way of influence or possessions in this world may look forward to the time in which he will be blessed with more than the mind is capable of imagining. We are all the children of a King. We stand to inherit that which he owns. Lazarus had little before he died. In the afterlife, we find him in Abraham's bosom rejoicing in his reward.

JAM 1:10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

The rich man often has burdens that are exceedingly heavy. If he is observant, he will find his riches useless in the salvation of his soul. Death will snatch his possessions away. If he manages to remain alive until the second coming of Christ, the houses, land, bank accounts, livestock, etc. will fade away when the trumpet of the Lord sounds and the heaven and the earth dissolve.

JAM 1:11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

It may take a bit longer for the rich man to wither and fade. But just as a flower shrivels and dies in the heat of the noonday sun, the bounteous life may pass. The rich man who had failed to take notice of Lazarus while both were alive, later found himself in excruciating torment, begging for a drop of water to be placed on his parched tongue.

JAM 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Revelation 2:10 informs us, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* We are also told, *He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.* Sometimes it seems beyond our ability to outlast the heavy load which rests upon the shoulders of the Christian. In times like that we must remember that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear, but will provide a way of escape.

JAM 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

There is a difference between being tempted and being tested. God does not tempt men. He does allow them to be tested. Job is the prime example of the manner in which God strengthens his children. Christian character is developed in a similar manner to the development of the physical man. When men strive to build up their physique through lifting weights, they know they must push themselves to the limit. Sometimes the muscles must even become sore from the load which is placed upon them. God allowed Job to lift all he was able to bear before he was finally dismissed from his great battle with Satan. At that point Job had twice as much as he had at the beginning.

If you lose your faith dear reader, it will not be because God abused you, or tested you beyond your ability. It will be because you failed to respond properly to his efforts to build your faith.

JAM 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Here is that word **lust** again. It is a selfish word. It thinks nothing about others, but always attends to its own. Mothers warn their small children about talking to strangers. The child may be enticed by coins or candy, and then abused at the will of the seducer. Satan has all kinds of baubles he dangles before us. The naive will follow him until he claims them as his own.

JAM 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

The spiritual laws follow the same patterns as the laws of vegetable production. Seed is sown. It is cultivated. It is harvested in far greater quantities than the ones which were planted. Lust seems pleasant for the moment. How could such a trivial appetite turn into a devouring monster. Yet it does! David found his lustful gazing at Bethsabee ended in murder and even the death of his son who was born of Bathsheba. Lust–Sin–Death!

JAM 1:16 Do not err; my beloved brethren.

All that has been said previously in this chapter urges a proper relationship between God and man. God is there. God is aware of human needs. God

expects man to come to him for the fulfillment of those needs. If we come to him in faith, he will hear and respond. If we reject him, we are the loser. Therefore, it is the height of foolishness to err in failing to love and obey him.

JAM 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Paul told the philosophers and other listeners at Mars Hill in Athens that it is in God that we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Without God, we could neither be anything, have anything, nor do anything. It would be safer to cut off one's supply of food and water than to cut one's self off from God. He provides both physical sustenance for the body and intellectual food for the mind and spirit.

Although men may be double minded and hypocritical, God never is! Through the words spoken by Malachi the prophet he said, *For I am the Lord. I change not (Mal. 3:6)*. He is absolutely faithful to his word and will do that which he has promised.

JAM 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

James is addressing these words to Christians. They are the ones who have been begotten through the Word of Truth. The seed of the gospel was planted

in their heart. It found good soil, flourished and finally brought forth fruit as the old man was crucified and was replaced. A new man, born through the Spirit of God then came into existence.

The apostles and other Christians of the first century are sometimes called the firstfruits of God's great harvest. As time passes the harvest will continue until that wonderful day when the angels do the final reaping and God has gathered all of the wheat into his garner.

JAM 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

The foolish man often speaks and acts prematurely. He moves into action before all the facts are in. The mature Christian will avoid making that type of mistake. He will listen carefully. Hear all of the facts, and only then will he speak and act. The souls of many men and woman have been destroyed or damaged severely by those who have acted impulsively. Not only do such erratic persons hurt others, they lose their own soul in the process.

JAM 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

The hot head seldom promotes the will of God. He becomes a servant of the Devil and brings about the malice and hatred which pleases his master. The wrath of man is a selfish work of the flesh. Responsible children of God will be peacemakers.

JAM 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Naughtiness is a word we tend to use without realizing just how accurately it describes the misconduct of the naughty person. To be naught is to be nothing. The person who is drawn to the filthy and evil conduct supported by Satan is really bringing himself down to nothing. He becomes worthless. We were not created for sinful conduct. We were created for good works. The individual who chooses to serve Satan throws away all that is meaningful in his existence.

Rather than follow these works of the Devil, we should be found feasting upon the Word of Jehovah and using our bodies as instruments of righteousness. This will result in a healthy soul which God will be pleased to call to the heavenly home some day.

JAM 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

It is not enough to hear the Word of God. Robert Ingersoll, the famous agnostic orator, who spoke on what he termed the “Mistakes of Moses”, had heard the teachings of the Bible. I recall reading one of his speeches in which he discussed the casting out of the unclean spirits into the herd of swine at the Sea of Galilee. Ingersoll knew the details of the event

well. His mistake was in failing to recognize the truth and act upon it when he heard it. He had deceived himself.

JAM 1:23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

James was not writing primarily to persons like Ingersoll. He was addressing the Hebrew Christians who were scattered through various nations. James knew the danger of Christians deceiving themselves into thinking they were pleasing to God simply because they had exposed themselves to the truth. It is easy to do this my friends. We are sometimes lazy. We are also affected by our lusts and our pride. Too many times, it is more pleasant to hear than to act. Ezekiel found that eating the Word of God was as sweet as eating honey. Later, when he was expected to warn his people about their wicked ways, Ezekiel described his feelings as “bitter in the belly.”

The man who hears the Word is like one who stares into a mirror before going out into society. We put on attractive clothing. We bathe, comb our hair and then take a final look in the mirror to assure ourselves that nothing else needs to be done.

JAM 1:24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Does the man who examines himself in the mirror walk away without making the needed corrections?

Of course not. That is why he looked into the mirror in the first place. He straightens his tie, combs the wayward hair, or washes his forehead where that smudge remained.

JAM 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The New Testament of Jesus Christ is here called the “perfect law of liberty.” Some would have us believe today that Christians are not amenable to any law at all. That is a serious mistake. We no longer live under the law of Moses. We do live under the perfect law of liberty. Christ gave commandments. He spelled out the rewards for keeping those commandments and he just as clearly spelled out the penalties for breaking them. Sin is the transgression of the law. If there is no law, there is no sin. John said, If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar. Paul added, All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Do not deceive yourself into believing Christians are not amenable to any law. God has always provided law for man. He still provides it, and he will until the end of time. .

The man who looks into the perfect law of liberty, as presented in the New Testament of Christ, sees himself. But he also sees Jesus Christ, who is the express image of God. When that man makes the comparison between what he is and what Christ is,

he is obligated to make whatever corrections are necessary. The responsible person will move from glory to glory as he draws ever closer to the man God created in his own image. A major part of becoming like Christ is putting the Word into action. Failing to do and to teach is not Christlike!

JAM 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

The Christian who allows his tongue to run wild is not truly religious. He only pretends to be. Even if he believes he is a servant of Christ, he has deceived himself. His outbursts destroy that for which the Saviour died.

The word “religion” is considered by many to be almost synonymous with hypocrisy. That is not true. There is pure religion and there is vain religion. Vain religion is empty and useless. It serves neither God nor man.

JAM 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Pure religion is unpolluted with the works of the flesh. It is alive and strong in the service of the Lord. The fatherless and the widows are those who

have lost the support of their husbands and fathers. Without assistance they were in danger of having insufficient food, clothing and shelter. Pure religion will motivate those who have more than enough for their own needs to attend to the needs of those who are lacking.

Pure religion will not only see that the needs of the underprivileged are met. It will cause the one who practices it to abhor that which is evil. Pure water and bitter do not flow from the same fountain. If we kept our souls as clean as we keep the dishes from which we eat our meals, our religion would come closer to the purity of which James spoke.

Chapter 2

JAM 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

To have the faith of Jesus Christ is to trust him, obey him and follow his example. This cannot be done when one pays honor to men because of their possessions or their achievements. Both possessions and achievements may well have come to a person without his having obtained them through godly means. Sometimes men inherit great fortunes. Sometimes they obtain influential positions by mutual back slapping with others who place social climbing ahead of true character.

JAM 2:2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

That which James is ready to picture now is not fiction. It is so much a part of the carnal way of thinking that it happens in all nations in every age. And it does happen in the congregations of God's worshippers! The contrast between the two men in this verse is sharp. One is obviously prosperous and influential. The other is barely able to clothe and feed himself.

The question which slaps us in the face now is, "How would **you** react to these two persons? Would you automatically give far greater respect to the rich man than to the one of poor estate?"

JAM 2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

James explains how most of us would show our attitude toward each of them. We would quickly usher the rich man to a place where he could be easily seen, and where he could enjoy everything which took place. The poor man would not be treated in like manner. He would be neglected and relegated to a position where he would not detract from the appearance of the assembly.

JAM 2:4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

If the rich man is treated with undue respect, and the poor man is immediately shunted off into obscurity, the members of the congregation have judged without proper consideration of the situation. The Christian is certainly commanded to give honor to whom honor is due. But in this case, he has acted before he knows which of the two men deserves the honor and which does not.

JAM 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Not many mighty, not many noble are saved. It is in general the poor who come to realize their dependence upon Jehovah. They are the ones who are rich in faith because they have learned the lesson of humility. They are the ones whom God will delight in someday inviting to the marriage feast of the Lamb. They will dwell in the mansions of heaven.

JAM 2:6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

This partiality which is shown to the rich is misplaced. The poor are usually the ones who are most willing to help others. The rich all too often have obtained their high estate by emphasizing the things of this world and ignoring the needs of those around them. They are apt to trample upon anyone who stands in the way of their march to gold.

JAM 2:7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

To blaspheme is to speak against that which is holy. The rich often have little respect for God, for the Son of God, for the Word of God or for the Church of God. They are caught up and enamored of their own importance.

JAM 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

This royal law is not one which came into existence in the Christian age. It is an everlasting principle which has been in effect from the beginning. Cain broke it when he murdered Abel. David broke it when he took the wife of Uriah. Judas broke it when he betrayed the Lord.

According to Jesus, it is the second commandment. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment he said,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

The royal law is very closely related to the golden rule which requires that we treat others as we would have them treat us.

JAM 2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Again we find that Christians do live under law. This royal law has always been in effect and always will be. When the Christian shuns the poor man he has broken the law and rebelled against the will of God. He will be held responsible for that sin.

JAM 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

It is not sufficient to justify such behavior by saying, "I live by most of the principles of godly conduct. Surely this partiality is but a little matter." A law breaker is a law breaker, regardless of how much of the law he has broken.

JAM 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

Are we talking about the law of Moses here? The two commands mentioned; Thou shalt not kill., and Thou shalt not commit adultery., were two of the ten commndments given on Mount Sinai. After all, Paul told the Colossians the law had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-17).

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The following verse will aid us in understanding the answer to this question. If the law, whatever law, includes prohibitions against murder, adultery and disrespect for one's brother, then doing any one of the three is transgression of the law and will

bring the penalty of that law. In the case of God's law, transgression of the law is sin, and the penalty of sin is death.

JAM 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

The Christian will not be judged by the law of Moses. He will be judged by the perfect law of liberty; the law of Christ. The law of Christ is a law of liberty in that through the grace which is offered in the Son of God, sin may be forgiven and the death penalty may be lifted. Men may be made free from the bondage of sin.

Nevertheless, the man who has shown respect of persons has broken that law of liberty. Without repentance and God's forgiveness, he will be lost.

JAM 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

The man who shows no mercy to his fellowman, can hardly expect God to show mercy toward him. Mercy and true forgiveness come through Christ. If a man is not Christlike, he need not anticipate God's mercy. Mercy and judgment are opposites. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7).*

JAM 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

The man who says he has faith, but who has no works, has deluded himself. There are several kinds of faith mentioned in the scriptures. The kind of faith which does not create an output of works is not a saving faith. It is true that works of merit are insufficient to earn the eternal reward in heaven. It is just as true that if no works are present, faith will not save either.

JAM 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

It is especially true with respect to our attitude and behavior toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. If one member of our physical body were to be suffering from cold or pain, the rest of the members would attempt to alleviate the suffering. It must be the same with the spiritual body of Christ. If a brother or sister needs food or clothing, those who have more than enough to satisfy their needs are expected to help.

JAM 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Talk may sound good. It does not warm the body or fill the stomach. Nor are we to wait until the one who is suffering begs for assistance. We must be observant enough to realize when help is needed and offer it without the fellow member being

humbled by the necessity of having to ask. Wishing them well is not enough.

JAM 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

There is great faith, little faith, no faith and **dead** faith. Dead faith is worse than useless. It leaves the needy in poverty, and it condemns the soul of the one who fails to put faith into action. A saving faith must be demonstrated in action.

JAM 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Your faith may be strong as far as recognition of God's wisdom and his power. You may teach others of his great glory. You may understand all mysteries and give your body to be burned, but without concern for others, you are not following the Great Shepherd. You will be eaten by the wolves.

It is not possible to show one's faith without working. It is only by working that either God or man will find faith discernable.

JAM 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Those who give mental assent to the existence of one God, but who then deny him the obedience

which such truth demands, find themselves with some very famous company. The devil and his angels do the same thing. They well know there is a God. They recognize Jesus Christ as his Son. Nevertheless, they ignore God's will and devour his children.

JAM 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

What a vast difference there is between a virile living person and the corpse which remains after that person is mangled in an automobile accident. It is the same with faith. A faith which produces no fruit of the Spirit of God is just as dead as the body whose life has been extinguished.

JAM 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Abraham had a faith which resulted in the approval of God. He put that faith into action in his willingness to offer Isaac upon the altar. His faith was not alone.

JAM 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

The faith which has not produced any works is in an immature state. It still lacks something very important. It is only brought to maturity when that

which is lacking is supplied. Works supply that insufficiency.

JAM 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Abraham's works did not make him righteous. They made him pleasing to God and then God justified him by **considering** him righteous. **God** had made him righteous.

JAM 2:24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Martin Luther had great difficulty accepting this verse as being inspired of God. Luther loved the doctrine of grace. It was by grace men were saved and not by works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:9). Luther failed to see how James 2:24 and Ephesians 2:9 could be harmonized. Therefore, he concluded the book of James was not a valid part of the holy scriptures.

There is really no great problem. Salvation is not earned by works of merit. But salvation is conditional. Placing faith in action meets God's conditions and God then offers salvation as a free gift. A gift is not something which is earned. It is given by one who is pleased with the one to whom the gift is given.

JAM 2:25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

James provided another example; that of Rahab the harlot. Rahab did not prove herself pleasing to God just because she gave mental assent to his existence. When Rahab realized the spies were true servants of Jehovah, she put her faith into action and brought it to life by receiving those servants and by speeding them on their journey. This resulted in her inclusion in the list of heroes of faith as given in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

JAM 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James case is made complete. The faith of Jesus Christ is only useful when it comes to life in obedience to God and support for his children. Without those works, faith is as unimpressive and as unproductive as a corpse.

Chapter 3

JAM 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

This time James is not talking about the masters of slaves. He is talking about those who instruct others. Jesus himself was often addressed as Master. The responsibilities of teachers are very great. Because the responsibilities are great, the penalty for abusing those responsibilities must also be great. The teacher is able to lead many souls astray if that teacher goes in the wrong direction. Every teacher must pray and study carefully so his instruction will edify rather than destroy men.

JAM 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

It is so easy to hurt someone through the use of our speech. Harnessing the tongue is vitally important. If a man is able to control his tongue, he will also have the ability to control all other members of his body. He will have reached a state of great spiritual maturity. How badly we need such persons in the church of Jesus Christ today!

JAM 3:3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

This is the first of two examples of control of powerful forces with small devices. Horses are powerful animals. Yet they can be caused to go in the direction we choose by putting a small metal bit into the horse's mouth.

JAM 3:4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

Here is example number two. One has only to stand close to a large seagoing ship to realize the enormity of it. It would seem that a sizable controller would have to be used to maneuver it through the water. The truth is just the opposite. The rudder is much smaller than one might suppose. With a tiny rudder, the entire ship is moved through the water in a new direction.

JAM 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

A human tongue probably weighs less than a pound. Yet it is capable of triggering vast changes. When the president of the United States stands before congress and declares that we are at war with another nation, the consequences are enormous. Millions of lives may be lost on battlefields before the war comes to a close.

One sentence, spoken without good judgment, is capable of splitting a congregations of God's people and leaving scars which never heal.

JAM 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

A tiny match can start a blaze which destroys thousands of acres of timber. The tongue is like that. The song advises us that we are never to let careless words proceed from an unbridled tongue. **“Careless words, O let them never, from the tongue unbridled slip!”** When the tongue goes wild, the entire body is likely to follow. Soon an entire church can be at one another's throats. The destruction which follows is as if it had burst forth from the very bowels of hell.

JAM 3:7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

Tigers, lions, elephants, eagles, dolphins and even snakes have been tamed and placed under the control of man. There is no type of animal which cannot be trained.

JAM 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

The tongue must then be a very, very powerful organ, either for good or for evil. When used for evil purposes, it is more deadly than the venom of the most potent of the poisonous vipers.

JAM 3:9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

We can use the tongue to commend our brothers and sisters when they do well. We can use the tongue to present edifying lessons to a multitude of hearers. We can also use that same tongue to condemn and curse our own brethren in Christ.

JAM 3:10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

It is not right that both good and bad words proceed from the same tongue. We cannot be both for Christ and against Christ at once. Nor can we scandalize our fellow Christians in one breath, and then praise them with the next.

What pure and vivid language James used! There is no misunderstanding his point. It is wrong in the sight of God to mix evil and wicked speech with speech which is holy and uplifting.

JAM 3:11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

It is utterly and absolutely impossible for a source of drinking water to produce delicious refreshing water one moment and then, in the next moment to produce repulsive foul tasting water. The Christian's tongue then ought to always produce wholesome speech and never that which is hurtful and degrading.

JAM 3:12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

There is a manner of speech becoming to a Christian. It is as unnatural to hear foul speech coming from the mouth of a Christian as it is to find olives growing on a fig tree or figs growing on a grape vine. God is shocked to find the tongues of Christians speaking the things of Satan.

JAM 3:13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Many men see themselves as being very wise and well informed. The only way to prove this is true is to show good judgment in both speech and actions. A genuinely wise man will be meek and will behave himself properly toward both God and man.

JAM 3:14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

A Christian ought to carefully examine his heart. If there is envy toward others, or a spirit of conflict in the heart, those evil things need removing. To let such things cause evil words to be spoken is to oppose the way of life God expects of his children.

JAM 3:15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Solomon said, *The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Jehovah (Psa. 111:10)*. God has specified peace as the pattern of life for his people. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God*. A manner of speech and life which enjoys confrontation and feeds on it is displeasing to both the Father and his Son. Jesus Christ is the Prince of peace. Foul speech and deeds do not come from God. They came from the Devil.

This does not mean the Christian will never contend with others. He will contend for the truth and will oppose falsehood. But he will never promote contention nor will he relish it. Even when confrontation is necessary, it will be an unpleasant experience for the man of God.

JAM 3:16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

When envy and strife boil up, all sorts of wickedness follow in their wake. The lack of harmony leaves people not knowing who to believe nor who to use as examples of good behavior. There will be

many evil things done and said. And at the same time it will be nearly impossible to accomplish anything worthwhile. All the time and energy will be used in wrangling.

JAM 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

When men look toward God for wisdom, the results are far different than when they accept the cunning of the Devil. God's wisdom is true wisdom. It is not mixed with evil. The person who has drunk deeply from the Spirit of God will be a lover of peace. He will be easy to get along with. He will not be a respecter of persons, paying attention to the rich and powerful and neglecting the poor and the weak. He will produce good works and will be sincere in thought and speech.

JAM 3:18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

The man who sows evil words and deeds will not enter into heaven. Even if he were to enter, he could not be satisfied there.

The peacemaker, whose wisdom is from above, will sow peace, and he will reap a harvest of peace. He will always be drawing closer to the God of peace. He will be beckoning others to go with him. He will be ready to enter into the New Jerusalem, God's final abode of peace. He will be happy there.

Chapter 4

JAM 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

War and fighting at every level, from squabbles within the family unit, to the vicious fighting which takes place in international encounters such as World Wars I and II, are all the result of selfish greed and pride. Someone is setting out to fill their appetite for power or possessions. The attitude is, "I want what you have, and I will do whatever is necessary to get it."

The sad thing about this pattern is that men with strong political influence are able to enlist common men in their selfish causes. The propaganda which is fed to the population persuades the multitudes that they are truly defending their rights. Much of the time it is the appetites of the rich and powerful that are being served, rather than the rights and freedom of the common man.

At the family level, every divorce which has torn a family into shreds is the result of either the husband, the wife, or both being self-centered and inconsiderate of their spouse and their children.

JAM 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Those who enter into such violent conflicts have chosen the wrong way to find satisfaction in life. All

of the fighting and killing could be avoided if men would only ask God to grant his blessings to them. He has more than any of us will ever need. Yet men ignore his treasure chest and set out to take from others to satisfy themselves. Why not ask God?

JAM 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

James proposes another very closely related problem. There are those who do ask God for blessings. But they do not ask with love in their hearts. All of that for which they ask is intended for their own worldly pleasure and satisfaction. When men ask God to open the windows of heaven to such selfishness, they will find the windows closed and locked.

JAM 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

I think James is certainly talking about those who disrespect the sanctity of marriage here and seek illicit sexual pleasures. However, I think he is going much farther than that. I believe spiritual adultery is in his sights. Any person who is supposed to be a Christian, but who embraces the world, is guilty of being unfaithful. The church is the bride

of Christ. Going to bed with the world will bring the wrath of both the Father and the Son upon one.

JAM 4:5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

The latter part of this verse is not a direct quotation from either the Old or the New Testament. What spirit is this that dwells within the Christian and results in envious lust. It is certainly not the Holy Spirit which is given to those who obey God. There are many differing meanings applied to this verse by various commentators. I conclude that the spirit which causes envious lust is the law of the flesh which Paul said lusteth against the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:17). There is a constant war within the Christian between the flesh and the Spirit. Following the flesh cultivates lust. Following the Spirit leads to loving obedience to God.

JAM 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

The Spirit which God gives fights against the proud and selfish man. It does just the opposite for the humble man by providing gracious blessings far beyond what is deserved. The proud are brought low and the humble are lifted up.

JAM 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

All of this means there is no great difficulty for the Christian in making his decision. He must follow God and serve him. He must fight against the Devil and cause him to depart.

Another remark is in order on this matter of the departure of the Devil after he has been resisted. He may flee away for the present. But, he will be back tomorrow or the next day. He is a most persistent being. Christ resisted him three times before the Devil finally admitted defeat. Even then, he tried again and again to obliterate the Saviour. The cross itself shows just how stubbornly Satan continues his efforts to devour the righteous.

JAM 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

God reacts somewhat similar to man. We enjoy the presence of those who enjoy our presence. The wise man said, *He that hath friends must show himself friendly (Prov. 18:24)*. Abraham drew nigh to God. God recognized this friendliness on the part of Abraham and called him "The friend of God." It pays to be friendly with God. When God draws nigh to you, and the two of you walk together, peace will reign in your soul.

Sinners make themselves enemies of God. If such persons ever expect to find the good life, they will have to turn from their sins and allow God to cleanse their hearts. The Christian must not be double minded. He must love the good and hate the evil. He cannot love both.

JAM 4:9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

The momentary pleasures of the sinner will be short lived. While the present mourning of the righteous will be turned to joy, the laughter of the wicked will turn to tears. How sad it is that some will trade eternal joy for a few moments of reckless folly.

JAM 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

God has always loved the poor and down trodden. He has always despised the proud and haughty. The best way to draw nigh to God is to develop the mind of Christ which is never self serving, but always searches for the opportunity to aid another.

JAM 4:11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

It is wrong to pass personal judgment on a brother or sister in Christ. Judgment belongs to God. The moment you begin to pass personal judgment on another of God's children, you are also passing judgment upon the law of God. You are saying that

since the law of God is not doing an adequate job of judging, you must take it upon yourself to improve upon it. The one who does this ceases to learn the law and obey it. He commits multiple sins. First, in judging his brother when he does not have the ability to make such judgments. Second, in criticizing God's own ability to set up and apply law.

I quickly add that this does not prohibit reproof, rebuke and correction of an erring brother. All of these activities are not only permissible to Christians; they are commanded by the Lord. We are expected to judge righteous judgment which is based upon the Word of God. The difference in righteous judgment and speaking evil of our brother is that the latter is based upon personal standards, while the former is based upon the standards set forth in the Holy scriptures.

JAM 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

God is the lawgiver. He is the one who can see the ultimate consequences of every thought and action. He is able to reward according to our deeds. He is able to punish according to the seriousness of our transgression. *Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

It was just such weak logic which resulted in the catastrophe in the Garden of Eden. Satan was able to persuade Adam and Eve that they had a right to question the law of God. Man has never had that right. He never will have it!

JAM 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

While James is on the theme of men setting themselves up as capable of directing their own steps, he gives another clear warning. We do not even know what will happen between today and tomorrow. When we make plans for the future, we have no way of knowing there will even be a future.

Bible critics have pointed to these verses in the book of James to accuse Christians of teaching that one should not plan ahead. That is not a just criticism. The scriptures do not teach laziness. They do not teach impulsive behavior. They do teach that we are not to leave God out of our plans.

JAM 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

We will not live forever. We have not been promised our next breath. Men die at all ages and from a variety of causes, some of them very unexpected. At one time I felt that as I grew older I should plan my study and writing on the Bible such that I would be able to finish the project upon which I was working if I became ill and could not continue. Because of Bible teachings such as that found in this verse, I no longer believe that to be

the correct view. I now feel that if it is possible, I should be right in the middle of some work for the Lord when he decides to take me home. *We must work the works of him that sent us, for the night cometh when no man can work.* Let us not worry about whether or not we can finish it. Let us plan ahead, but, at the same time, we must always be ready to lay down our tools and answer the evening call.

JAM 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

In everything we do, we must realize God is watching. He is guiding. He is strengthening. Our prayers must constantly appeal to him that all our actions be brought into accord with his will. We must not even wish to do that which is antagonistic to his desires. And that includes living tomorrow, if he finds today was enough.

JAM 4:16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

There is something of the same attitude here that prevailed in the Church at Corinth. A willingness to criticize others and degrade them, while at the same time puffed up with pride over one's own accomplishments. It is right to be pleased when service in the Kingdom of God produces fruit. It is wrong to waste time in boasting about these achievements while even greater work is neglected.

JAM 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

When doors of opportunity are opened to God's servants, we must walk through them. Constantly looking back to revel in yesterday's glories will only result in taking our attention from the work God has for us today. It is not enough to refrain from that which we ought not to do. We must find the things which should be done. Then we must work diligently before the night comes.

Chapter 5

JAM 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Those who are rich in this world's goods are in general not very well thought of in the New Testament scriptures. The problem is that they have too often gained their riches at the expense of others. Compounding the problem is their tendency to rely upon the riches rather than on God.

The final judgment will not be kind to those who choose mammon over the true and living God. The pleasure their riches brought them will turn to tears and cries of anguish when they find the poor are then blessed and the positions of the rich and the poor are reversed.

JAM 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

Pick up a penny which has been lying on the ground for several years and notice the corrosion on it. No longer does it shine with the lustre it had when it jingled in the pocket. Take a look at an old wool sweater which has been invaded by moths. One would hardly burst with pride wearing such a riddled garment in public. Although these rich men to whom James wrote still gloried in their gold and their garments, the truth is that those possessions are already green with corrosion and riddled with holes, as far as God is concerned.

JAM 5:3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Jesus told of the farmer who had filled his barns and then found his new crop would not fit in the barns he had already built. Instead of using his excess to help others, the farmer decided to build new barns. That type of selfish action will be recorded in God's book of remembrance. The Lord warned that we are to be laying up treasures in heaven rather than on earth. Moths and rust are the end of earthly treasures. Eternal life is the end of the treasures which are laid up above.

Greedy men have spiritual myopia. They cannot see afar off. The last days for them are those which come before physical death. If they could see beyond the resurrection and the judgment, they would realize the last days which really count are those that lie beyond the grave.

JAM 5:4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

The Old Testament commanded the employer to pay his laborers when the sun went down. The wages earned were not to be kept overnight (See Deut.

24:15). When a servant labors earnestly for his master, he has a right to collect his wages. When they are kept back they will cry out as a witness against the employer. Though the servant may be powerless to collect that which is due him. God knows of the fraud.

Do not confuse the term “Lord of sabaoth” with “Lord of the sabbath.” The Lord of sabaoth is the “Lord of armies.” He has the power to subdue and punish each and all of those who oppose his will. His will is not that men should be at ease while their fellow men suffer (Amos once said, *Woe be to them that are at ease in Zion!*)

JAM 5:5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

The Lord Jesus Christ talked about those who prayed on the street corners in order to be seen. He declared that they already had their reward. It is the same with those who live in luxury while others are in need. They have had their pleasure here where it is temporal. They will be in agony when they realize it will be removed from them. Just as the calf is fed and fattened for the day when it is butchered, these men filled their cups of pleasure to the brim. They had their hearts desire in all things. All of that would end when they, like fatted calves would be fried in the flames of hell.

JAM 5:6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

The rich so often oppress everyone who stands in their way. They have the strength to enforce their greedy lusts. Men who are far better than they are, have been trodden down and humiliated because they have no ability to defend themselves.

JAM 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

James had been talking to the greedy and selfish rich men up to this point. Now he turned his attention to the brethren who were abused by the rich. They must be very patient. Justice will be meted out when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to judge all men. The farmer knows better than to expect the harvest the next day after the seed is sown. He must wait until the crop has ripened. God's vineyard is not yet ready for the harvest. When it is ready, the poor will become rich beyond measure.

JAM 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

The poor brethren were to follow the example of the patient farmer. They were not to faint before the end time. Jesus said, *Behold, I come quickly!* The years of suffering will soon pass by and be replaced by the bliss of heaven, where every man will be rewarded according to his works, and where no tears are ever shed.

JAM 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Holding malice in the heart toward those who oppress you will not improve the situation. What it might well do is to cause your own condemnation. One is to return good for evil. He is to pray for those who despitefully use him. It will not be long before the Judge of all the earth will be knocking at the door. The heart should be clear of malice when he comes.

JAM 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

One would think a prophet of the Lord would be gladly heard by all men. That was not the case. Jeremiah pleaded with the people to give themselves up to the punishment which God was ready to bring upon them. Even as Jeremiah spoke, an army from the north was bearing down upon them. Instead of listening to the prophet, they cast him into a dungeon and called him a traitor. It was not only the prophet of God who suffered. The Master looked out over the city of Jerusalem and accused it of stoning the prophets whom God had risen up early in the morning and sent to warn them of their wicked ways. In all of this, the prophets continued to patiently speak the Word of the Lord. The brethren to whom James spoke must do likewise.

JAM 5:11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

James then used Job as a prime example of patience. Those to whom James wrote were certainly familiar with the record of this man of God. He lost everything he had. His livestock was stolen. His children died. His wife urged him to condemn God and die. His body was covered with sores from head to toe. He became very confused and wished he had never been born. But he never did the one thing the Devil claimed he could make Job do. Job never cursed God.

God knew precisely what was happening to Job. When all was over and Job had passed the test, he was given twice what he had in the beginning. He had twice the amount of livestock. His health returned. He even had the same number of children he had before, perhaps to add to those who waited in the grave.

JAM 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

Sometimes the prohibition against swearing seems to be against saying one will do this or that.

Jesus talked about not being able to make one hair white or black. This case seems to be different. This time it appears to be a matter of saying such things as “By God”, “Jesus Christ” or “By Jupiter.” These kinds of expressions are used when people become exasperated and angry.

Rather than using such terms, the proper thing to do is control one’s anger and speak words that will be profitable to all. Otherwise, the lack of respect for God and his handiwork could cause his wrath to fall upon the speaker.

JAM 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

James then became a bit more specific about the kinds of things which should proceed from the mouth of a Christian brother or sister. Affliction and persecution should cause one to pray to the Father in heaven. Happiness and a merry heart should cause the disciples of Christ to sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

JAM 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

Not all the grief which comes upon a Christian is the result of being misused by his fellow man. Some of it comes from sickness. What is the Christian to do in the face of severe illness? James has an

answer. He is to call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

The elders of the church were godly men of great faith. The prayers of such men make a difference. It was so in James' day and it still is. Some within the church in the time of James had miraculous powers of healing. Anointing with oil was a medical practice. Between the prayer to God and the anointing with oil, all had been done which man was able to do. When these things were done, everything must be left in the hands of the loving and caring heavenly Father.

The same plan of action is correct today. We must apply all the medical treatments that are available, and we must call upon God to see that all things work together for good.

JAM 5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Christians are expected to believe in the effectiveness of prayer. The prayer must always anticipate that the will of God will be done rather than one's own will. Even when Jesus saw the cross just ahead, he prayed for the will of his Father to be done. Sickness and death are a part of this sin stained world. But when the will of God is that men be healed, the healing will take place.

Notice the connection between sin and sickness in this verse. It is not true that every illness today

is a direct consequence of the sins of the one who is sick. It was not true of Job and there is no reason to believe it is now. However, if there had **never** been any sin, there would be no sickness. Penitent prayer and the best medical attention which can be given to the sick is pleasing to God. He will forgive any sins, and he will heal when and as he sees fit.

JAM 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

How much can prayer accomplish? God proclaims that it avails much. This is not true of all prayer. It is true of that which issues from the heart of a righteous man. I recall an incident which occurred when my wife was in the waiting room of the hospital shortly before being moved to the delivery room for the birth of our first child. While she was in the early stages of her own labor, a woman was wheeled by the door of her room. She was much farther along than my wife was. Just as she passed the door of our room, she cried out, “God help me!” Two things crossed my mind as I heard her cry. One thought was that prayers do not have to be long or beautiful to be effective. The other thought was a question. Was the woman’s life in such condition that she would be heard? Or had she been in the habit of laughing at God’s commandments in the past? I hoped she had drawn near to God in the days before this so he would then draw near to her.

Confession of our faults is a prerequisite to forgiveness. If we love our sins and wish to cling to them, we need not expect God will remove them. If we confess them and repent of them, we will be justified. Remember the sinner who called out, *God be merciful to me, a sinner*. That man went to his house justified.

JAM 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

Elias, or Elijah as he was called in the Old Testament, was having a confrontation with King Ahab. It is recorded in 1 Kings 17ff. that Ahab had made a grove and set up an altar for the worship of the false god, Baal. He had provoked Jehovah more than any of the kings who had come before him. Because of this Elijah said to Ahab, *As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years but according to my word.*

The verse before us gives us further information. The beginning of the drought occurred after Elijah prayed for it to take place. For three and one half years it remained dry, until Elijah went to God again with a prayer that it be ended.

There were two notable things about this prayer of Elijah. It was an earnest prayer by a righteous man. It was also a prayer by a man like us, and not a God.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once flipped a switch and all the power of Boulder Dam was activated. Christians have an infinitely greater source of power than Boulder Dam.

JAM 5:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

After those three and one half years of drought had devastated the land, Elijah sent to Ahab and told him he wished to speak with him. After having a victorious all out battle with the prophets of Baal, Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel. He fell to the ground and placed his face between his knees and prayed. He told Ahab to prepare his chariot to move quickly so the rain would not stop it. In a short time the clouds appeared and there was a great rain. The land once more brought forth its produce.

Prayer works in providential rather than miraculous ways in our own day. But we may rest assured that it does work.

JAM 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

Sin is a missing of the mark. It is like shooting at a target and missing the bullseye. It is like straying off the road and finding one's self floundering in the mud of the ditch. If one Christian sees another walking in the darkness and in danger

of getting lost, he is expected to approach the wayward and warn him of the danger. If the person turns from his error, great good is done.

JAM 5:20 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.

It is not easy to tell a person they are wrong. The common reaction is for the sinner to flare up and point out weaknesses in the one who is attempting to help them. Most of us are hesitant to take the chance that we may be insulted. We just allow the erring to follow their fatal path and face eternal separation from God after the judgment.

God praises the man who does have the courage to turn such a one back into the highway of holiness. He says two major accomplishments occur. First, the sinner is rescued from the second death in the lake of fire. Second, a multitude of sins are covered. What sins are these which are covered? More than one possibility may exist. The sins may be those which the sinner would have committed if he had been left to walk his evil way. They may be the sins which were confessed when he repented of them. The last possibility I see is that the sins of the man who does the rescuing may be removed as his own life becomes more and more pure.

I would like to have known the writer of this great book. He was a man who had both compassion and vision. He knew where he was going, and he

wanted to see as many others as possible walk with him. Perhaps we shall meet him as we drink together from the river of life in the city of gold. May God ever guide us, strengthen us and give us patience to prevent us from stumbling.



**The Book Of
I Peter**

Introduction

The Author and Date:

The apostle Peter is the author of the book. He was one of the three who were closest to the Lord during practically all of his ministry. The others were James and John. Peter was operating a fishing boat when the Lord called him to become a “fisher of men.”

Various apostles were associated with special themes unique to them. John was the apostle of love. Paul concentrated on faith, James on works. Peter is recognized as the apostle of hope.

Peter was usually outspoken, sometimes speaking before he had carefully considered the consequences of his words. At the same time, he was bold and fearless. It was he who delivered the great sermon to the Jews on the day of Pentecost.

The letter was written somewhere between A.D. 64 and A.D. 67.

The Recipients:

Although Peter is associated with the Jewish people as Paul was associated with the Gentiles, we find this letter has material appropriate to both Jew and Gentile. They were “strangers and pilgrims” because this world was not their home. They also may have been scattered over a large territory in what we now know as Turkey, and estranged from their homes.

The Nature of the Letter:

This is a letter of encouragement in the midst of suffering. The readers are instructed to “stand fast.” God will see that patience and hope have an eternal reward. There is glory waiting for the Christian who does not fall short under persecution and trials. The believer cannot succeed through his or her own strength and wisdom. However, he can come through this life victorious when he leans on the everlasting arm of the God who created the universe.

Chapter 1

1PE 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

Although the apostle Peter was a major figure among the apostles, it is interesting that he wrote but two books of the New Testament. This compared with the twelve or thirteen written by the apostle Paul.

Rather than “strangers”, the American Standard gives “sojourners.” They are strangers because they are truly citizens of the kingdom of heaven instead of the nations in which they are scattered. The countries mentioned are found in the present country of Turkey. All Christians are actually sojourners on earth, regardless of the nation in which they wander today. Our true citizenship is above in the kingdom of God.

1PE 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

God prophesied well ahead of the fact that the Gentiles would be invited into the family of God. He knew it would take place centuries beforehand.

No man or woman becomes a Christian without the sanctification, or setting apart of the person for

the holy purposes of God, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. This verse connects obedience and sanctification. There is no sanctification without obedience to the gospel message. When one believes, repents, and is baptized, the blood of Christ is applied to his heart and he is a sanctified soul. Compare Hebrews 10:22 *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

God's grace is poured out on the sanctified individual. As a child of the Father in heaven, the faithful Christian has the promise of spiritual blessings far beyond the power of his imagination. Every real need will be administered to. The peace spoken of in this verse is not just absence of violence. It is the condition which arises in the life of any person who stands firm in the grace of God.

1PE 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The word blessed used here is not the same word which is used in the beatitudes of Matthew 5. Man cannot bless God. God blesses man. The word, as it is used here speaks of God as being the source of blessings.

Before becoming Christians, every man was dead in sin. As the source of blessing, God brought us back to life through the resurrection of Christ. As

God the Father is the power behind virgin birth, and the raising of Christ from the grave, it is also the power which gives new spiritual life to the convert. The same one who is the Father of Jesus Christ is our Father.

Outside of Christ there was no hope. Sanctified through the blood of Jesus, we both live and die in hope of dwelling in the very presence of our Father. If Jesus rose from the grave, so can we, provided we remain faithful.

1PE 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

While John is called the apostle of love, Peter is called the apostle of hope. Much of I Peter and II Peter deal with the reality of our hope, and encouragement to the Christian to cling to that hope in the face of every hindrance. A home in heaven is waiting for the faithful. Unlike the houses on earth, it never needs repair. We will not find that it has been removed when we arrive. The reservation is absolute. Life in glory is eternal. The question is whether or not we will be faithful unto death, that we may receive it. As a season football ticket may not be used, the home in heaven may allowed to go unclaimed. What a tragedy that would be!

1PE 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

It is no ordinary power which works in the life of Christians. It is the same power which created the universe, and brings physical life into existence. That power is available to those who possess a living faith in our Lord. That faith, working hand in hand with the mighty grace of God, will move one ever toward the heavenly home.

The saints await a manifestation of glory. That change will occur at the return of Jesus Christ. See Rom. 8:17-18. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

1PE 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

Christians have suffered for their faith in every time and place since Pentecost. We face trials from within and from without. There is great comfort in the knowledge that these trials will someday cease. They may seem unbearable for the moment. However, when we receive the final reward, we will find that the weight of glory at that time will far outweigh any burdens placed upon us in this age.

The temptations come to us with the full force of the power of Satan. Lust and pride are his major avenues of destruction. We have the armor and the power to ward them off. We must do so.

1PE 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The faith of the Christian is extremely valuable. Out of that faith comes trust and obedience. Out of that faith comes hope and love. Trust, obedience, love and hope are the ingredients from which God composes eternal life.

That faith will be tested and tried by Satan and his cohorts. In spite of those trials, it must come forth stronger and more beautiful than before the trials came about. Peter compares the testing of faith to the purifying of gold. Gold is purified by fire. Our faith is purified by the fires of temptation, etc. Unlike gold, which will pass away with the present heaven and earth, our faith will become sight in the land of endless day. When Jesus comes that day will begin.

1PE 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

The persons to whom Peter wrote had apparently not seen the Lord and Savior. Nor have we. It is not necessary to see the object of our love. I love my mother, though she has been removed from this earth for a number of years. I love the brave and

courageous Christians of days gone by, who transmitted the Christian faith to me. I love Jesus Christ for having come to this world to take on the form of a servant and demonstrate to me what it truly means to be found in the image of God.

That confidence, that Jesus was just what he claimed to be, causes rejoicing of the highest order. There is a mutual glorification taking place between the Godhead and the Christian. As a husband and wife glorify each other, each member of the Godhead fills the Christian with the light of the glory of God. In turn, each Christian praises and glorifies the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

1PE 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The word salvation is used to refer to both the salvation from the guilt of sin, and salvation from this temporal world. We are saved from the guilt of sin when we repent and are baptized into Christ. We are saved from the temporal world when we are caught up to be with Christ forever at the time of the resurrection. The latter condition is the end of the Christian's faith.

1PE 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

What a powerful idea this is! Searching pays off! Jesus said, *Seek and ye shall find*. The prophets of

Old Testament days were good men. It was not easy to stand before kings and princes, telling them of the need to repent. It was not easy to separate oneself from others by wearing camel hair and fasting for days on end. Yet, these men did so. Their dedication in seeking the way of holiness was rewarded. They were given the privilege of delivering the Word of God to a lost world. They pointed out the sins of their own day. However, that was not the heart of their activities. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. Every prophet was helping to draw a picture of the coming Messiah and the grace which he would bring into the world.

Finally he came. John was to say, *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:14-17).*

1PE 1:1 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

The prophets were seeking out that coming day which the Spirit of Christ, which was inspiring them, made clear to them. That Spirit taught of the

suffering of Christ, as it did in the case of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. It also taught of the glory which would follow, as it did in the case of the second chapter of Joel.

It is also in order to mention here 1 Peter 3:18-20. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.*

It was that same Spirit of Christ who preached to a lost world in the days of the flood, though the lips of Noah.

1PE 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The prophets of old did not fully realize the glory of the days of which they foretold. They knew the things of which they spoke were to come in the latter days, and not their own. Those days are now upon us. The inspired apostles were empowered with the ability to more fully reveal that which had been a mystery in days gone by.

The angels are interested in the spiritual affairs of men. They rejoice over a lost sinner who repents. They are sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation. See Luke 15:7 and Heb. 1:14. Like the prophets, the angels were awaiting the day of the Lord when the Jew and the Gentile would be made one new man in Christ Jesus, and would share in the promise made to Abraham that **all** men would be blessed through his Seed.

1PE 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

It was Peter who denied his Lord three times just before the crucifixion. It is interesting that now he urges us to gird up the loins of our mind that we may be firm to the end? His experience of seeing Jesus raised from the grave made a tremendous difference in his attitude. On the day of Pentecost he boldly preached to the Jews who had crucified the Christ. It is reported that he died by crucifixion. He knew his Christ was the Son of God. He wished for us to have that same confidence.

Grace does not wait for the second coming of our Lord. Paul began several letters with the words “grace and peace be unto you.” That grace had already appeared through the virgin birth of Jesus. But there is a greater grace which will be ours when Jesus returns to gather his gems. Peter looked forward to glory beyond the grave. Jesus claimed it. Peter wanted it, and he knows we should want it also.

1PE 1:14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

We will not receive that coming grace in disobedience. We will not receive it while building lives on the foundation offered by Satan, the father of liars. The world no longer lies in ignorance. The gospel has now entered and a life of pride and lust is inexcusable. If we wish to receive the inheritance of our Father, we will have to live as his obedient offspring.

1PE 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. God is wise, and in him there is no folly. God is holy, and in him there is no sin. The word conversation here is not limited to speech. It includes the entire manner of life. God created man in his image. He grieved when that image was lost. He sent Jesus Christ that it might be recaptured. Let us then be holy.

1PE 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

There is no mistaking the urgency of Peter's words. It is as if he underlined them, italicized them, and then put them in bold print. **BE YE HOLY.**

1PE 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

Prayer is the precious privilege of the Christian. That privilege is not to be taken lightly. It is to be valued highly. If one expects to live a corrupt life, and then have his petitions approved at the throne of the Father in heaven, he will be disappointed. God is not mocked. God knows our works. Furthermore, he will not be impressed with our influence, possessions, or stature among men. First, fear God and keep his commandments. Then offer your prayers before him.

1PE 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

God's children were redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. All of the silver and gold on earth is as nothing when compared to the value of that divine sacrifice. We normally think of silver and gold as durable. That is one of the reasons for their use in jewelry. Once purified, they are inactive and remain lustrous. However, the time will come when they will go the way of all the present heaven and earth. It is not so with the blood of Christ. The effects of that redeeming sacrifice will last eternally.

The Word of God is contrasted with the traditions and customs of men. Men are blind guides. Without the wisdom of God, they stumble and fall into the ditch. The wisdom which comes from above is perfect wisdom. It will not mislead. The contest between the traditions of men and the word of God is not a contest at all.

1PE 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

The sacrifices of the tabernacle and the temple were to be without blemish. This anticipated the perfect and unblemished sacrifice of the Son of God. The difference was that they were but bulls, goats and sheep. Christ was God with us.

1PE 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

God knew, even before the creation of the heaven and the earth, that Jesus would have to die upon the cross for the sins of the world. It took thousands of years of preparation before man was in a position to receive the perfect example of love and unselfishness which was seen in the life and death of the Lord. But the day did come. Christ came and lived in the flesh, among men. They saw him grow up. They heard him teach. They saw his sinless life. They ate with him and travelled with him. They saw him die, then saw him after his resurrection. The mystery of God was beginning to unfold.

1PE 1:21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Our belief in God is not superstition. It is based on the empirical observation of the life of Christ, and upon the dependable witness of those who observed him first hand. He was the Son of God. He was the Master Teacher. He was killed, buried and resurrected. He does exist in glory today. All of these things give birth to the faith and hope of children of God.

1PE 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

The purification of the souls of men does not take place at the point of hearing the Word of God. It does not take place when one is sorry for his or her sins. It takes place when one obeys the truth taught by the Spirit of God. A major outcome of that obedience is sincere love of our brethren. The first commandment is to love God. The second is to love our neighbor. God is love. His children must also love.

1PE 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

The seed of men is corruptible. In the long ago Onan spilled his seed upon the ground, rather than to provide children for his dead brother. The seed of Onan is no longer capable of bringing life into being. In contrast, the Word of God is the seed which brings spiritual life through the second birth. It is incorruptible. Until time is no more, it will continue to bring forth spiritual life in the children of the Father. Although the heaven and earth will pass away, God's Word will endure.

1PE 1:24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

The flesh and the grass is here today and gone tomorrow. Man is born, lives and dies. He is like a vapor which appears for a moment and then disappears from sight.

1PE 1:25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

When the gospel is preached to men the incorruptible Word of God is being planted in the soul. It will never lose its vital power. God's Word will not return to him void. It will accomplish that for which it was sent out. Peter was honored to preach it. We are the recipients of the grace of God in being allowed to hear it. It remains to be seen what each of us will do with it after hearing. Will it be received in a fertile heart? Will it be rejected? Will it be aborted? Time will tell.

Chapter 2

1PE 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, all evil speakings,

The faithful child of God must have his affections fastened on things above, not on the things of this world. **Malice** is ill feelings toward others. The Christian is expected to pray for those who despitefully use him. **Guile** and **hypocrisy** are very closely related. It is said that Jesus had no sin, nor was any guile found in his mouth. One could depend upon the Lord in consistency of both word and deed. Peter command us to do the same. **Envy** desires that which belongs to others. **Covetousness** seeks the opportunity to obtain it. **Evil speaking** destroys the reputation of those maligned. These thoughts and actions are a part of the old man who should have been crucified during conversion.

1PE 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

The innocence of the newborn is clearly evident. One of the few things the infant knows to do is seek for milk. The newborn child of God should have an ingrained desire for the spiritual nourishment available in the Word of God. If he feeds on the Word of God, growth will take place. If he neglects to feed that new life, he will starve and die in soul, even if the physical body remains robust.

God does not expect stagnation and dormancy in his children. They are to take full advantage of the opportunities for study, for mutual edification and for spiritual exercise.

1PE 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The assumption in this verse is that one who has tasted the heavenly gift will find that taste but an appetizer and will return like bees to a flower. Throughout his writings, Peter emphasizes the importance of recognizing the value of God's blessings. They are to be appreciated. They are to be cherished and woven into the new life. They are to be guarded with diligence.

God has been so very gracious to us! Christ has made the supreme sacrifice for us. Blessings beyond our imagination have been heaped upon us. How could one possibly turn away and look back toward the world?

1PE 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

The Lord is the chief cornerstone on which the church, the temple of God, is built. Inanimate material stones do not gather by themselves around a cornerstone to make up a building. But Christ is a living stone, and so are we. Therefore, we are attracted to him, and move toward him.

He has been a stumbling stone to the Jews, as he has been to many Gentiles. They have rejected him and built upon the sand. While the heathen have raged in rebellion, God has placed Jesus Christ at his right hand. No diamond, emerald, ruby or any other jewel was ever as precious as the Rock of Ages. Without Jesus Christ a man might possess all of the precious gems in the world and still be in poverty.

1PE 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

God is building a magnificent structure. It is not composed of wood, metal or brick. It is composed of souls. It is, in effect, a temple. Temples are locations where men commune with God. The church, as a spiritual temple, is provided as a channel for such communication. Through the church God teaches his Word. Through the church, Christians, as priests, offer up the spiritual sacrifices which please God. But we are not just any priesthood. We are both kings and priests (Rev. 1:6). Someday the faithful will be brought into the immediate presence of the glory of God. Today we must be satisfied with the taste of that great feast. That taste comes to those who allow themselves to become incorporated, as living stones, into God's holy temple.

1PE 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief

corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Centuries ago, through the lips of Isaiah, God had revealed his plans to introduce the Christ as a chief cornerstone. Peter refers to Isaiah 28:16. Paul also referred to the same scripture in Romans 9:33. God's scheme of redemption was not a spur of the moment thing. It was planned and prepared from the foundation of the world. It remained a mystery in the days of Isaiah. It is now revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The person who builds his life on the precious Rock will find his foundation solid. I have worked in two science buildings at Middle Tennessee State University. One is over sixty years old. There are almost no cracks in the walls. The other is perhaps twenty years old. There are numerous cracks in its walls. The foundation of the first is far superior to that of the second. Unlike these two buildings, any cracks in the walls of the Church of Jesus Christ will not be due to an inferior foundation. The choice to build on that foundation will never be an embarrassment to the living stones erected upon it.

1PE 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

Men react either positively or negatively to the Son of God. The person who faces the evidence

honestly understands the value of God's gift. He knows it is more precious than all the temporal things found in this present world.

1PE 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

The same Christ who serves as the chief cornerstone in the temple of God, acts as a nuisance to the unbeliever. The unbeliever stubs his toe and falls flat on his face over the Rock which could save his soul.

This verse does not teach that any one individual is destined to disobey and stumble. The verse is talking of the disobedient in general. It has been appointed that those who are disobedient will stumble and fall.

1PE 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;

Long ago, God chose Abraham to be the father of the faithful. Abraham was removed from a land filled with idolatry. God desired to cultivate a people who would be true to Him and Him alone. He carefully nourished the family of this Abraham. They were allowed to gain sight of the promised land.

Then the sons of Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, were allowed to enter into Egypt where their descendants learned more about idolatry and bondage.

God followed this by delivering the nation of Israel from Egypt and bringing them to the foot of Mount Sinai. There he offered to make a covenant with them. If they would love him and obey him, recognizing him as their God, he would guide and protect them as his people. His precious statement was, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.*

God's people failed to uphold their end of the covenant. They broke it repeatedly. God was well aware that this would take place. Men were being allowed to see that they would not perfectly keep the commandments of Jehovah. After it became perfectly evident that this was the case, God sent his people back into the very land from which Abraham was called. They spent seventy years in bondage. When they returned from that bondage, they still rebelled.

God then announced a new covenant. His people would no longer be simply fleshly Jews. They would be the spiritual descendants of Abraham, through a faith similar to that of Abraham. Jew and Gentile would become one new man in Christ. But, as in days of old, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* In some passages these people are called "a precious possession." In other passages, they are called "a peculiar people." God is collecting his gems today. When this world passes away and is replaced by the new heaven and earth, he will gather those gems and take them home as his precious possession, his own inheritance.

1PE 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The Gentile world was not privileged to be called the people of God under the first covenant. The oracles of God had not been delivered to them. They had no priesthood, no temple and no sacrifices to bring them into communion with him.

We, who are Gentiles, should rejoice with all of our hearts that God has now extended his mercy to all men. Our sins may be forgiven and our hope is clearly defined. Let us be grateful.

1PE 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

While we live in the world, we are not of the world. This world is not our home. We are but strangers here and as wanderers whose real home is in heaven. We must not allow ourselves to become attached to the temporal. If we allow ourselves to be entrapped with lust and pride, we will find Satan has captivated our souls and we will have lost our home in glory. These bodies in which we presently live are but tabernacles in the desert of a sin stained world. We will find our true home when we cross the Jordan and are glorified in the marriage of the Lamb.

1PE 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak

against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

We have just been talking about the Jews as the fleshly descendants of Abraham, and the Gentiles as those who were not of the seed of Abraham. I think the application is different in this verse. The Jew in this verse is the descendant of Abraham by way of faith rather than flesh. He is the one who is circumcised of heart. The Gentile in this verse would then be the one who is not one of God's peculiar people. He is an unbeliever.

How are God's people to behave themselves in the presence of the unbelievers? They are to provide examples of faithful living. So much so, in fact, that the unbelievers will be able to see their good works, and themselves be persuaded to glorify the God of heaven. Even though they speak of us with mockery and sarcasm, they must see us as living epistles, written and read of all men.

1PE 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

An important part of such living is to be obedient to the laws of the civil government. The king and the governors of the land may not be Christians. However, they are an instrument in the hands of God. Though the Christian is truly a citizen of heaven before he is a citizen of the nation in which he lives, he is commanded by God to observe the laws of that

nation, as long as they do not contradict the laws of God.

1PE 2:14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

The student of the Bible should notice the two contrasting duties of civil government, as listed in this verse. Civil government is ordained by God for two very important purposes. One is to punish evil men. The other is to encourage good men. If the government does not accomplish these two tasks, it fails in it's reason for existence. A comparison of this verse with Romans 13:1-4 shows perfect agreement. *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: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

For a number of years I was very much concerned over whether a Christian ought to vote, hold office or even earn a salary from the civil government. It

seemed that God had his own kingdom. Perhaps we were to pay our taxes in order that the government could punish the evil doer. But it was only a necessary evil ordained for the purpose of controlling those who would not subject themselves to the King of kings. However, both I Peter 2:14 and Romans 13:1-4 indicate civil government has an encouragement function as well as a punitive function.

The civil government legislates in the realm of social and civil law. The King of glory legislates in the spiritual realm. There is some overlapping. Nevertheless, the basic dominion of each is spelled out in the Holy Scriptures. When conflict arises between the two, one of them has been applied in a manner God did not intend.

1PE 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

God is manifesting his infinite wisdom through the church. Both men and angels are witnesses to the demonstration. Satan and his followers are convinced they can successfully ignore the will of God and direct their own footsteps. It is not so. As Christians travel the highway of holiness, and unbelievers walk the broad way that leadeth to destruction, it will be made clear which is the superior way. As the evidence pours in the conclusion will be inescapable. It is folly to walk in the darkness.

1PE 2:16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Jesus said, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).* Add to this the words of Peter and the other apostles when they were commanded to no longer preach in the name of the Lord. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).* James spoke of the **perfect law of liberty.**

Let us try to bring all of these scriptures together. The Christian has been freed from the law of sin and death. He has escaped the bondage of Satan. He serves the King of the universe. That does not exempt him from obedience to the laws of social order and civil government. In fact, it obligates him to be even more conscientious in respecting those laws. They are present by the will of God to prevent social chaos. As long as they do not challenge the revealed will of God, the Christian will be well pleasing to Jehovah in obeying them.

1PE 2:17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

All men were created in the image of God. The value of their soul demands that they be cherished and treated with the dignity due to one of that high station. The Christian is not to simply dismiss the unbeliever as worthless scum upon the face of the

earth. When the unbeliever does that which is worthy of commendation, the Christian should offer that commendation.

At the same time, a very special love and honor must be manifested toward those who have become our brothers and sisters in the family of God. They are the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

The fear of God is the beginning point for honoring all men, loving the brotherhood and respecting the earthly ruler. The Christian is a promoter of harmony, not confusion.

1PE 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

Much of the world has now passed beyond the point where men own other men. In the first century there were vast numbers of men who were no more than property. In some places this is still true.

What is the proper attitude for a servant who has become a Christian. His real master is the God of heaven. Does this give him the right to disobey his earthly master? The Bible says no. Does the Bible attack slavery? The answer is yes! Philemon was not told to release his runaway slave Onesimus when he returned. He was told to no longer treat him as he had before. He was now a brother in Christ and must be treated in that manner. Christianity attacks slavery by making it obligatory that the master love his servant and do everything within his power to promote his well being. If that

means releasing him from bondservant status, the implication is that such release is to be granted. The servant will not rebel against his master. He will provide an example of godly living in the hope of converting that master.

Even though we do not normally possess other humans today, there remains a master-servant relationship. The employer is the master. The employee is the servant. Becoming a Christian does not grant the employee license to pilfer from his employer. It does not excuse him from giving the employer an honest day's work. It does not suddenly elevate him to a position where he can look with scorn upon that employer because he is not a Christian.

1PE 2:19 For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

What is the servant to do if he is mistreated. Perhaps he is owned by his master. Perhaps he cannot resign and get another job. Does God provide advice for him? Yes. Jesus Christ provided an example of suffering for a cause. He voluntarily left the glory of heaven to come and show us the power of a holy life. If he was victorious in suffering, we may be also. If a servant suffers while living a godly life, his conscience will be clear. There is a crown of victory just over the river.

1PE 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it

patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

If one suffers because he has sinned, it is no honor. He deserves his suffering. But, if a man suffers after doing well, God will see and approve of his actions. He need not despair under persecution. The reward to come is infinitely greater than the light suffering of the day.

1PE 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

When Jesus called each of us, he said, “*Come—follow me.*” We are to follow in his steps. If we share in his suffering, we will also share in his glory.

1PE 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Our Lord could have evaded the torment he endured while here. He certainly did not deserve the agony he suffered. He was no vile sinner. He did not lie and deceive. If we suffer even though righteous, we are in the company of the Son of God.

1PE 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

He could have called ten thousand angels to his side to protect him from the jealous Jews and sarcastic soldiers. He could have bribed his tormenters with all of the treasures of earth. He did not. He went to the cross as a lamb, dumb before the shearers. He knew courage under persecution was and is one of the most powerful influences. It is more powerful than either money or force. He was acting by the will of the Living God. The Judge of all the earth will do right.

1PE 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Isaiah had said, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:4-5).

Oh how much Jesus must have suffered, all the way from his birth to his burial; but especially upon the cross! The very men for whom he died spit in his face and trampled in his blood. It was not because he looked forward to fame upon earth that he allowed himself to be crucified. It was for **you**. It was for **me**! If he suffered so much, can we not suffer just a little to make his sacrifice accomplish that for which it was planned?

1PE 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

As a shepherd grieves over his sheep who have been scattered abroad by wolves and other wild beasts, and who are in danger of being devoured, Jesus saw you and I as helpless in the grasp of Satan, the Great Red Dragon. Through Christ's sacrifice it has been possible to gather the sheep who will hear his voice and return them to the fold of the Great Shepherd.

Chapter 3

1PE 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

God has seen fit to place the husband in the leadership position within the home. If the husband loves his wife as himself, there will be no cause for her to be uncomfortable. This is not always the case. This verse is particularly addressed to those cases in which the wife is oppressed by her husband. Peter's advice here is in line with what he has been saying just previously. Any suffering of this kind is temporal. It will be replaced by a glory far greater than the suffering.

If the wife **does** endure patiently, showing humility and respect toward both her husband and the Lord, she may well teach her husband lessons through her example that he would never learn by reading the Bible. I might inject a personal note here that I saw this truth in action as my mother did precisely what Peter suggested and saw it work exactly as Peter said it might.

1PE 3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

The chaste conversation is more than words. It is a holy and humble manner of life in general. If the wife shows an obedient spirit toward her

husband, he may learn the power of such obedience and react in similar manner toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1PE 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

Women like to be noticed. The Lord has arranged matters such that the beauty of the woman is an attracting agent. The man is naturally the pursuer. Thus, it might be expected that women would seek means to enhance their appearance. They are style conscious. The cosmetic industry grosses fantastic amounts of money by appealing to the female desire to be beautiful.

Does this verse indicate that women should not adorn themselves at all? Perhaps the thrust of this verse is a comparison between inward and outward adornment. If the woman is content to lean upon outward attractiveness, while at the same time neglecting the inward spiritual beauty which is so very valuable to women, she will have shortchanged both herself and others.

Some of the sharpest words in the Old Testament were directed toward the women of Israel who wore head tires and walked with mincing steps, etc. See ISA 3:16-24

Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth

necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

If I were a woman I would wish to be ultra cautious that I did not let myself be obsessed with such vanity.

1PE 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

As the years pass, the outward beauty of most women fades. The smooth skin shows wrinkles. Spots show up on the arms and the back of the hands. The

hair loses much of its sheen. Often weight is difficult to control. At the same time that such changes are occurring, the inward beauty may continue to grow. The spiritual beauty of a woman is a blessing to everyone around her. May God give us many many such great women.

1PE 3:5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

From the beginning God has been pleased with women of great faith. Their quiet spirit and fulfilment of the charge to be a help meet for their husband is not only important to their own family. It is invaluable to society as a whole. The problems which arise when women become loud and aggressive can fill prisons, bring disease and drug abuse, encourage child and parent abuse, and inspire a host of other societal ills. We will never be able to completely realize the importance of godly women.

1PE 3:6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

The woman is to glorify her husband, even as the man is to glorify Christ. Sarah was obedient. I feel confident that this was not a source of great irritation to her. If Abraham can be called the father of the

faithful, can she also be called the mother of the faithful?

It is not a matter of serving one's husband because she is filled with terror. She serves because she loves. She serves because God has asked her to serve. She will not be sorry in the judgment that she was a true daughter of Sarah.

1PE 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Now the husbands are encouraged to behave themselves toward their wives in such manner as will make it a delight for the wives to show humility and submission. But what does it mean to dwell with them according to knowledge? To what type of knowledge does this refer?

I see two possible explanations of the term knowledge. First, it may have to do with the fact that God has provided instructions as to how the husband is to treat his wife. If that is the meaning, it is saying that he is to take into account all that God has said on the matter. Second, it may be saying that the man is to make every attempt to understand the nature and needs of his wife, and to meet those needs as far as he is able. It is mentioned that she is the weaker vessel. The husband should honor that difference, as well as others.

As a husband and wife agree to become one flesh and cleave unto one another, they are in effect

making a mutual agreement to walk the highway of holiness side by side. They share the hope of heaven and each should strive to aid the other in achieving that hope.

The implication of hindered prayers is serious. Here again we have a principle which shows up over and over in the scriptures. God treats each of us in a similar manner to that with which we treat others. If we forgive others, he forgives us. If we neglect the poor, he will neglect us. If the husband takes advantage of the wife because she is a weaker vessel, he would do well to remember he also is the weaker vessel when compared to God.

1PE 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

Verse eight becomes general again. All Christians are commanded to work together with brotherly concern. We are to be compassionate, courteous and full of pity toward others who may be less fortunate, never taking advantage of our brother simply because we possess the power to do so.

1PE 3:9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

We are back to the major theme—endurance with hope. When abused and persecuted, the Christian will use his Lord's perfect example of non-retaliation.

When Jesus was suffering at the cross, he cried out, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* We were called out of a world which renders evil for evil and rails back when railed against. This behavior only multiplies evil and railing. The Christian who offers a blessing when mistreated, will receive a blessing from God in heaven, whom he has also mistreated through sin.

1PE 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Throughout this book the life of Jesus Christ is kept before the Christian. It may be true that others will oppress and persecute the Christian. Yet, in the end, the Christian way of life is the most meaningful and fulfilling. Christ said, *He that loseth his life shall find it.* There appears to be a reference to the thirty-fourth Psalm, though the quotation is not exact.

1PE 3:11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Living the Christian life is not a passive thing. We must actively pursue it. If we do not eschew evil, or abhor and refrain from it, we will find ourselves entangled in its web. If we do not seek out peace and work toward it, we will find ourselves contributing to conflict and surrounded by it.

1PE 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Since God is invisible, it is altogether too easy to forget his constant providential concern for us. His loving kindness is very real. He both knows and cares about us. When we love and obey him, he will guide and bless us. When we mock and reject him, he will turn his face away and close his ears to our cries.

1PE 3:13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

With the Godhead guarding and guiding us there is no power on earth capable of visiting eternal harm upon us. We may be burdened for the moment, even to the point of martyrdom. The bliss of eternity will far outweigh that slight discomfort. Romans 8:31ff. should always be examined in connection with this verse.

1PE 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

This is, of course, in agreement with Jesus statement in the beatitudes, *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all*

manner of evil against you falsely, for my names' sake (Matt. 5:11). God knows every sparrow that falls. He certainly knows the burdens his children carry. He will not allow them to destroy us. We are not to fear the one who can cast the body into prison, but he that can cast both body and soul into hell. If we have the proper respect for the latter, we need have no fear of the former.

1PE 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

To sanctify is to set apart as holy. To sanctify the Lord God in our heart is to respect him for what he is and to reserve a place in our heart for him. Then when men attack us, we will have provided ourselves with evidences for the convictions we hold. We will be able to defend both our beliefs and the Lord.

This is never to be done in arrogant fashion. The Christian is to have a meek and quiet spirit. The contrast between his spirit and that of the man of this world is to be a sharp one. Christians sometimes fail to manifest such a quiet spirit. When they do fail in this regard, they sometimes suffer for their arrogance. That type of behavior does not give rise to the peace God has promised.

1PE 3:16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of

evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

There are those who will speak evil of any man, even the Lord himself. When they do so, it must not be justified. We must give others no reason to speak of evil in our lives. We must live with a clean conscience. If this is done, the accusers should be embarrassed by the contrast between their malice and the Christian's purity of soul. This does work on many occasions.

Allow me to present a personal example. I taught in elementary and high school for several years. We often had parents days. On one of these evenings a parent accosted me on behalf of her child. The child had misrepresented what had really taken place. When the parent first began to speak, she was red faced and almost out of control. I calmly and gently replied to her with my view of what had really taken place. I could see her gradually calm down and begin to see the other side of the matter. When she was quite convinced that I was not trying to mistreat her child, she changed completely. By the time she left, she was my friend. Her child gained much by our conversation. It does not always work. When it is successful it is very satisfying to be a part of it.

1PE 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

This verse indicates that sometimes it is the will of God that we suffer for our well doing. God's plans

and purposes are served at times like these. It is not that God favors such suffering. He does not. However, since there are men who will cause others to suffer for their well doing, it pleases God that we stand up victoriously under it.

1PE 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

If we suffer as a consequence of our well doing, we will be in the very finest of company. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. He suffered after having lived in perfection. He, being absolutely just, suffered for the unjust, including you and me. With him, it went so far as to suffer the loss of his life at the hands of the very ones he would have led to the Father.

Yet, though he was murdered by crucifixion, he was resurrected by the power of the Spirit of God. Death could not hold him.

1PE 3:19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

This verse and the next are difficult verses. At first glance it seems that Jesus preaching to the spirits in prison was a consequence of his being crucified. This causes some to think he actually preached to the dead while he was in the grave.

This is not necessarily the case. The verse is talking about the power of the Holy Spirit which enabled him to rise from the dead. It may be that the spirits in prison are those to whom Noah preached in the days of the flood. If that is the case, the preaching that Noah did was made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of God and also the Spirit of Christ. When Noah preached the Word of God, he preached by the power of the Spirit of Christ.

1PE 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The souls whom Jesus preached to were disobedient in the days of Noah. There is a question as to whether they were preached to during Jesus three days between death and the resurrection, or whether they were preached to in the days of their disobedience. If they were preached to in the days between the death and the resurrection of Christ we would have a contradictory lesson to that of Lazarus and the rich man. That account teaches us that death closes the account. There will be no preaching, and no opportunity of repentance after this life is concluded.

Therefore, I believe this is talking about the same Holy Spirit which empowered the life and the resurrection of Jesus being the Spirit which activated

Noah as he preached to the disobedient in his day. They were not in the prison of Hades. They were in the bondage of sin.

Out of the entire population of earth, only eight souls believed the preaching of Noah. Those eight were saved from destruction because they entered into the ark and escaped drowning.

1PE 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

The salvation of those eight souls as they entered into the ark of safety was a figure of things to come. Those who are baptized today enter into an ark of safety which protects them from the second death. Baptism is not for the purpose of washing off the physical dirt from the surface of the body. One is baptized because God commanded it. When baptized one has cleared his conscience in that he has met the conditions God set up for the remission of sins. Baptism alone would not be sufficient. Baptism must be preceded by hearing the Word of God, by repenting of one's sins, and by confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. When these conditions are met, God sprinkles the conscience of that soul with the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God. He or she is then sanctified and justified. The challenge is then to remain in that condition by walking in the light, as our Lord walked in the light.

1PE 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

As he was stoned to death, Stephen saw Christ standing at the right hand of God in heaven. John saw him at the right hand of God as he took the book of the Mystery of God from the Father. Jesus has gone on before us to reign as king until every enemy is brought under his feet. He must reign until death itself, the last enemy, is vanquished. Such is not yet the case. It will be!

Chapter 4

1PE 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

The Christian must be prepared to deny himself many comforts. Just because he is a Christian, there are those who will make life difficult. There are temporary pleasures which must be left to those of the world. If one is to have the mind of Christ there are two patterns which cannot be ignored. He left the glory of heaven to present himself as a sacrifice for others. While doing so, he avoided even the very appearance of sin. He suffered, and we will suffer. In the meantime, the hope is far greater than the suffering. We must follow in His steps without hesitation.

1PE 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

We may follow the desires and will of the flesh, or we may follow the will and the Word of God. The Christian will do the latter. The reader is reminded again of the purpose of our creation (Rev. 4:11).

Rev. 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

1PE 4:3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Peter is not speaking of Gentiles in the fleshly sense. He is speaking of those who are uncircumcized of heart. They are spiritual Gentiles. There may have been a time in which the Christian walked in the paths of Satan. He can no longer do that.

Lasciviousness is speech or actions which incite unlawful sexual passion. Lust obviously is closely connected with lasciviousness, and follows it just a step behind (or perhaps ahead). Excess of wine produces drunkenness. The Christian is not to be drunken with wine, but is to be filled with the Spirit. Revellings and banquetings symbolize intemperance and lack of self control. One abandons himself to his appetites. Idolatries occur when men place the creation before the Creator. It may be statues made of wood, stone or metal. It may be the worship of material goods, etc.,

1PE 4:4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

The servants of Satan find it remarkable that the godly man does not desire to join their riotous ways. They will accuse the Christian of being a religious fanatic, or being so mentally weak he must

have an emotional crutch to lean upon. It is not so. The Christian has chosen the way which leads to eternal life. It is the infidel who is in serious need of help.

1PE 4:5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

A time will come in which all that have ever lived will stand before the Judge of the earth. They will then realize just how foolish the choice to follow the wide way was. It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment.

1PE 4:6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

This verse has been understood by some, along with 3:18-20, as teaching the doctrine of purgatory. It has been held that those in the grave had been preached to after they died, in order that they might not meet everlasting torment. I pointed out earlier that the account of Lazarus and the rich man teaches an opposite lesson. Once we have passed the portals of death, there will be no turning.

How then are we to understand this verse? God is going to judge all men, both the living and the dead. All will be judged according to the truth which God had presented to them. They will find

themselves classified in one of two great groups. Either they have lived according to the desires and will of men, or they have lived according to the desires and the will of God.

1PE 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

These are the last days. God prepared the earth many long centuries for the coming of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our response must be to hunger and thirst after righteousness in order that we please him. Prayerful lives, lived in sober fashion, are absolutely necessary.

1PE 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

The word charity is usually translated as love in the later translations. Peter agrees with the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. Without love, all else becomes vain and useless. When love dominates, all else falls into proper perspective. Love is capable of bringing about the conversion of the sinner and the encouragement of the fellow Christian, both of which result in the elimination of sin.

1PE 4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Hospitality here is more than inviting another into one's home. It is related to the word **hospital**. The one who shows hospitality to another is the one who sees the needs of the other person and responds to those needs.

1PE 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

As God has given unto us, we must also give unto others. The word gift in this verse is in the singular. The verse may well be self explanatory. The Christian has been made a steward of the wonderful grace of God, which appeared in the form of Christ Jesus and his offer of eternal life. God could give no greater gift than salvation. We have the privilege of offering that same gift to our fellow man.

1PE 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Man is not to direct his own steps. He does not have that capacity. Surely he can make choices as to whether to drive to work, or to walk. We are here speaking of spiritual legislation. Man should have

found out thousands of years ago in the Garden of Eden that he is incapable of digesting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ultimate good and evil.

Therefore, the proper route is to listen to the voice of the eternal God. It is God who sees the end from the beginning. Only He can perfectly advise us as to the ways of righteousness. Whether we minister to others in word or in deed, it must be done by the authority, and to the glory of, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Men are too frail.

1PE 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

I do not know what the fiery trial of which Peter spoke consisted. Some suggest it was the burning of Christians to light Nero's circuses. Others point out that the verse seems to indicate these fiery trials were already in process.

We can be sure of one thing. Christians of many lands and of many centuries have suffered fiery trials. We may not be burned at the stake today, or smeared with tar and impaled upon a stake to light the gardens of Nero. However, we still know the meaning of fiery trials. Whatever these trials may be for us, we must anticipate their coming and be prepared to meet them.

1PE 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when

his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

It is not easy to rejoice when sore trials come upon us. Still, rejoicing is in order. When we suffer trials, we have placed ourselves in the very finest of all company; Jesus Christ. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. His glory will be revealed when he comes in the day of judgment with all his mighty angels, taking vengeance upon them that know the the way of truth. When his glory is revealed it shall also be manifested in the resurrection of his saints.

1PE 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

Christ has always been treated in vastly contrasting ways. Those who wish to remain heathen rage against him. They attempt to cast away from themselves any bonds with which he might restrict their search for pride and pleasure. Those who love and obey him will glorify and praise his name through both time and eternity.

1PE 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

It is entirely possible to suffer as a murderer, a thief, or an evildoer. Such actions inspire retaliation

in kind. Killing places one in danger of being killed. Thievery inspires others to steal. Gossip inspires others to spread malicious and false tales. Sin sown brings a sin harvest, often at a one hundred fold rate.

1PE 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

It is also possible to suffer as a Christian. Chapter six of the Revelation describes those who have been caught up in a world filled with rebellion, violence, want, disease and death. The Christian must live in such a physical world. He will suffer, and he will perhaps die. If so, let him do so proudly and praise God unto death. Just beyond is the crown of life.

1PE 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Every man shall give account of his life. Some who are in the Kingdom of God will be found unworthy and will be cast out into outer darkness. If this is true, what is the condition of those who have never turned their face toward the Lord of glory?

1PE 4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

It will not be the case that those who are saved have lived such honorable lives that God must accept them into his presence. The truth is that every one of us who enters into the heavenly city will do so only because we have reached out for the cleansing power of the blood of the Son of God. We will be pleading for mercy, not for justice.

The ungodly have spat in the face of the grace of God. He will abolish them from his presence, for that is what they have desired throughout their lives.

1PE 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

He has created us. This reveals his concern for us. If we will commit our souls unto his keeping, they will be safe. Nothing above the earth, on the earth, or under the earth can tear us away from his protecting arm. In the midst of suffering we must constantly remember that God and Christ have not and will not forsake us.

Chapter 5

1PE 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

The elders of the church have a very vital part in assuring endurance under suffering. These are the leaders of the family of God. If they falter, the congregations as a whole will be more apt to fall short. Peter, therefore exhorts them to keep a vision of eternal glory before them at all times. As they remain faithful, those who follow them will be encouraged.

Peter does not hesitate to remind them that he is a fellow elder. Although not the first Pope, Peter did occupy an important position in the early church. He was an apostle. He was one of the inner three, who were apparently closer to the Lord than the rest. He preached the first sermon on Pentecost. And he became an elder in the church at Jerusalem. He very well knew of the burdens elders bear. He also knew of the reasons for bearing those burdens. It is one of the greatest privileges granted to men that they may be accounted worthy to be ensamples to the flock of God.

Peter is certain that by becoming a participant in the present suffering, he will also become a participant in the glory following the resurrection. He shared this hope with his fellow elders.

1PE 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not

by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

The charge is clear. The elders of the church are to feed the sheep. Peter had received this charge himself when Christ asked long before this if Peter loved him. Three times Christ asked. Three times Peter said he did love him. Each time Jesus gave the command, “Feed my sheep.” Peter now passed that charge on to his fellow elders.

I am seriously concerned about the condition of the eldership today. I do not believe many of the elders truly understand the personal way in which this command is to be received. One of the qualifications for being an elder is being “apt to teach.” The reason for this qualification is clearly that the elders are to be directly involved in the teaching program. They are personally to feed the congregation which they oversee. It is not sufficient to hire professional teachers and then simply oversee their work. An elder who cannot teach is not qualified to be an elder.

The elder should not have to be forced into taking the eldership. If he is qualified, he should consider it an honor and a privilege to serve in that capacity. Nor does he serve for personal profit. The office does not exist for individual advantage. It exists in order that men who are spiritually advanced may lead others in the way of holiness.

1PE 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

We may pity the congregation which labors under the supervision of one or more men who see the office as an opportunity to exert power over the members! One does not lead the people of God by reveling in the power of the office. One leads by living the Christian life with such dedication that others see the Spirit of Christ in action and desire to serve also.

I have several times heard the illustration of pushing a string. Forcing the people of God is something like trying to push a string. It is much easier to get out in front and pull it.

1PE 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The Chief Shepherd is Christ. Ultimately, it is he who leads Christians to green pastures. Every elder must look to Christ first, then he is privileged to ask the flock to follow him. When Christ appears in judgment, the elder who has served well will receive an elder's reward.

1PE 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

No person can lead others unless there is a disposition to follow upon the part of others. Even if the elder is of very high character, if the membership

will not follow his leadership, the work of God will not be finished. Not only are the members to subject themselves to the eldership, they are to look upon all men as being worthy of respect. God despises men of pride and self dependence. He loves and blesses those who recognize their dependence upon him.

1PE 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

It makes sense to humble ourselves. When one accurately evaluates his own wisdom and power, as compared with that of God, the conclusion must be that we will serve him. If we do arrive at that conclusion and perform that service, God will lift the humble servant to the position of priest and king (Rev. 1:6).

1PE 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

When we have once arrived at the proper understanding of our relationship with God, we are in position to make request for his mercy and his blessings. He loves us and has made every preparation to promote our welfare. It grieves him when we do not follow him. It pleases him when we do follow.

1PE 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,

walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

It is not as if there were no dangers. We are constantly being eyed by the Devil as possible prey. He roamed the earth in the time of Job, looking for the weak and the foolish. Today he does the same. The lion roars occasionally. Most of the time he stalks silently, slipping up on his prey until it is finally overcome.

1PE 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

We are never alone in our trials. Elijah once thought he was the only faithful servant of God left alive. God informed him there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The same burdens which we bear are also borne by many others of whom we know not.

The time will come when we will know of those others. Heaven will be populated with them.

1PE 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice and follow me.”* He has called us out of the world and we have

heard the call. Compared with the burdens of the wicked, his burden is light and his yoke is easy. However, there are a multitude of challenges to our faith. If we will meet those challenges, God will use them to purify and strengthen us.

Note the different words used in this verse to reinforce the idea. He will perfect us, strengthen us, settle us and establish us. We could not ask for more.

1PE 5:11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

To God must go the glory. It is to that end that our Christianity must point. We will be glorified at the proper time, but only if we are willing to first glorify God. He deserves the praise, the honor, the glory and the power for ever and ever without end.

1PE 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Silvanus is Silas. He was a faithful co-laborer with Paul and Timothy. Paul does not hesitate to give honor to those of lesser prestige. This letter comes to the readers through the hands of Silas. The letter is truly brief, being but five chapters, and those short. However, brevity does not imply insignificance. The message contained in this book is that Christians must stand strong in the faith. If

they will endure, they will be handsomely rewarded. Their labors are not in vain.

1PE 5:13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

Some believe the church at Babylon is a reference to the church at Rome, which is called that because it resembles earthly Babylon. Others believe it refers to a congregation of Christians who lived near ancient Babylon. If this refers to Rome, it may be evidence that Peter wrote the letter from Rome. If it is Babylon in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, then it must be but a shallow imitation of the famous Babylon of old which was to be destroyed forever.

1PE 5:14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The kiss of charity was the normal method of greeting for both men and women at that time. While preaching in a strange congregation many years ago, one of the men proceeded to kiss my wife on the cheek. I assure you that neither she nor I appreciated his “holy kiss.” We do well to be cautious in twentieth century America with respect to the precise manner in which we obey the above command. Time, place and custom must be respected.



**The Book Of
II Peter**

Introduction

Author and Date:

While there has been almost universal agreement that Peter was the writer of the first epistle, there has been some doubt regarding II Peter. As early as the time of A.D. 253, some of the Christian writers such as Origen, Eusebius and Jerome were noting that there were those who doubted Peter had written both epistles, since the style of writing was somewhat different. However, by A.D. 400, there was almost unanimous agreement that the letter was the work of the apostle.

This letter was written somewhere near A.D. 66, not long after the first epistle of Peter was written (See 2 Peter 3:1).

The Nature of the Letter:

The first letter is a message of hope. This second letter concentrates on the importance of true knowledge and the need to avoid the error of false teachers. The writer seeks to make the horror of hell so terrifying, and the picture of heaven so beautiful, that men will avoid hell and reach out for heaven.

God has a plan for this heaven and earth. He created it in the beginning. He punished the rebellious. He sent Jesus Christ to give men hope. Christ will return to take his own to be with him. This world will pass away and be replaced by a new heaven and earth.

Chapter 1

2PE 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Peter is never ashamed to admit his inferiority to the Master. He is but a servant and a messenger to the Son of God.

He writes to Christians. They have shared the precious faith with him. That faith was made possible through the perfect life of the Lord. He is truly the Saviour of all who will come unto him. Note that Peter is already preparing for his defense of the faith, which will be seen throughout the epistle.

2PE 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

He desires that these Christians enjoy an abundance of both grace and peace, and indicates that this becomes possible through **knowledge** of the Lord. Now knowledge does not come without effort. One must study and expose oneself to Christian experiences to obtain knowledge. It is not possible to enjoy the fullness of God's grace without the proper knowledge of his will. That knowledge must then be accompanied by an obedient walk.

2PE 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the know-ledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Through the scriptures God has revealed his will for man. No information which is necessary to the living of the Christian life has been neglected. He has called us to follow in his righteous steps. The word of God is a lamp and a light in order that those who choose Christ can find the way.

But God does more. His chastening and providential hand accompanies his children constantly. Ask, seek and knock. Your needs will be attended. But, we must both know of his will, and walk in his way.

2PE 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The gospel contains three major types of information. These three are facts, commands and promises. Christianity is far more than a set of positive and negative commands. The factual evidence of Christianity is abundant. One must believe those facts, or else he will have negated any hope from the beginning. Then, after believing the facts, one must obey the commands. This obedience is the result of loving trust and respect. God is

pleased when men keep his commandments. *“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.”* It follows that when God is pleased with one’s manner of life, he will honor the promises he has made to those who love him.

These precious promises include such things as peace which passes understanding, hope of life eternal, as well as the strength, comfort and support which come through the Holy Spirit.

The verse indicates two blessings Peter had in mind as he wrote. First, the gospel allows men to escape the way of the flesh with its corrupt nature. Then, having escaped the bondage of Satan, Christians are allowed to become partakers of the divine nature. What does this mean? Does one actually become divine? It is not reasonable to believe a man takes on all of the attributes of the Godhead in their infinite and eternal fulness. **It is reasonable** to believe that a man may be infused with power far beyond that available to the flesh. Jesus told those who followed him that if they had the faith of a grain of mustard seed, they could remove mountains.

I think many Christians have not realized the enormous power which lies within their grasp. Work and prayer are switches which unlock the window of heaven for God to pour out his blessings beyond our ability to conceive.

2PE 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

Beside what? Beside escaping from the corruption of the flesh, and taking on the divine nature. The Christian is expected to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. It is not enough to be born into the family of God. That birth must be followed by steady maturation. Peter is going to give the steps in moving toward the fullness of Christ.

Compare Eph. 4:13-15 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

Faith which lies dormant is useless. It must come to life in works. Thus one must add **virtue** to his faith. Virtue means the courage to move toward excellence. A virtuous woman is one who lives courageously in the sight of God and her family. She will not be dominated by the foolish and idle ways of the servants of Satan. The virtuous man will demonstrate the courage required to live as Christ lived, even when those about him are conforming to the world.

Which comes first, faith or **knowledge**? If one is not careful in examining this verse, he will conclude that faith comes before knowledge. The truth of the matter is that knowledge comes both

before and after faith. One must hear before one can believe. However, after believing, one does not cease to absorb knowledge. This is but the beginning. There is enough spiritual food in the Holy Scriptures to feed the wisest of men through an extended lifetime and still leave him short of the whole.

2PE 1:6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

Temperance is self control. A Christian will activate his courage. He will control his temper. He will control his fleshly appetites. He will control his pride. The child of Satan revels in all sorts of self gratification. On the other hand, Christ is the center of the Christian's life. Self will only be satisfied when Christ is exalted. *“He that loseth his life shall find it.”*

Patience is easier for some than for others. One man finds it possible to sit on the bank of a river for an hour waiting for fish to bite. Another would find it quite impossible. But patience, as it is used here is more than just passive waiting. It is the willingness to take the difficulties of life in stride without folding under the pressure. Sometimes we say, one must “keep on keeping on.”

The godly man is the one who properly orients his life with respect to both God and man. He is the truly religious man. His decisions are made within the bounds of what Christ once termed the greatest and second greatest commandments. *“Love the Lord*

thy God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself."

2PE 1:7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

The godly man will look upon his fellow humans with a spirit of gentle kindness. He does not seek his own. He seeks the welfare of those around him.

Brotherly kindness is the inward attitude which causes a man to be truly concerned over the joys and sorrows of fellow Christians. He will look upon the opportunity of serving them as a privilege rather than an obstacle in the way of his own progress.

Charity is love. Love is the bond of perfection. If all other Christian virtues are present and love is missing, the man is but a tinkling symbol and a sounding brass. The mature Christian will be a loving, caring individual.

2PE 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first eight verses of this chapter are an encouragement to the Christian to make full use of the opportunities found in Christ. We cannot, and we must not, fail to develop and grow. If we do, we will fall to the enticements of the Devil and be found right back in the barren and lifeless condition from which we have escaped. Failure to mature means a wasted life.

I believe when Peter speaks of the knowledge of Jesus Christ he is talking about more than just reading of the Bible and understanding of the Bible. I am certain it includes the knowledge of Christ gained by putting the Bible truths into action. A husband and wife do not truly know each other until they have lived together for some time. We will never really know the doctrine until we do the works.

2PE 1:9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

In this case, to be blind is to be short-sighted. Regardless of the amount of factual information one has at hand, if he has not proceeded any farther than the baptismal pool, he has not much grasp of the Christian religion. A proper understanding of the value of the forgiveness of sins will inspire one to move surely and steadily forward toward the fullness of the Saviour.

2PE 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

There are those who insist one cannot fall from the grace of God. This verse says one can do so. Clearly, if one does not add the previous virtues to his Christian beginnings, he may expect that his

calling and election will be brought to nothing. This unfruitful end may be avoided by fortifying one's self as described by Peter.

2PE 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are certain verses in the scriptures which must be compared with other passages to gain a full knowledge of the involved concepts. This is one of those verses. Peter is talking to persons who are already Christians. They have been baptized into Christ and thus they are citizens in his kingdom. He reigns at the right hand of the Father today. How then can it be said that an entrance will be provided for them if they add these virtues?

The answer to our question lies in the difference between the present state of the Kingdom of God and the future state. When Jesus Christ returns in judgment, the saints will be glorified and will be invited to dwell in the new heaven and the new earth. The temporal will be replaced by the eternal. Much of what we experience as Christians on earth is but a foretaste of the marriage of the Lamb which is to come. We must be ready for that time. We will be, provided we make proper progress in the Christian faith here.

2PE 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these

things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Peter would be shirking his responsibilities if he failed to warn those he addressed. He was perfectly aware of the fact that they knew of the things he was saying. Nevertheless, he felt it absolutely necessary to stamp the importance of them deeply into their minds. There was serious danger that if they did not take these matters seriously, they would be lost eternally. They must be established in their faith. Peter would do his best to help them.

This verse points up the need for constant preaching on topics which are already familiar to the listeners. If a preacher thinks he ought not to preach on a certain topic just because he has covered it a year or two ago, he does not properly understand human nature. Repetition is invaluable. Advertisers know this. Christian teachers and preachers should also know it. Coca Cola is advertised more than one time as “the real thing.” If it is useful to remind men about Coca Cola, we can expect that it is also useful to remind them **Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**

2PE 1:13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

The tabernacle of which Peter speaks is his own body. A tabernacle is a temporary dwelling place. A tent is called a tabernacle in the Old Testament. The Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial to the fact

that the Israelites lived in tents while traveling through the wilderness.

Peter implies that the Christians to whom he writes also live in a temporary tabernacle of the flesh. For the short time that both of them have here on earth, it is necessary that he warn them, and that they know, of the dangers resulting from falling away from the truth of God. He intends to discharge his own responsibility in the matter. He pleads with them to hear and heed.

2PE 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

This verse leads most students to believe Peter was in his later years when he wrote this letter. That is probably the case, although not necessarily. All of us must shortly put off this fleshly tabernacle. One hundred years of lifetime on this earth shortens to no more than a moment when one considers the unlimited nature of eternity.

Christ had shown Peter that the fleshly tabernacle could be put off by having died and rising again from the grave. He had also taught his apostles that he would return from heaven and take them unto himself, as he will all of the faithful.

2PE 1:15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

The faithful Christian keeps constantly in mind the fact that events on earth will go on after his departure. Peter knew many of those to whom he wrote would be alive after he was gone. He would do his best while still alive to cause them to maintain their faith after he was gone. It is always pleasant to find those whom one has taught gaining in spiritual strength even though the teacher is no longer directly present.

2PE 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Some men base their lives and actions upon the concocted philosophies derived by men. Men may spin very interesting webs of ideas. But men are frail. They cannot see the end from the beginning. They do not have perfect logical powers. The apostles were not delivering man-made schemes and plans. They had been first hand witnesses of the life and teaching of the Son of God. He had come in power the first time, and he promised he would come back in power a second time to receive his own unto himself.

It was then vitally important that the message of the apostles not be neglected. Heaven and hell hung in the balance. They did then, and they still do!

2PE 1:17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

One of the most impressive experiences of the apostles was having heard the voice of the Father in heaven declaring that this Jesus was his Beloved Son. Peter had been in the vicinity at the time of Christ's baptism and may well have heard the voice at that time. He was one of the three who stood on the Mount of Transfiguration and heard the same statement again, this time with the added command, "*Hear ye him!*"

Nicodemus had been right when he admitted that "*No man can do the things thou doest, except God be with him* (John 3).

2PE 1:18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Peter had at one time denied the Lord three times in rapid succession. He would not make that mistake again. He had heard the voice of the Father. It was not a matter of second hand knowledge. He was there, and Peter would not forget.

2PE 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark

place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

In verse sixteen the apostle had said he was not teaching the fables of men. Now he makes comparison with what he is teaching. He is teaching the sure word of prophecy.

I think my own experience has placed me in position to have a very special appreciation of what Peter is saying. I have taught physical science classes at the college level for many years. I have also dabbled in philosophical studies. It is my understanding that man has only three means of ascertaining truth. First, he may use the scientific method to observe facts and then build a logical structure upon those facts. This method is subject to two major forms of error. He may not observe accurately. He may not reason correctly from the observations he has made. The second means of gaining truth is philosophical logic. This time, one begins with certain truths and from those truths he derives others. There are weaknesses in this also. If the axioms and postulates he thinks to be true are in error, he will arrive at erroneous conclusions. Once again, his logical abilities may also be imperfect. For the reason cited, both science and philosophy are not sure and certain.

In contrast, divine revelation is sure and certain. It has the perfect mind of God behind it. He makes no mistakes. The knowledge he offers is infallible.

I hasten to add that the human reception of this absolute revelation may not be accurate. Although

the message itself is true and infallible, men come to it with personal biases and prejudices. Their own experiences and desires often cause them to reject or distort God's divine and perfect truths.

This is why Peter says we have a more sure word of prophecy. Prophecy is absolute truth, coming from the perfect mind of God. It is delivered without error. The science and the philosophy of man is simply not capable of such perfection.

2PE 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

The truths of the scripture are not derived from the minds of men. Nor do men have the right to manipulate these truths as they happen to see fit.

This verse has been abused by some. The word "interpretation" is anathema in the eyes of some Christians. They look with suspicion at anyone who talks about interpreting the Bible. Let us try to mend the differences which this has caused.

The word interpretation, as we use it today, has to do with explaining that which is difficult to understand. An interpreter who stands beside one who speaks in one language and then translates the words into the language of hearers is not supposed to be injecting his own ideas into the message. He is supposed to be presenting the true message in words the hearer can understand. Hermeneutics is the study of Bible interpretation. Far from being a method of distortion of Biblical truth to please the

man doing the interpreting, this is a set of principles for explaining what the Bible truly does say.

In the long ago Nehemiah built a pulpit. From that pulpit this man of God read the law of God, and then **gave the sense thereof**. He was **interpreting** the Word of God, but he was not giving his **own** interpretation (Neh. 8:8).

2PE 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

God has spoken at various times in sundry ways according to the writer of Hebrews. But whenever a true prophet spoke, he was delivering the Word of God through the wisdom provided by the Spirit of God. Therefore, men may reject the word of man, but they will destroy themselves if they reject the Word of God. Both in the time of Peter and also today, we must hear and obey. Eternity lies in the balance. To ignore the Word of God is to invite spiritual death.

Chapter 2

2PE 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

How often the New Testament writers go back to Old Testament examples to make their point. The student of the New Testament can ill afford to be ignorant of this history of Israel. Many times there were human teachers who placed their own wisdom above that of the true prophets of God. When this was done the people suffered terribly. Thousands of them died on more than one occasion.

Peter warned that it is no different in the latter days. There would be men who defied the teachings of the inspired apostles. They would lead many astray and the consequences would be death and destruction. Peter's warnings were true. These things did happen in the first few centuries of the Christian age. They still continue even into the twentieth century.

Do not overlook what the apostle has to say about the heresies being brought in **privily**. These teachers slip in beside the true teachers and establish themselves before they are recognized. As I write these notes I can recall one example after another of just such silent treachery. Just as Peter warned, the consequences are disastrous. Congregations are split. The work of decades is cancelled, and many souls are lost.

2PE 2:2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

The contrast is between the lies of men and the truth of God. When men distort the truth of God in order that they may present their erroneous teaching, they do untold damage.

2PE 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

False teachers do these things because of covetousness. They are gainsayers who will say anything that will bring them an advantage. They care nothing for the flock of God. Their lies feather their own nest. Nothing else is important to them.

Such teachers may not be punished immediately as Korah, Dathan and Abiram were punished. However, hell awaits them and God is not slack concerning his promises.

2PE 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Peter now presents examples of divine punishment. Even the angels who sinned were

removed from their previous dominion. They have been removed from the presence of God and await their judgment.

The word translated as hell in this verse is the Greek word **tartaros**. It does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. It is clearly a place where wicked spiritual beings are confined as judgment awaits. A similar condition seems to have been the plight of the rich man who suffered in torment while Lazarus rested in the bosom of Abraham. This information leads many students of the Bible to believe that both suffering and rejoicing occur before the great day of the Lord. Since the new and glorified bodies are given only in the resurrection, this condition must be one in which neither the tabernacle of the flesh, nor the new and incorruptible body is involved.

2PE 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Here is Peter's second example. The population of the earth in the time of Noah was disrespectful of the Word of God. God saved Noah, who preached in righteousness. In contrast, those who rejected the preaching of Noah, and lived in mockery of God, perished in the worldwide flood.

2PE 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them

with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Here is example number three. Sodom and Gomorrha were corrupt cities. They cared nothing for the truth. This went so far as to cause them to insist on abusing the angels God sent into their midst. The result was a rain of fire and brimstone which turned their cities into ashes. Once again, God punished the ungodly.

2PE 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

Notice how carefully Peter shows that in each case God protected the righteous. Lot was embarrassed by the evil conduct of the citizens of Sodom. Because he was righteous, God saved him from the doom of the city.

2PE 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

It was not easy for Lot to maintain his character in the midst of such heathenism. It is not easy now. The pressures of immoral conduct overwhelm many and drag them down to perdition. Even as Peter warns here. The church must be constantly on guard that it not be conformed to the world but that it be transformed by renewing the mind after the image of Jesus Christ.

We will be vexed and we will be tempted, day by day, as Lot was. We must resist as he did.

2PE 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

The above examples should reinforce the Christian's confidence that God will punish the wicked, and will reward the righteous. It may not happen as rapidly as we wish. It **will** happen. It is too bad that some men cannot see far enough ahead to react properly.

2PE 2:10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

The false teachers of whom Peter warns are not respectful of any authority, especially that of God. They are determined to pursue their own lust and pride, regardless of the power of God. When they should exhibit fear and trembling, they ridicule the powers that be.

2PE 2:11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

They are willing to run down the most faithful of Christians. Although angels would recognize the

righteous condition of the authorities, these evil mockers accuse them unjustly.

Is this not the height of foolishness. Angels are far more powerful than men. Yet, these men oppose the faithful leaders and attempt to destroy their authority. We could expect it. If they have no fear of God himself, why would they fear to ridicule and accuse God's servants?

2PE 2:12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

The beast world was not created to share in eternal life. They live and die. These ungodly teachers are headed for the **second** death. They forfeit all claim to living in the eternal presence of God. Why would he have the slightest mercy upon them in judgment. They have steadily proven they do not wish to abide in his will.

With all of their smooth deception, they do not know what they are talking about. They are shortsighted and have confined their minds to the temporal world. The real and eternal are beyond their sphere of thought.

2PE 2:13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

Sodom, Israel and the rebellious angels all reaped as they had sown. These false teachers will do the same. We do not usually use the word “reward” to refer to retribution. The reward these evil persons will receive is anything but pleasant. God will call them to account.

They are so shameless they see fit to commit their wickedness even in the daytime. When one becomes so bold as to no longer feel any shame over his sins, that individual has fallen extremely low.

Christians are expected to be clothed in the white robes of righteousness. But when God looks at his saints, all too often he is dismayed by the sin stains he finds among his people. These people make a game of seeing how much they can get away with as they mix and mingle with the faithful.

2PE 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

I am reminded of the statement in Genesis informing us that those persons in the days of Noah had allowed their minds to become so filled with sin that they could be described as thinking only on evil continually. These false teachers eyes were searching constantly for the chance to commit adultery. As long as they were so saturated with such thinking, they could not give themselves to godly living. The verse does not teach that it was impossible for them to cease from their evil ways.

It teaches that as long as they filled their minds with evil, they could not.

They were unstable themselves, and being unstable, they cause others to be deceived.

Spiritual exercise, like physical exercise, is vital to proper development. However, these men were exercising their hearts in the wrong direction. They were practicing covetousness. Their practice had apparently caused them to become expert in their wickedness. God describes them as cursed children. What a sad description! To be a cursed child of God meant that at one time they had repented of their sins and had been baptized into the body of Christ and the family of God. Now they had renounced all of that and had reversed their directions. I would not wish to be in their shoes.

2PE 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

Can one fall from grace? He most certainly can! You cannot forsake the right way unless you have at one time been on that way. Balaam was a prophet of God. He was persuaded, because of his covetous heart, to turn from service of the Lord to disservice. He, as well as these false teachers, had fallen from the highway of holiness. They were willing to curse and harm God's people for material gain.

2PE 2:16 But was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

God caused a donkey to rebuke Balaam for his foolish actions. Balaam is said to have gone mad. We could use the word insane. It requires a mind diseased with sin to turn from being a faithful child of God to such self centered ways as these men had done.

2PE 2:17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

A well without water makes promises it cannot keep. Picture yourself having come through burning desert sand. Your throat is parched and your body longs for water. A well looms up in the distance. You hurry along knowing that just ahead there is relief. Then, you arrive at the well and find no water present. Not only are you thirsty. You are grief stricken over the loss of hope. The situation is the same with those who attempt to find spiritual refreshment in the doctrines of deceptive teachers.

2PE 2:18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

These servants of Satan are great debaters and orators. They utter most impressive and beautiful speeches. There is but one problem. The speech is empty and meaningless. It leads to destruction, not God.

Through their fine speeches they are able to entrap those who have previously escaped from Satan. Those good men and women had entirely removed themselves from the kingdom of darkness and had been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Now these evil men snatch them from the light and plunge them back into the darkness where Satan reigns.

2PE 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Why do the heathen rage? They rage at the bonds they imagine prevent them from doing just as they please. Bertrand Russell, the famous English author of the book, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, was very honest about the matter. He flatly declared that he did not want to be a Christian because Christianity was too restrictive.

God makes it clear that the yoke which is placed upon the Christian is far lighter than the bondage of sin. We must ask ourselves the question, "Which is better, to be controlled by an all powerful, loving God, or to be pulled ever downward by the lust and pride of the flesh." The real slave is the servant of

sin, not the servant of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31-32).

These men and their deceived converts are worse off than a caged tiger. At least the tiger knows he is in a cage. These deluded people are caged in by their sins, and do not know it.

2PE 2:20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Peter will now use a couple of illustrations to show just how disgusting it is to leave faithful service in the Kingdom of God, to return to the bondage of Satan. This condition is so serious that they are in an even worse condition than they were before they were converted to Christ.

One wonders if this verse indicates degrees of punishment in hell. Will there be an even sorer punishment for those who have tasted of the good way and then turned their back on it than there will be for those who never experienced life in Christ? Or is it that once one has turned away in such manner, it is even more difficult to bring them back into the fold of God? In either case, the situation is deadly serious.

2PE 2:21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

To turn away is almost as if one were spitting in the face of the Son of God. All three members of the Godhead are insulted. God is mocked because the gift of his Son is ridiculed. Christ is crucified afresh because his sacrifice is considered useless. The Holy Spirit is quenched because the inspired Word is despised. In addition, the faithful members of the family of God are insulted because their commitment to God has been questioned.

2PE 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Most of us have seen a sick dog eating it's own vomit. I can think of absolutely nothing more repulsive. Peter uses this feeling of repulsion to make his point that these false teachers and their followers are as disgusting as you can get.

His second illustration is that of the sow who has been cleaned from her stinking unsightly condition brought about by the mud of the pigpen, and who then goes directly back and wallows in that mire and mud. These were men who had been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. Now they turned back and

wallowed again in the filth of sin. How stupid can you get?

Chapter 3

2PE 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

This verse is fairly substantial evidence that II Peter was written by the same person as I Peter. One could consider the claim to be false. However, this would be a strange situation; one in which the author is condemning lies and false teaching while he himself is guilty of the very things he condemns. This is highly unlikely.

2PE 3:2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

In both letters a main purpose was to remind his readers of the importance of remembering the things taught by the prophets of old and the message of the apostles as delivered by the Lord. There was strong danger they would forget. That would lead to apostasy.

2PE 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

When are the last days? I do not think they are the Christian age as a whole. I believe Peter refers to dangers which lay ahead in his time, and that he

did not consider himself as living in those last days. From what we have read in this epistle, there were scoffers who walked after their own lusts even as he wrote. The very tone of his words, however, leads me to think he is talking about a future increase in the number of these deceivers, and their threat to faithful Christians.

Scoffers in every age act in the manner they do because they are callous to the importance of the truth as revealed by God. Their own gain is their only real concern.

2PE 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

As time wears on these mockers will persuade themselves the promise of Christ's return in judgment was invalid. The tragedy of the matter is that these were not atheists or agnostics. These were men who posed as Christians and mingled with the true and faithful daily.

Solomon recognized the fallacy of limiting one's thinking to that which takes place "under the sun." If one is deceived into thinking the only reality is that which occurs only in the realm of the natural, he will arrive at false conclusions. Solomon noted that if one takes that very limited viewpoint he will draw the conclusions formulated by the teachers of which Peter speaks. The rivers run into the sea and return to cycle again. The man is born. He grows

old. He dies in similar manner to the beast, and another man takes his place “under the sun.”

Two thousand years after Peter gave his warning, the population of the world has been deluded into believing what scientists now call the “principal of uniformitarianism. Since science is limited to investigations in the natural world, and since science has led to many awesome changes in our living conditions, men have concluded there is nothing superior to the natural world. It could hardly be expressed more clearly than Peter phrased it. “All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” Supposedly the events of “**yesterday** and **far away**” can be explained by the events occurring in the **here and now**.

Those who limit their vision to the material world are wrong! There is a reality superior to nature. There is a God in heaven. Things have not continued as they were from the beginning of creation. God has intervened in the past and he will intervene again in the future. Uniformitarianism is useful in scientific investigation. Science would be seriously handicapped if the law of gravity acted one way today, and another way tomorrow. But, we must not delude ourselves into thinking all of reality is confined to the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. God has made a promise that Christ will come again. We would do well to be ready when that promise is kept.

We are presently seeing the effects of harboring deistic, agnostic and atheistic world views. Crime, greed, drugs, sexual perversions and a host of other

ills are closely related to the feeling that if there is a God, he has more important things to do than to interfere in the affairs of mankind. Men no longer fear the judgment or believe there is a heaven or a hell.

2PE 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

For men to believe completely in the principal of uniformitarianism, they must deliberately ignore what the scriptures say about the flood in the time of Noah. In that day, much as it is today, part of the earth was covered by water and part stood above the water.

2PE 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

That part of the earth which had stood above the water was completely covered by the flood, even above the highest mountains. All mankind, with the exception of Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, were drowned in the flood. The foolish believers in uniformitarianism have seen fit to ignore the clear teachings of the Bible

2PE 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Immediately after the flood, God placed the rainbow in the sky and made a covenant with man that he would never again destroy mankind in that same manner. He did not say that he would never again destroy the earth.

Peter makes it clear God is planning to do just that. Only the next time the destruction will come through fire rather than water. That fire will be accompanied by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be accompanied also by the final judgment with its eternal punishment of the wicked and rewards for the faithful.

2PE 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Because of the extremely long period of time since the promise of Jesus return, men have decided he will not keep that promise. The problem is their inability or unwillingness to recognize the difference in the way an eternal God perceives things and the way finite and limited men perceive things. What if God, for a thousand years, has not kept the promise that Christ will return? A thousand years to the mind of the eternal God is no more than a single day in the mind of a man. Time is not the measure of God's reliability. He did not promise a date. He promised an event.

2PE 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;

but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Men often break their promises. Sometimes it happens because they are undependable and make promises they do not even intend to keep. Other times they are prevented from keeping their promises by conditions beyond their control.

Neither of these things is true with God. He is absolutely dependable. There is nothing powerful enough to prevent him from keeping the promises he makes. He will honor his word.

The reason he has not yet brought an end to this world is his reluctance to see men perish in the second death. He has presented the gospel of Christ as a means of salvaging the precious souls of men. God desires to have a family with him in eternity. He will not cease his work in this world until that family is completed. He knows when the proper time has come to bring the curtain down. In the meantime, he has made it possible for men to repent and escape from the destructive power of Satan. How foolish of men not to respond to such patience!

2PE 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

This patience will not last forever. Christ will return. There will be no announcement thirty minutes ahead of time which will allow the wicked to make a last minute retraction of the rebellious ways. It will come unexpectedly as a thief does in the middle of the night.

When it comes, this present world will be altered beyond recognition. The sun, moon and stars will suffer a gigantic explosion. The temperature will be so hot the very elements which make up the physical world will be melted. All of the things which have been done on earth will be wiped away.

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

Peter feels it is reasonable to conclude that men should live holy and godly lives as they prepare for that great day. Vast numbers of Christians have agreed with him over many centuries. They have ordered their lives with complete confidence Christ is coming back to receive them unto himself forevermore and to live with them in the place he is preparing for that purpose.

How different is such hope from the despair found among those who have honestly faced up to the end as posited by the **natural** man. I refer the reader to Bertrand Russell, the famous English atheist again. Russell admitted that his way of thinking demanded that he believe all the hopes and dreams

and accomplishments of all mankind through all of history were doomed to be buried in the heat death of the universe. Either the earth would be swallowed up someday as the sun passed from its present stage into a red giant, moving outward from its present size until it encompassed the entire solar system, or if this did not take place, entropy increasing until absolute disorder prevailed with all things being reduced to an even distribution of heat.

I think the Christian view is infinitely more hopeful, and I might also say more logical than that of Russell and his companions. You and I, as Christians, expect to escape from the bondage of corruption and be translated into the presence of the glorified Lamb of God.

2PE 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

For a few fleeting days we shall run the race which is set before us. We have set our eyes on Christ who has already finished the course and awaits us at the end. We do not fear that day of Christ's return. We anticipate it with the greatest of joy. Those who crucified, and do still crucify the Son of God afresh, will weep in remorse. Those who follow in his holy steps will sing the new song of the redeemed.

2PE 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In spite of the two thousand years which have passed since the promise was made, we still believe it! There will be new heavens and a new earth. But only the righteous will dwell there. The adulterers, liars, covetous and self-centered will be immersed in a lake of fire. They will not contaminate that City of God.

There has been much discussion over whether the new heavens and the new earth will be a rejuvenated creation, or whether some remnant of the old heaven and earth will be carried over into the new. I have wrestled long with these thoughts. Some of the finest scholars in the church in the past have held that the new heavens and earth will be a purified version of the old one. They believe the place Christ has gone to prepare for us is the present creation, escaped from the bondage of corruption. Romans 8 is a basic source used to support this view. Present members of the Church of Christ tend to ridicule such a view. They say it would be difficult to present a more complete picture of annihilation than the one presented here and in Revelation 21:1-4. The terms **dissolved, melted, burned up,** and **passed away** are all used to tell of the replacement of the old by the new. In answer to this the older scholars would point out that salt dissolved in water is still salt, iron which is melted is still iron and wood which has burned leaves ashes.

In addition, one may examine the picture Paul gives of the resurrection body in the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians. The old body is buried and goes back to the dust. Yet the word “it” is used of both the old body and the new incorruptible one. “It” is buried and “it” is raised. Yet the glory of the new is as different from the glory of the old as the glory of the sun is greater than the glory of the stars. Is it a new body, or is it the old body rejuvenated?

I leave the reader to draw his own conclusion based upon the study of the scriptures. I must confess my personal limitations. One thing I know. Since Jesus Christ has been preparing a place for me, I believe he will return for me. I look for that new heavens and earth, and I hasten toward it.

2PE 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

In spite of all of the forces which face Christians, such as these false teachers that Peter warns of, we must continue in holy conduct. We must keep our robes spotlessly white and our souls radiating the purity of Jesus. Then, when he comes, we will be prepared for the marriage feast. He will own us and crown us as his own.

2PE 3:15 And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to

the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

The seemingly long periods of suffering which Christians must undergo while they wait must be viewed as preparation for salvation. This agrees with many of the statements the apostle Paul made in several of his letters.

Is it not interesting that Paul once confronted Peter with his unwillingness to treat the Gentiles as he should have. Yet, now we find Peter commending Paul and praising his wisdom. Would it not be wonderful if the entire body of Christ could find such a forgiving and appreciative spirit.

2PE 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Yes, some of the writings of Paul are very difficult to thoroughly understand. This is especially true with respect to the book of Romans. Some of these passages have indeed been wrested by unstable men in the attempt to make them fit a preconceived position. When this happens both the deceptive teacher, and the ones who are deceived, walk the wide way which leads to spiritual death.

2PE 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye

**being led away with the error of the wicked,
fall from your own steadfastness.**

Peter has now discharged his responsibility. His readers have been adequately warned before the time. They must steadfastly continue in the truth and avoid being captured by the gainsayers who would plunge them back into the world.

2PE 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

One either lives and grows, or one dies. Knowing this, Peter urges his readers to grow and live. Honest study of the truth of Christ, as presented by the apostles, will lead to increased approval and grace in the sight of all three members of the Godhead.

Peter does not hunger for the glory which belongs to the Son of God. To Christ must the glory go, today and forever.

What a wonderful set of two letters we have from the apostle who once denied him thrice in a short time, but whose praise of his Lord now reaches all the way from Pentecost to the new heavens and earth!



**The Book Of
I John**

Introduction

The Author

Although the epistle does not begin with the name of the author as many of the New Testament letters do, there is little doubt that the author of this work is the same as the one who wrote the gospel of John which is identified by name. The sentence construction and the major themes of both the gospel and the present work show much similarity. The apostle John is assumed to be the author. It is difficult to find evidence within the letter which would locate the time and place of writing. It does appear to be the writing of an older man. Various writers have guessed at times from A.D. 68 to A.D. 97.

The place is no more easily identified than the time. Provided it is correct that the apostle John was the writer, and that the apostle John spent much of his latter years in Ephesus, it is assumed that the area of Ephesus was the location.

The Purpose of the Letter

The latter years of the first century had seen a dimming of the enthusiasm of many Christians when compared with the excitement which was present at the birth of Christianity. A sizable number had left their first love. There was need for a reminder that the saints should cherish the opportunity of walking in the fellowship of Jesus Christ and also in the fellowship of one another.

There had been a lessening of the desire to be separate and distinct from the world. Bible principles had been put into second place and the world had begun to replace them in the hearts of these descendents of the earliest Christians.

Christians were not as much in danger of persecution from the outside as they once were. The danger at the time I John was written was from false teachers on the inside.

A philosophy called gnosticism was prevailed. The gnostics held that the entire material world was evil. It was unthinkable to them that the Son of God would come in the flesh. John wrote that, "*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of antichrist*" (I John 42-3).

A Very Brief Outline

1. God is Light.
2. God is Love.
3. God is Life.

Chapter 1

1JO 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

There are two possibilities as to the meaning of “the beginning” here. It could be that John is speaking of the beginning of the creation. The word beginning is used in Genesis 1:1, in John 1:1 and in the present passage, 1 John 1:1

It is also possible that it is speaking of the beginning of the ministry of Christ, as he called his apostles. Christ took upon himself the form of a servant. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This gave the apostles the opportunity of observing his reality with the five senses. They could see him, hear him and touch him. Remember that when Judas was replaced by Matthias, after his suicide, a major qualification was that the chosen person must have been associated with Christ from the time of his baptism until he was ascended into heaven (Acts 1:21-22).

The apostles had a very special task. They were to deliver the teaching of Christ to the world. Their qualifications matched their responsibilities. They were first hand students, sitting at the feet of the Word.

1JO 1:2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew

unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth and the life* (John 14:6). Man was made in the image of God and was immortal before taking of the fruit of the Garden of Eden. He lost that perfection in his disobedience. When Jesus came, he provided fallen man with the opportunity to see that image once more in its full glory. Physically, he died upon the cross. Spiritually he ever lives.

From the beginning, Christ was one of the three persons in the Godhead. He then was born in the flesh that the apostles and others might see him and hear him. It was the responsibility of the apostles to relay the truth which he presented to them on to others that whosoever believeth in Him might have eternal life.

1JO 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The apostles discharged their responsibilities. They had heard and seen the Christ. They were determined to share their experiences with the multitudes. Nothing was more important to them than to know others had come to a knowledge of the truth and had been united with Christ, and thus enjoyed the fellowship of the family of God.

The fellowship of Christianity is infinitely more important than membership in any organization founded by men, such as civic clubs or academic institutions.

1JO 1:4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Not only did John and the other inspired writers address the world of that day; they continue to be read by multiplied millions down to the day in which we live. As a result of their labors, men of many centuries and of many nations may know the joy of life in the Kingdom of God. No joy matches that joy. All other pleasures dim and fall by the wayside. The joy of the Kingdom of God extends from the physical into the spiritual, and from time into eternity.

1JO 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

John has established his authority to teach. It came directly from the Christ. His motivation for delivering the teaching of Christ to others was not personal reward. It was that others might share in the joy of eternal life.

Now he launches into the heart of his message. God is light. There could be several lessons in this one statement. Light has at least three beneficial actions. It illuminates. It energizes. It purifies. Thus,

God enables men to see the path of holiness. He provides the physical and spiritual strength to walk that path. And He removes the filth of sin from the souls of those who will repent and obey.

The statement in this verse is primarily intended to convey the first of these three actions. God provides illumination for men that they may see the way of life. In no case does God confuse the issue by mixing the truth with the slightest amount of deception and confusion. The voice of Christ may always be heard as aye, and never both aye and nay. There is no guile in his mouth and there is no sin in his life.

1JO 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

Since God is absolutely holy and absolutely truthful, anyone who walks in sin and teaches lies is automatically separating himself from God. There can be no fellowship between light and darkness.

There were those in John's day who taught that the flesh could sin while the spirit remained holy. John denies this. The man who claims to be a Christian, yet walks in sin, is a hypocrite. He lives a lie.

1JO 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

There are those who walk in the flesh, and those who walk in the spirit. Occasionally, those who walk in the flesh will perform some act in harmony with the will of God and the welfare of their fellowman. However, their general walk of life is self centered and greedy. It is a walk in darkness. Occasionally, those who walk in the Spirit will slip and transgress the will of God. However, their general walk is God centered and is a walk in the light.

For those who walk in the light, and only transgress when they are overtaken by sin, the blood of Christ which is available in the body of Christ constantly purifies the soul and removes the stain of sin. I have heard the illustration of a windshield wiper continually cleaning the windshield of an automobile as it moves down the road. The illustration is not perfect, but it is helpful.

1JO 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Those in John's day who claimed they had no sin were deluded. To say one has no sin is a lie within itself. *All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). This was true in John's day and it is just as true today. Some men sin less than others. But all men sin and need the forgiveness of God and the power of the purifying blood of the Saviour.

1JO 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The beautiful part of the plan of salvation is that when men walk in the light, God is willing to forgive those sins which are occasionally committed, if we are willing to confess them and repent of them.

We are not to sin that grace may abound. Paul said in Romans 6:1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* The mercy and grace of God is not meant as a license for walking in the flesh. It is a gift which overcomes human frailty.

1JO 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

God has flatly stated that all men have sinned and do sin. Therefore, any man who claims he has not sinned has denied God's honesty. He has refused to digest the truth as God has given it. Consequently, the truth is not in him. The Publican, who cried out to heaven, *God be merciful to me, a sinner.* was justified. The Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not a sinner like other men, went down to his house unjustified.

Chapter 2

1JO 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

John has just made it clear that anyone who says he has not sinned makes God a liar. Now he introduces the grace of God into the picture. If a child of the Father in heaven does become caught up in sin on occasion, a way has been provided that the sin will not separate that person from God. That avenue is the advocacy of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is perfectly righteous. He is the only means by which the sinner may claim the right to approach the Father's throne.

1JO 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The blood of Jesus Christ is capable of removing the guilt of our sins. When the guilt is removed, the wrath of God is removed. This is the idea being presented here. Jesus has made it possible that the sins of any person who will appropriate the blood of the Saviour may be cleansed of his sin, and may escape Divine wrath. This is not limited to the Jew. It is offered to any person who will comply with the conditions presented in the plan of salvation, regardless of nationality, gender, race, etc.

1JO 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

There is a strong connection made here between knowing Christ and loving Christ. Jesus said in John 14:15 *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* John was having to contend with men who claimed to have special insights which others did not enjoy. At the same time, they were claiming it was all right for the flesh to sin. This could take place and the soul would still be pure. John says, “If you are going to claim you have spiritual insight, you must honor Christ’s statement and keep his commandments.”

1JO 2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

This is strong language. Men do not appreciate being labeled as liars. That is exactly what John says these foolish persons are. Regardless of the claims, if a man does not keep Christ’s commandments, he neither loves Christ, or even knows him. He certainly has no special insights into spiritual truth.

1JO 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

Hypocrisy has no place in Christianity. Love for Christ is seriously flawed when one rejects his

teaching. If a man rejects the teachings of the Master, he is not in Christ. He cannot expect to receive the spiritual blessings mentioned in Ephesians 1:3. If we do not keep his commandments, we do not love him, nor are we in him. Perfect love casteth out fear. These, having imperfect love, need to fear the wrath which is to come.

1JO 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

It is a precious privilege to be “in Christ.” There are some who truly abide in him and Christ in them. There are others who only claim to be in Christ, but who are not so. The man whose life does not match his claims makes a mockery of the Son of God.

1JO 2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

I think it strange that the first word in this verse is translated “brethren.” The word is **agaphtoi**. It is a plural from the Greek *agape*, dealing with very deep love. It would have been more accurate to have translated it as “loved ones.” It would also have made the verse much clearer. Some manuscripts do have the Greek “**adelfoi**” rather than “**Agaphtoiv**.”

The command to love one another was an old commandment. The Jews had received such

directions from of old. *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deut. 6:5). Also Lev. 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.* In addition, these first century Christians had been taught to love one another from the beginning of their Christian experience. Thus, the command to love each other was an old commandment. They knew about it.

1JO 2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

The new commandment can hardly be anything other than the one which Jesus gave to his disciples. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).* The new commandment is much more intense than the old. We are not only to love God and to love one another. We are to love one another **as Christ has loved us.** If we are to be in Christ, and walk as Christ walked, we must love as He loved.

1JO 2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

John is the disciple of love. He never tires of extolling its greatness. He points out a major contradiction. There are those saying they walk in the light and have unique understanding of the truth. At the same time, these persons hate their brethren. This cannot be. Hatred removes one from the light and plunges him into spiritual darkness. Such a person might as well be blind. He sees nothing.

1JO 2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

In contrast with the person who hates his brother, the one who loves his brother walks continuously in the light. He not only sees where he is going. He enables others also to see. His life is consistent with his claims. The one who causes his brother to stumble can hardly be said to love him.

1JO 2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Here is repetition for emphasis. The man who hates his brother is stumbling along, far from the true path of righteousness. He may well see perfectly physically; but he is blind spiritually. He simply does not know where he is headed. It is easier to know you are physically blind than to know you are spiritually blind.

1JO 2:12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

The apostle likes to speak of an entire congregation as his "little children." John writes to them because they have been cleansed from their sin and he desires that they remain pure. Jesus gave his life that men's sins might be forgiven. All of the suffering and persecution which he endured is compensated for when men avail themselves of the escape from spiritual death which he provided.

1JO 2:13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

The fathers would be those who were mature in the Christian faith. They had been Christians long enough to have produced new converts through their efforts.

The young men would then be those who fill the gap between the new Christians and those who are mature. They are the strong soldiers who have defeated Satan and his angels, at least for the present.

Now he refers to the little children again. This time it appears that he is concerned with differing levels of maturity within the congregation instead

of using a general term to include all of the members of the congregation. These little children are the babes in Christ, as contrasted with the fathers. These little ones have come to know the Father in heaven as their own.

1JO 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

The fathers have been acquainted with Christ and his system of life for a long time. These fathers should place great value on their past fellowship with Christ, God, the Holy Spirit and fellow Christians.

The young men are strong and have much to offer in way of energy. They must rejoice that they have the power to overcome Satan with the power of the gospel.

Do not think the repetition in the above verses is wasted words. There are slight variations in the ideas as the picture is rounded out.

1JO 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

John will now discuss misdirected love. He has been emphasizing the extreme importance of the

love of the brethren. One cannot abide in the light and fail to love them. However, there is another type of love which has no part in the life of the Christian. That is the love of the world. To love the brethren is to walk in the light. To love the world is to walk in darkness. One can love one or the other. He cannot love both.

1JO 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Satan is the prince of this world. He has three seducing agents. They are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. He used each of them on Eve in the garden. He attempted to use them on Jesus Christ when he tempted him at the beginning of his ministry. He has used them on every person alive through every age.

One first looks at that which is forbidden. It is attractive and does not reveal the bitterness which comes later. After looking, man tastes, or revels in satisfying the fleshly and carnal appetites. The pride of life enters when man is persuaded to place his own will above that of the Godhead and legislate for himself as to what is right and wrong. All three of these temptations march hand in hand.

Notice that all three of these tools of the Devil fasten man's attention upon himself. This is the strong connection which ties in what is said here with the earlier remarks. If a man fastens his

affections upon himself, he will hate his brother. Satan would like nothing better than to persuade all men to look inward at the expense of all other men.

1JO 2:17 And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

This world is not eternal. It will pass away. The desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye and the vaunting of one's own self are all destined to be removed from existence. Physical life is temporary. The spiritual life is not so. The person who remains faithful to the will of God will probably die a physical death. His soul will not die. It will live forever in the presence of the Divine.

1JO 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

The little children this time are all of those whom he addressed previously, including the fathers, the young men and the little children. John is warning all of the Christians that those who oppose Christ are on every side.

There are two possibilities for the meaning of the "last time." Obviously it is not referring to the last few years before his second coming. We are now many centuries beyond that point. It could be that

he is speaking of the Christian age as compared with the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages. He would then be saying that with the coming of Christ, there would necessarily follow those who opposed him; those who are antiChrist. The other possibility is that he is speaking of the last days of the Christian age as compared with the earlier days before the opposition had reached the stage it had reached as he spoke.

I do not believe John spoke these words because he was deluded into thinking Christ was about to return.

We often hear of a single individual who is to unite the non-Christian forces against the Son of God. This is not the picture presented in the scriptures. The antichristian is any person who manifests the spirit of opposition to the cause of our Lord. There are many antichrists.

1JO 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Some who had been Christians had departed from the faith. They had decided the Christian way was not for them. If they had remained true Christians, they would have continued with the faithful. By departing, they had made it evident that they no longer wished to share in the fellowship of God's children. It is probable that these had departed

because they loved the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life rather than the the family of God.

I have debated with a young man who used this verse, along with a number of others to try to prove that these **had never been** with Christ. The argument is unsound. The Bible does not say they had never been in fellowship. It says that at the time they departed, they were not of us.

1JO 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

This unction, or anointing, was a special blessing which they had received as Christians which allowed them to determine the truth of what was being preached to them. Various spiritual gifts were granted in these apostolic days before the Bible was completed. It allowed the validity of the message to be tested to see if the spirit presenting it was of Christ or not.

The gnostics gloried in their special insights. John is saying all Christians have the ability to distinguish truth. It is not the possession of a special few. This does not mean every Christian was inspired. It does mean there were enough Christians with the gift of testing the spirits to separate the wheat from the chaff.

1JO 2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

John is not writing this letter to provide new information for them. He writes to remind them of truths they already knew and needed to grasp tightly. Lies and truth do not mix. Lies do not proceed from truth.

1JO 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

The most vicious liar in the world is the man who denies Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God, anointed as King and Saviour of mankind. The man who denies this truth is obviously antichrist. He has, in denying the Son of God, denied the Father who sent the Son.

1JO 2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

It is not possible to deny the Son of God without denying the Father in heaven. It is just as true that the one who accepts Christ as the Son of God has accepted his Father also. Clearly, there were some who wished to worship Jehovah but who were unwilling to be subject to His Son.

1JO 2:24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

From the time of their baptism, these Christians had heard the Word of God. They were to allow that Word to live in their hearts and minds. If they would hold tight to that which they had been taught, they would not go out from the fellowship of the family of God, but would continue in the love of the Father, the Son and the brethren.

Reject the Word of God and cast it from you and you will soon separate yourself from God's family.

1JO 2:25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

God did not create man to die. Man brought death upon himself. Even after this disaster, God began to make arrangements for man to reclaim eternal life. Abraham was promised that through his Seed all nations would be blessed. The New Testament makes it clear that this blessing is life eternal. We have but to please God for that grace to be awarded to us. It is the gift of God. However it only comes to those who accept the teaching of the Son and follow it.

1JO 2:26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

The point of John's writing this letter becomes clearly evident in this verse. The various points he has been making are meant to bolster the faith of his beloved children that such faith may not be destroyed by those who would lead them away from their first love, Jesus Christ.

That which fortified them in that day will serve to do the same for us today. There are many attractions and pleasures of the world which are placed before us by antichristian spirits. The Word of God will protect us against those fiery darts, if we will but make use of it.

1JO 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The anointing which first century Christians had from Christ allowed them to recognize truth from error and try the spirits. They had Divine teaching presented to them by inspired teachers. There was no need that humans add to that teaching. It was absolute truth. It contained no error. Taking heed to it would insure that Christ abode in the Christian and the Christian abode in Christ.

When the false teacher arrived on the scene, the Christian who had received the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit would be prepared to maintain his fidelity to Christ.

This verse does not teach that every Christian is his own channel for the revelation of the truth. The anointing was provided through inspired men. Each Christian had need of studying those revealed truths. Each Christian today must study to show himself approved, rightly dividing the Word of God.

1JO 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

The responsibility and privilege of each Christian is to continue to abide in Christ and walk in the light of his truth. If that is done, when Christ returns the meeting will be a pleasant one. It will be a source of great joy. This will not be true of those who have denied Christ by their love for the world. They will be shamed and punished for their foolishness.

1JO 2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

The Christian should certainly be aware of the fact that Christ is without sin. If they have a grasp of that fact, they should also realize that those who are raised to walk in newness of life through the Spirit which quickened him will also walk in righteous paths. There are two interwoven truths here. The one who is born of Christ will walk righteously. The one who walks righteously proves he is alive in Christ.

Chapter 3

1JO 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Many men and women who are about to become foster parents have mulled the decision to adopt children. Those who do so generally manifest a very deep love for those youngsters who are to enter into their family. God has bestowed an even greater love upon those who become Christians. The human parent who adopts a child often wonders about the genetic makeup of the child. Will he or she fit into the family? Will undesirable character traits from the birth parents appear in the behavior of the child?

God is perfect. Each one of us is a sinner. It required an unimaginable manner of love for a perfect divine personality to adopt sin stained and rebellious children such as we. Yet, he has done so. Our gratitude should be beyond description.

There is a tremendous gap between the true Christian and the man who walks by the flesh, in the ways of the world. The world will never understand the Christian. It did not understand the Son of God. Neither will it understand God's other children. See John 15:18-20.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

1JO 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

We are today in an intermediate stage. We have resigned our citizenship in the world and have become the children of God. This means we have taken on new characteristics. The old man has been crucified and the new man has taken his place. There is still a change to anticipate. It will occur when Jesus Christ returns to claim his own. We will then be transformed in the twinkling of an eye and will be given new bodies. At present we are unable to conceive of the exact nature of those new spiritual bodies. Nevertheless, we look forward to our glorification. At that time we will be able to see him in his glorified condition, and we will be like him. I look forward to that time.

The following scriptures are closely related to this verse.

PHI 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,

according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

2CO 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

DEU 29:29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

1JO 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

There is no excuse for the man who is in Christ to walk in sin. We are told to *Be ye holy, for I am holy (Lev. 19:2)*. Christ left us an example that we should follow in his steps (I Pet. 2:21). Once cleansed we may remain pure by walking in the light as he is in the light (I John 1:7).

It is a tragic sight to observe those who wish to be known as the children of the Living God, walking in sin and darkness. They will have to answer to the Father in heaven for their folly.

1JO 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

It seems that some to whom John wrote failed to understand the meaning of sin. He gives the Divine definition here in no uncertain terms. Sin is the transgression of the law. Any man who breaks the

law of God is sinning, whether or not he admits the fact.

There are some today who wish to speak of Christians living under grace and not under law. We certainly do live by the grace of God. But that does not imply that we do not live under law. We have already been told in this book that if a man says he does not sin he makes God a liar. All men have sinned, from Adam to ourselves. This can only be true if we live under law. *Where there is no law there is no sin.* We have sinned. Therefore, we live under law. It is not the law delivered by Moses, which left men condemned to the second death. But, it is law, and anyone who breaks it is a sinner who must depend upon the grace and mercy of God to enter heaven.

1JO 3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

The purpose of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice upon the cross was to make possible the removal of sin. He came as the perfect sacrifice, having no sin nor guile. How cruel and ungrateful it is that men would entertain the thought of harboring sin within their souls!

This kind of action on the part of the children of God is unthinkable. For the moment, sin may sneak up on us. In the long run, it must be conquered.

1JO 3:6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

There is a great difference between abiding in sin and being overtaken by a sin. If one abides in Christ, he will not allow sin to abide in him. Both of these statements have to do with consistent and deliberate association. Peter, Paul and John himself must have sinned on occasion. They were not, however, guilty of opening the door of their heart and inviting sin to become a habitual resident. If Christ lives in the Christian, and the Christian in Christ, there will be no room for spiritual filth.

The man who allows sin to have dominion over him has not caught a true vision of what Christ is, and he surely ought not to proclaim to the world that he is intimately acquainted with him.

1JO 3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

We must be careful not to be deceived into thinking that one may sin and lean back on the grace of God to provide us a license. Paul spoke decisively on that issue in Romans 6 *Shall we sin that grace may abound—God forbid.* A righteous man leads a righteous life. There is no other way. A fountain does not send forth both sweet and bitter water (James 3:11-12).

1JO 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

John continues to speak of the one who allows sin to make a permanent residence in his heart. This man is the servant of Satan. He is not a child of God. Christ did not come into the world to condone such behavior. Christ came, suffered and died, that the Devil might be vanquished. The man who promotes Satan's way of life is a traitor to the cause of the Son of God.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God IJO 3:9.

Being born of God requires three things.

1. The seed (The Word of God) must be planted and germinate.
2. Our will must become subject to the will of God.

3. The Spirit of life must energize and guide our lives.

Previously John has talked about the blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin. Now he tackles a related idea. In order for the blood of Christ to continually cleanse and purify the one who is in the body of Christ, that one must have the Spirit of God ablaze within his heart and be led by it rather than by his own carnal appetites and pride.

This verse does not teach that a man who has once been born of God can never fall from grace. It teaches that he is no longer alive in Christ when he deliberately and continually participates in a life of sin.

We should note that the Greek word **dunatai** is used in this verse. The dedicated Christian is not **able** to sin because he is born of God. However, when he ceases to be a faithful child of God and proves by his actions that he is a child of Satan, he can and does sin.

1JO 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

One can distinguish between the children of God and the children of the Devil by the nature of their lives. The man who lives a life of unrighteousness is not a child of God. Neither is the man who despises the Father's children. If you love God, you will keep his commandments. If you love the Father, you will

also love His children. The absence of either of these is proof that you are not his true child.

1JO 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

We are back again to the new commandment. Religions focus upon differing central points. Some promote lust. Some fertility of the land. Some fate and fortune. Christianity is built upon love of God and of one's fellowman. From beginning to end, it presents genuine love as the key to the satisfying life.

1JO 3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Cain is used as a prime example of the consequences of hatred of one's brother (Gen. 4:4-8). By his evil actions, Cain proved himself to be a child of Satan. Jealousy and envy lead to murder, even as faith and love mutually encourage concern for brethren.

It is apparent that there are spiritual laws relating to the growth of evil and righteousness, just as there are in the harvesting of a crop. When the seed is sown, the harvest normally is more abundant than the quantity sown.

Cain's murder of Abel was an outgrowth Jehovah's rejection of Cain's sacrifice. If he had obeyed the will

of God, his sacrifice would have pleased God. He would then have had no motivation for killing Abel. It is common for the wicked to despise the righteous and accuse them of a “holier than thou” attitude, simply because the righteous are righteous. No other reason is necessary to provoke that hatred.

1JO 3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Both Peter and John provide this truth for us (I Peter 4:12). The first priority of the world is self. The first priority of the Christian is God and fellowman. The world does not understand the thought patterns, or the actions of the Christian. Therefore, it hates the righteous man. This hatred is a reality, but it is also a tragedy. I am not proud that the world hates me. I wish it did not. I will try to do all I can to remove this hatred, rather than to provoke it.

1JO 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

The wickedness of the world earns death, the wages of sin. The righteousness of God leads to life eternal, the gift of God. That person who repents and turns from wickedness to righteousness has passed from death unto life. One of the major identification marks of the one who has made this

transition is love of the brethren. If we do not love, we are not alive in Christ.

1JO 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Sin originates in the mind and heart. Once the man desires the destruction of his brother, he is guilty of murdering him before God. This is but one of the several instances of this pattern in the New Testament. He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her in his heart. He who covets his neighbor's property has stolen that property in his heart. Such persons forfeit approved standing with Jehovah and separate themselves from him in this world, and in the world to come.

1JO 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Jesus was God with us. He provided the example of true love when he willingly went to the cross and gave his physical life for us. When we are willing to sacrifice our own welfare for that of our brethren, we know we have taken upon ourselves the attitude of our Lord. We are expected to follow in his steps.

1JO 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and

shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Jesus said the person who did something for the least of his brethren did for him. It follows that the one who sees his brother in need and feels no compassion for him has refused compassion for Jesus. The love which caused Jesus to have compassion upon us does not exist within his heart. James informed us that it is not enough to say, “*Be ye warmed and filled.*” This must be backed by action.

1JO 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

It is much easier to talk about loving others than it is to manifest that love in action. If there is no action, there is no love. Lack of action means that our statements of love are not actually true. True love will come alive in caring deeds. Perhaps we are again seeing in the background a group of persons John is addressing who have been doing a great deal of talking with very little to support their claims of love.

1JO 3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

It is extremely important that there be no discrepancy between our heart and our lips. The

two must agree. If they do agree, we can be certain that God is pleased with us. He knows and appreciates such singleness of life.

1JO 3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

If we do not love the brethren, we know deep in our heart that we are wrong. Our conscience warns us of our error. But, far more serious is the fact that God, the supreme Judge, condemns us as sinners. We need not try to convince ourselves God is not aware of our lack of love. The Spirit of God is able to discern the heart and the mind of man.

1JO 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

The conscience is not always a safe guide. However, if our conscience tells us we are wrong, we must not ignore it. The man who does what he believes is wrong, has rebelled against God. It is certainly better for the conscience to be clear. We can then approach God with confidence that He will hear our prayers and respond positively.

1JO 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Our true love for one another, willingly sacrificing for others, causes God to show similar compassion for us. In fact, it was He who first showed compassion for us. There is a direct relationship between keeping the commandments of God, and receiving the blessings of God. We delude ourselves if we think we can ignore his commandments and receive his blessings. We do not earn His blessings nor do we deserve His grace, but we must please Him to receive his gifts.

1JO 3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

“This is my beloved Son, hear ye him,” cried the voice of the Father from heaven. *“Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins,”* said the Son. But it does not stop there. We are commanded to love one another as he has loved us. It is interesting that a command is given to love others. Some persons are quite unlovable. We must remember that God himself loved the world enough to give his Son, and that the Son loved the world enough to die for it. Surely, we can love our own brethren who have turned from the world.

1JO 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Shortly before his arrest in Gethsemene, Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers. In this prayer he desired that his followers might be one as He and the Father were one. He spoke of being in the Father, and the Father being in Him. He expects us to dwell in harmony with his will and through his Spirit.

I am persuaded there is far more to this matter of unity of the Spirit than we finite humans are able to comprehend. Love is the bond of perfection. The body of Christ is held together and functions through love. Hatred, jealousy and envy are not the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ. They are of the Devil. If we manifest love toward the brethren, we have allowed the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ to live within us. Notice that this Spirit is God given. It is a gift to those who obey Him.

Chapter 4

1JO 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Some men are gullible. Some men are deceptive. Put the two together and you have a dangerous combination. From the earliest times there have been those who have desired to persuade men they are prophets of God, when in fact, they are liars. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 warns of them. I Tim. 4:1 warns of them.

The spiritual gifts of apostolic days included one of **discerning the spirits (I Cor. 12:10)**. God expected the listeners of those days to examine the speakers. He expects us today to examine those who speak to us. Today the standard is the written Word of God. If the speaker teaches something in opposition to Holy Writings, he must be rejected. The world is full of men teaching from their own hearts rather than from the revealed will of God.

1JO 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

John 1:14 tells us the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Any man who is true to the revealed will of God will acknowledge that fact. It is clear that the ones to whom John was writing were dealing with some who denied Jesus Christ had come in the

flesh. They were false teachers and must be so treated. One who confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh will confess this conviction by both his teaching and his life

1JO 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Regardless of the claims of those who refuse to accept Christ as the Only Begotten Son, they are against Christ. They are therefore antichrist. What a tragedy it is to note that there are men filling pulpits today who do not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. Most of these so-called preachers are calling out for a social gospel. They attempt to fill stomachs and heal physical illnesses, or set up governmental operations which will lead to a better world in the here and now. They attempt to bypass the divine power entirely. They are antichrist.

John declared the antichrist to be in existence in his time. The antichrist is not a single man. The antichrist is the spirit which opposes the most basic claim of Christianity; that God was in Christ and that the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. The condition will probably become worse before the end of time. But it was present then, and it is present now, over nineteen hundred years later.

1JO 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

These false teachers can be overcome. Those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ and have become the children of God have defeated them. This is so because the Spirit of Christ which dwells in Christians is greater than the spirit of antichrist which motivates the carnal and worldly man.

The way may be burdensome. The sorrows and trials may seem too much to bear. In the end, the Christian will receive his reward for fidelity. The wicked shall be cut off and the righteous will inherit the earth (Psalm 37). We **have** overcome, and we **will** overcome

1JO 4:5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

We sometimes say, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Worldly teachers will speak from a worldly philosophy. They will appeal to temporal and worldly interests. They will be heard by the man whose goals are worldly. The Christian, as a child of God, must listen for a higher voice.

1JO 4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

There were some men who would listen to the apostles and there were others who would not. Those who heard had hearts susceptible to the spiritual things of God. Those who did not hear had hearts fastened on the things of the world. By this John could know who had the spirit of truth and who had the spirit of error. The ones who listened to spiritual things had the spirit of truth. The ones who refused to listen to the truth had the spirit of antichrist, or the spirit of error.

1JO 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

It is highly important that God's children love one another. We will all need the strength which comes from mutual comfort and edification. God is love. Therefore those who are of God will love that which is godly. If one is to make the claim that he truly knows God, as some of the false teachers of John's day were apparently doing, he had better demonstrate that knowledge and acquaintanceship with God by loving the brethren. If you love God you will love his saints.

1JO 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Lack of love for that which is godly is absolute proof that one does not know God. The children of God will resemble their Father.

1JO 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

How can we know a man loves his brethren? We can know by his self sacrificing spirit. The God of heaven allowed his Son to be ridiculed, beaten, and murdered on the cross in order that we might have eternal life. The child of God will sacrifice his own interests to advance the welfare of his brethren. Love is the desire for the welfare of that which is loved.

1JO 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Love did not begin with man. Love began with God. We love him because he first loved us. When we were yet sinners, God allowed his Son to die for us. Men do not love that much. They simply draw from that perfect love and try to approach it.

1JO 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

God expects his love to be emulated. Spiritual laws are similar to natural laws in some ways. The single grain of wheat brings forth dozens of grains in the harvest. Therefore, the example of God's love for us should bring forth a harvest of millions of

souls who love because he loved. God will **not** have a crop failure. The only question is whether each of us will be gathered into the garner as wheat, or cast into the fire as chaff. The man who loves is the wheat of God.

1JO 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

John's previous remarks provide a method for determining whether or not one is a child of God. Some who claim to be God's children are not. John now goes on to tell us it is impossible to see God with mortal eyes. If God dwells in us we will be able to detect it through the love which we have for the rest of his children. The love of God comes to its fulness in us when we love others.

John wrote another very similar verse in his account of the gospel. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:18). These two verses might, at first sight, seem to contradict certain other passages of the Bible. If no man has seen God at any time we must harmonize certain Old Testament events. Moses, for example, was said to have seen the back parts of God (Exo. 33:20-23). Isaiah was afraid he would die for having seen the King, the Lord of hosts (Isa. 6:1-6). Daniel saw one like unto the Son of man coming before the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14). The ancient of Days is surely Jehovah. Yet, in each of these cases, it was

not the very essence of God which was seen. It was some manifestation which was observable through the physical eye. God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. Some day, in a resurrected spiritual body, we may see him face to face. Now it is not so.

1JO 4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

The child is sometimes called a chip off the old block. There are basic similarities between the child and his or her parents. These are transmitted through the genetic materials in the egg and the sperm. They are also taught through association with the parents. So it is with the children of God. When one is born of God through the second birth, that person becomes a partaker of the divine nature. God actually gives of his own spiritual nature to his newborn. It is more than giving the influences and effects of the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God himself which is given. The life is in the Son. In addition, God continues to teach and train his children through the written Word. Thus, that spiritual babe is first brought to life, then it is molded and guided by the wisdom of the eternal Father in heaven.

1JO 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

John and the other apostles had walked and talked with the Christ. They had observed his miracles and his manner of life. They had eaten with him after the resurrection from the dead. They knew his claims were valid. They unhesitatingly affirmed that he is the Son of God. They are just as certain that he was sent by the Father to save us from our sin.

1JO 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

The confession spoken of in this verse, which separates the one in whom God dwells from the one in whom God does not dwell, is not a confession by word only. It is backed by daily actions which also make that same confession. A confession by word only proves little. Anyone may make claims. When that confession is made in tongue and deed, the individual abides in God, and God abides in him.

One can hardly avoid making comparisons between the phrasing here and that in Jesus prayer for unity in John, 17:20-26.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and

thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

1JO 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Not just John and the apostles, but every true Christian can be said to have known and believed that love that God has toward us. The Christian experience is centered in unselfish love of God and of our fellowman. This creates a unity of spirit between God and man which insures that we have captured that image in which we were originally created.

1JO 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Someday each of us will stand before the judgment seat of God to give an account of the life which we have lived. It will be very comforting in that day to know that we have made a serious attempt to follow the perfect example of our Lord and love all men, even our enemies. That is perfect love. We will only partially perfect it. But we must try.

1JO 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

John is to me the most interesting writer in the New Testament. I admire all of the New Testament penmen. But the thing that intrigues me with John is the apparent contradictions, which after examination prove not to be contradictions at all. We are told through Solomon to *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*. We are also instructed to work out our own salvation in **fear and trembling**.

There is a fear which is good and right. It is that great respect for Jehovah which causes us to avoid his wrath by obeying his will. There is another fear which ought never to be found in the Christian. It is that fear which comes about because one knows he has already placed himself in danger through his irresponsible manner of life. The person who imitates the love of Jesus Christ and the Father in heaven need not fear the fires of hell. His love has guided him away from the fire of God's wrath.

1JO 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Our love for him is made easier because he initiated the relationship. Many years ago I was impressed on a visit to the campus of David Lipscomb College. I had been raised in an area where it was difficult for me to make friends. I was very interested in becoming acquainted with some eligible young ladies at the time. In Michigan, I was always forced to take the initiative. On the campus at Lipscomb, girls who were complete strangers would speak in friendly fashion as we passed on the sidewalk. That made the development of friendship much easier. God has spoken first. That makes it easier.

1JO 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

No man or woman who hates God's children loves God. It is impossible to love God and hate his family.

Thomas was absent when Jesus Christ appeared to the other apostles in one instance. Later the Lord appeared again to them with Thomas present. Thomas had said he would believe only if he saw the nailprints in Jesus hands and the wound from the spear in his side. Jesus gave him that opportunity. When Thomas then cried out, **My Lord and my God**, Jesus commended him, and then added that those who were to come later, and who believed

without seeing were to be even more highly commended. It is easier when can see first hand. We can see our brethren. Surely we ought to be able to love them.

1JO 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

How strange. It is a commandment to love. Does not love just happen? Not according to this verse. Love is obviously an emotion which can be controlled by the will. We may decide to love, or not to love. If we love Christ, we will keep his commandments. One of the most important of those commandments is, *“Love one another.”*

Chapter 5

1JO 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

The theme of love of the brethren continues. This verse is not teaching that belief separate from actions is sufficient to be counted as a child of God. Even the demons believe and tremble. The belief described here is that belief which motivates action such as that of the Philippian jailor who washed the stripes of his prisoners and was baptized that same night. It is a belief that will be accompanied with deep concern for the welfare of every other brother and sister in Christ. If one does not harbor such love for the children of the Father, he is not a true child of the one who loved us enough to sacrifice his own Son for us.

1JO 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

If one does not keep the commandments of God, he does not love the children of God. Why? Because his own disobedience renders it more difficult for others to be faithful to their Father. A man who lives a wicked and disobedient life influences others to do the same. When they follow his example, they will be lost. To cause another to be eternally separated from the Father is certainly not a manifestation of love for either God or his children.

1JO 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Jesus said, *If ye love me ye will keep my commandments.* This is in perfect harmony with the present verse. Both the Father and the Son have sacrificed more than we will ever imagine in order that we might have strength and guidance to live righteously. For any man or woman to mock those sacrifices by ignoring the spiritual instructions provided is proof that love is absent. They have loved us enough to give everything for us. We should return that love with a love of our own which takes advantage of their offer by obedient subjection.

Such obedience is not demeaning in any way. No commandment of God has been given selfishly. Each is perfectly tuned to the divine knowledge of our needs. Thus it is not grievous to obey. Obedience will result in a complete and fulfilling life. It is disobedience that results in tragedy and embarrassment. It is not obedience that brings tragedy.

1JO 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Apparently some of those to whom John was writing were tempted to live in disobedience and still claim they were the children of God. They had embraced the world rather than opposing and

overcoming it. They proved by their pattern of life that they were not the children of the Father in heaven.

The victory over the world is made possible through faith in Christ as the Son of the Living God, manifested in the flesh. All of the faithful of the entire Christian age have drawn their strength to overcome Satan from their supreme confidence in the One who died for them. Chapter eleven of the book of Hebrews provides a host of examples of such faithful persons.

1JO 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Jesus is the link between the human and the Divine. He is the Son. We, as humans, understand birth and sonship. Our progeny arrive in this manner. Jesus is more than just a Son. He is the Son of **God**. No person will ever overcome the world through his own wisdom and strength. Only the wisdom and power of the Gospel, provided through the Christ, is able to illuminate and empower the soul in its escape from the lust of th eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

1JO 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

How can the coming of Jesus Christ in water and in blood be connected with our faith in him? Let us see! There are two extremely important occasions in the life of Christ which are related to water and blood.

Jesus Christ came by water when he was baptized by John. At that time he stated that this was a part of the fulfilling of all righteousness. As he was baptized, the heavens opened and the voice of the Father was heard saying, *“This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* Jesus then moved into the wilderness to defeat the temptations of Satan and began his work of preaching the Word. Thus Jesus came by water.

Jesus came by blood when he was nailed to the cross of Calvary. He said, *“If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself.”* The life is in the blood. Jesus shed his blood that we might have life. The shedding of his blood indicated his willingness to give his life without reservation for us. It made it possible for him to inform us to *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*

The fact that the Spirit beareth witness is important. It was not Jesus own witness, by itself, that argued for his Divinity. The witness of the Father and the Spirit were added to his own witness. Denial of Christ is also denial of the other two members of the Godhead. All three of them agree in their affirmation of his Sonship.

The last part of verse six in the King James Version is not a part of verse six in the American Standard or numerous later versions. It is separated

from it and labeled as verse seven. Verse seven, as seen in the King James Version, is omitted completely from the American Standard and others and replaced by this last part of verse six.

What right do the American Standard and other versions have to eliminate this verse from the Bible? I will not belabor the matter. However, it is well to present the basic argument. The verse is not found in the earliest and the most important manuscripts. Erasmus made a version in 1514 in which he inserted the verse. It is said that he well knew of the scarceness of the evidence for its inclusion. He made a rash promise that if it could be found in **any** manuscript, he would include it. He was shown a manuscript in which it was present. To keep his promise, he included the verse in his version. Even the most conservative Bible language scholars doubt the authenticity of the verse.

1JO 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

This is the disputed verse. There is, of course, nothing in the verse which is not in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. The Father has his book of remembrance. The Spirit makes intercession for us and knows the deep things of the heart. The Son confesses us before the Father and the angels, if we confess him before men. The truth contained in the verse is indisputable, even though the verse itself is contested.

1JO 5:8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

This verse extends the previous statements made in verse six. Men ought to give attention to the witnesses of Christ. The events surrounding his baptism at the beginning of his ministry, those associated with his death upon the cross at the end of his ministry, and the constant demonstrations of his miracles performed through the power of the Spirit of God, all are in harmony that Jesus was the Son of God.

1JO 5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

It is foolish to refuse the evidence of reliable witnesses. If three well trained medical doctors were to agree in their diagnosis and prescription regarding a physical problem, one would be well advised to follow their advice. Most of us would do so. Since we would follow the advice of well informed men who are far less capable than the Divine witnesses listed above, we should be quick to hear and obey their testimony.

1JO 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar;

because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

In what sense does the one who believes Jesus Christ to be Son of God have the witness in himself? He has that witness because he has been invigorated with new eternal spiritual life. He that has become a child of God was born a second time by the implantation of the Word of God. When that Word caused conception a new and eternal life began. God gave his Holy Spirit to dwell in that man alongside his own physical spirit. Though the physical man die, the spiritual man need never die. It is eternal. If, however, the man later sets his will against that of God, the Spirit will depart and he will have forfeited his eternal life. It is still eternal life. But he has thrown it away.

The man who denies the Divinity of Jesus Christ has set himself up as a judge of the Divine witnesses. He has said Jesus Christ is not the Son. Since God has provided ample witness that Christ is his Son, the unbeliever has clearly presented God as a liar. That is, to say the least, a very unwise act.

1JO 5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

There are witnesses in heaven and there are witnesses on earth, all of whom agree on certain testimony. The witness they provide is that God has made eternal life available to man. Furthermore,

that eternal life is available only through Jesus Christ, the Son. There is no more important statement in the scriptures than this one. If one desires eternal life, it will be found **in Christ**. There is none other name whereby men must be saved.

According to Galatians 3:27, one gets into Christ through baptism. If eternal life is in Christ, and one gets into Christ by being baptized into him, the conclusion is that one must be baptized to possess eternal life.

Temporary physical life is the lot of all men born of woman. It is fragile and will someday be removed. Eternal life is permanent and will never be removed, unless we choose to abandon it.

1JO 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Those who have not availed themselves of the blessings provided by the Son of God are the living dead. Real, full and complete life is something foreign to them. There is a fulness in Christ which causes a man or woman to realize the true reason for existence.

1JO 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

There are some things a man may know. One of them is that he has eternal life. How can he know

this? He can know because the inspired record informs him of that truth. John wrote that men might know they have eternal life. By providing the evidence that verifies Christ as the Son of God, John was making it possible for men to believe in him. Believing in him results in eternal life. The sequence is plain.

1JO 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

The Christian rests secure on the promise of God that if we will place our trust in him and dedicate our lives to him, he will hear our prayers. Because of our inability to see the end of our actions, we must ask blessings with caution. We are like small children. We do not have the experience our Father has. Our requests must always be seasoned with humility. The Holy Spirit will present our prayers to the Godhead as a whole and the response will come in terms of what we actually need rather than what we have asked. We must pray, **Thy will be done.**

1JO 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Not only can we know we have eternal life. We can know that when we pray, our prayers will be heard and answered according to the wisdom and

power of a completely loving God. To ask is to receive, if our lives have been lived in the light of Jesus Christ.

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

We are commanded to pray for our brothers and sisters who are overtaken by sin. We are not to pray that God will save them in their sin. Our prayers should be that they demonstrate the strength and courage to cease from their sin. When this is done, God will honor our prayers.

Note that these prayers are to be made for those who do not sin unto death. We are not to pray that God will save the man who is sinning unto death. The question is how will we know whether the sin is unto death, or not unto death?

In verse nine of chapter one, John had said that *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins.* The reverse is that if we are not willing to confess our sins, he will not be willing to forgive us our sins. I believe the sin unto death is sin which we cling to so tightly that we are unwilling to repent of it and to confess it. If a man or woman does this they have blasphemed the Holy Spirit of God and there remains no more sacrifice. They have spurned the blood of the Son of God and there is no forgiveness. Do not pray for that stubborn

and rebellious man. Also, it might be added that each of us must be careful that we do not place ourselves in a position where it will be useless for others to pray for **us**.

1JO 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Any transgression of the commandments of God is sin. However, there is a vast difference between deliberate continuation in known sin, and falling to Satan's wiles in a moment of weakness. In the former case, the person will feel no shame. In the latter case, there will be Godly sorrow which leads to repentance. The man who falls in a moment of weakness is guilty of a sin which is not unto death. When he repents and confesses that sin, it will be forgiven.

1JO 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

This verse must not be interpreted in such a way as to contradict the statement found in chapter one, verse eight. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.* All men sin and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

The grammar here speaks of an attitude. He that is begotten of God does not **continue** in sin. He will sin on occasion. He will not make it his way

of life. Satan will not be able to claim him as his child. He is now led by the Spirit of God, not that of antichrist. The “touching” here is a little stronger than simply laying a finger on him. It is entangling him such that he is made a captive.

1JO 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

The children of God will not walk in darkness. The Christian walks in the light. This is in sharp contrast to the walk of the children of the Evil One. His children are of the world. They walk in darkness and their general attitude is one of selfish pleasure and pride.

1JO 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

John felt that when the evidence for the divinity of Jesus Christ was presented, men would be drawn to the Saviour and would thus come to know eternal life. He declared in his account of the gospel that this was the reason for his having written it. His remarks in this verse agree with that sentiment. Jesus came and lived among us that we might have a knowledge of truth; that we might know him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is truly God, and he is truly life.

1JO 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

The Lord our God is a jealous God. We are to have no other gods before him. This is true whether it be the ancient statues made of metal, wood and stone, or whether it be material things which are placed before the kingdom of God today. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.*



**The Book Of
II John**

Introduction

The Author

There is quite a difference of opinion over the identity of the author of II John. Papias, who lived in the second century, mentions an “elder John” who was a personal disciple of Jesus Christ. The circumstances suggested by the epistle, and the doctrine included, strongly indicate that the author of II John was the same as the writer of the gospel of John and the letter titled I John.

The Recipients

The epistle is addressed to the “Elect Lady” and her children. There are two possibilities. This could be a local congregation of the church or “Bride of Christ” who bears God’s children. The last verse of the letter speaks of an “Elect Sister.” This leads some to see the “Elect Lady” as a very godly woman and the children as her offspring. Without more information the reader might wish to be a bit cautious about which is correct.

The Message

Truth and love are the dominant words in the letter. Love of God will cause true Christians to cling to the truth and oppose those who attempt to spread the teachings of the antichristian forces. The author commends those who love truth and serve both God and their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Chapter 1

2JO 1:1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

I have no doubt the elder mentioned here is John the apostle. He is the elder because of his advanced age. He writes to one whom he calls the “elect lady.” Some believe this to be a congregation of God’s people, the children being the individual Christians in the congregation. Others see it as some particularly Godly woman and her children. The last verse of this letter lead me to think this is a Godly woman. Although it is not absolutely necessary to see it that way. The elect sister could be a sister congregation.

John loves this Christian lady. He is convinced others who love the truth also love her. As a Christian, it is much easier to love another who has shown love for the truth.

2JO 1:2 For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

She is loved for the sake of the truth which dwelt in John and also in other Christians who were faithful. The truth dwelt in John and also dwelt in the elect lady.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever. The message presented here is intended to inspire the elect lady to continue

in the truth. It will never fail her. The present reader may also rest assured that a search for truth is one of the grandest of all activities. Truth is eternal.

2JO 1:3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

The grace which is from God includes all of the wonderful blessings which come from his hand, exceeding by far that which we deserve. Mercy and peace are a part of the grace of God. Men have no claim on mercy. They have all sinned and come short of His glory. They have all contributed to the conflict and confusion existing upon earth. Still, through God's wondrous grace, we have mercy rather than death, and peace rather than conflict.

Men look for peace in the wisdom of men. It will never be found there. The only source of peace is the Godhead. It is the truth and love which arise from the Godhead that bring real peace.

2JO 1:4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

John rejoiced that the offspring of this elect lady were walking in truth, or walking in the light. This is typical of the attitude all Christians should display. It should be a source of rejoicing whenever we observe the younger, or less mature Christians following the paths of Godliness.

Was the command from the Father that we walk in the truth, or was it that we rejoice when we see others walking in the truth? Surely the Word of God instructs us to do both.

We cannot obey the Father until we walk in the truth and rejoice when others do so.

2JO 1:5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

John reminded the elect lady of a commandment which had been given in the beginning. There are two thoughts regarding this beginning. It could be speaking of the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. It could also be speaking of the beginning of the Christian age. The command to love one another was certainly not new. God's people had always been taught to do that.

Jesus spoke of a new commandedment. It was that his followers should love one another "as I have loved you." The new aspect was in the perfect example of love which he had placed before them.

It is little wonder John is called the apostle of love. How many times he uses the word in these short letters!

2JO 1:6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

To love God is to obey him. Jesus said, *If ye love me ye will keep my commandments (John 14:15)*. Our love of God is demonstrated by our willingness to keep His commandments. Two of those commandments are that we love the brethren and walk in truth.

2JO 1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Even at that very early date men were denying Jesus Christ was the Son of God, born in the flesh. Such a denial was the very worst of all deceptions. The man or woman who taught such lies set themselves in opposition to the divine plan. They were actively fighting against the highest purposes of both the Father and the Son. They could be described as **anti-christ**. John has more to say about this antichristian spirit in other places also. Notice that he does not say “the antichrist.” He says “an antichrist.” There are many individual antichrists, all of which together make up the antichrist.

2JO 1:8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

There was a serious danger that the elect lady and her children might be deceived into following those deceivers who denied Christ had come in the flesh.

If they allowed themselves to turn away from the Saviour, they stood to lose everything which had been gained. It would be a sad plight to have served God in the beginning, and then to lose the reward of eternal inheritance because of lack of perserverance.

2JO 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

To abide in the doctrine of Christ is to walk in the light of truth. If one fails to continue that walk, he has given up both God the Father and God the Son. The doctrine of Christ would, of course, include all of the commandments and examples of conduct which Christ provided for us.

One may slip occasionally and still be said to walk in the light. But when his general attitude is such that his teaching or his life denies the truth as presented by the Saviour, he will lose his reward.

2JO 1:10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

If any came to the elect lady and her children denying by their lives or by their teaching that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, come in the flesh, that person was to be avoided. This should be contrasted with the advice given with respect to the true

messengers of God. Gaius was told in III John to entertain such and help the faithful messengers on their way.

The Christian is to assist any who truly need assistance and who are willing to cooperate in the cause of Christ. He is not to waste the time and effort required to throw his pearls before swine. In fact, if he is not extremely careful, it is likely that he will be contaminated by the evil attitudes of those who reject the grace of God.

2JO 1:11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

It is very difficult not to encourage those whom we love, even when we know they are walking in error. But God's warning is clear. If we act in a manner which indicates our approval of the pattern of life lived by one in error, we have become a fellow participant in that error. False teachers must not be condoned. They must be made to know that the Christian distinguishes between what God has taught, and what those in error are promoting.

If find it interesting that the word translated as **partaker** in this verse is from the same base Greek word as fellowship. It is **koinwnei**, which is related to koinonia. What the person who bids Godspeed to the false teacher is doing is having **fellowship** with him.

2JO 1:12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and

ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

Both 2 John and 3 John close with this thought. John much preferred to make direct contact with those whom he taught. Much more could be said in less time. Nevertheless, Christians of later centuries are grateful beyond measure for these two short letters. Each of them has a valuable message for the child of God.

John desires that both his joy and the joy of the elect lady and her children may be full. Such joy comes from Christian association.

2JO 1:13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

The writer tells the “Elect Lady” that the children of her “Elect Sister” send greetings. If John is the writer of the letter, then certainly he would not refer to himself in the feminine sense. He is either referring to a Christian lady who sends greetings, or a sister congregation that does so. If it is the latter, the children of the sisters would be the members of each of the two congregations.

**The Book Of
III John**

Introduction

The Author:

There is good reason to believe the author of III John is identical with that of II John. It was probably written in the latter days of the apostle John while he was living near Ephesus.

The Recipient:

While there is conjecture as to whether II John was written to an individual, there is none in the case of III John. It was written to Gaius who was a brother in Jesus Christ. Since we find more than one individual named Gaius in the New Testament records, we cannot pinpoint which Gaius is the one addressed.

The Purpose:

It seems there was a Christian in the congregation where Gaius worshipped that was greedy of glory. He desired to be lifted up above his fellow Christians. Gaius was warned to avoid this man whose name was Diotrephes.

Gaius was a good man who had shown hospitality to others. John wished to commend him for his kindness and encourage him to continue it.

Chapter 1

3JO 1:1 The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

III John is a letter from the apostle John, written in his old age, to a fellow Christian whom he loves very much. The letter follows the common form of letters in that day. It begins with a greeting. Then moves on to wish the recipient good health. Next comes the body of the letter, and finally an urging to greet the common friends of both John and Gaius.

Gaius is a common name at that time among the Christians. There are three mentioned by that name in the New Testament. Acts 19:29, Acts 20:4 and Romans 16:23. It is quite possible that the Gaius of III John may not be any of the three.

3JO 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

It is important to see John's concern here for both the spiritual and physical health of Gaius. It is true that there are dangers in thinking of the Christian system as a gospel of physical prosperity. Yet, it is certainly advantageous to have both spiritual and physical well-being. A combination of physical and spiritual health may bring the greatest effectiveness in the service of the Lord. It is also true that those laboring under physical handicaps

are sometimes very dedicated servants. But I repeat; both physical and spiritual health are to be desired.

3JO 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

Like many a preacher since, John was delighted to hear of his fellow Christians faithful obedience to Christ. He had heard repeated reports of Gaius fidelity.

There are two walks men can make. One is walking in the flesh. The other is walking in the Spirit. Gaius was walking in the Spirit. All men should be baptized into Christ, walk in Christ, die in Christ, and thus become joint heirs with Christ in the land of endless day.

3JO 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

John loved to talk about his little children. To him, those whom he had baptized into Christ were as his own children. He had been responsible for their spiritual birth. Any Christian who has had the privilege of witnessing the baptism of one whom they have taught will know the joy of John.

To walk in the truth is also to walk in the light. See I John 1:7. It is to walk according to the instructions given by the Saviour and his apostles.

3JO 1:5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

Gaius had demonstrated his faith in his helpfulness to the Christians who associated with him daily. He had gone farther. He had shown hospitality toward traveling preachers of the Word who came his way.

Many a Christian family has been blessed by entertaining a gospel preacher in their home. This was more true in the past than it is today. We are far more apt to house the preacher who has come in for a gospel meeting in the local motel than we are to have him in our homes. We may be cheating ourselves of rich spiritual fellowship in following this pattern.

The missionary who came through the territory in apostolic times would have hesitated to stay in the inn. Unlike our modern motels, it was all too often a house of bad reputation. A Christian who opened his or her home to the messenger of God performed a very valuable service.

3JO 1:6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

Gaius was urged to continue his hospitality toward those who preached the gospel. Apparently there were some who were on the way to the

congregation where Gaius served as an elder. John wished for Gaius to assist them in their labors and aid them in their journeys. If he would do so, he would have been living a godly life.

3JO 1:7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

The traveling preachers had sacrificed much in order to preach the Word of God. In addition, they were being careful not to sponge off the ones to whom they preached. This meant that the Christians in the areas to which they travelled had an obligation to see to their welfare. God is never ignorant of the support given to his Kingdom. He has a book of remembrance. That book is kept up to date and it will be opened in the judgment. Gaius had written some good things in that book. John prayed that he will continue.

3JO 1:8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

Since these messengers were attempting to serve God, it was a privilege for Gaius to support their actions. In doing so, he could become a companion in their labors.

What a beautiful picture this is of a generous and loving Christian man. This will make a sharp contrast with the character of the man John is about to discuss.

3JO 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

John was not at all happy about the behavior of Diotrophes. This wicked man was just the opposite of Gaius. Gaius welcomed the messengers of God, even though they might receive the majority of attention while they were present. Diotrophes found it unbearable for any but himself to be the focus of attention.

Who are the “us” in this verse? Is John including himself with those who had come to the congregation of Diotrophes? Or is he talking about the teaching of the apostles in general? I cannot say for certain. Of one thing, I am sure. Diotrophes had placed his personal glory before the teaching of the Word of God. That is a disastrous position. The work of hundreds of persons over thousands of hours can be demolished quickly within a congregation by such actions.

3JO 1:10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

The “if” in the first part of this verse is fairly certain. John truly expects to come to them a little

later. It is not quite a “when”, but it comes close. I would not wish to have been in the place of Diotrophes and have an apostle prepared to chastise me for opposition to the work of the Lord.

If Diotrophes believed his deeds would be forgotten with the passage of a little time, he was mistaken. If John did come, he would remind both Diotrophes and the entire congregation of the nature of his wickedness.

3JO 1:11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

John had commended Gaius for his walk in the truth as the letter began. Now he instructs him to go on in that direction. We are to *Abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12:9)*.

Diotrophes might well claim to be a true Christian. His claims would be false. His evil ways proved he had no real understanding of God, of Christ, of the church, or of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

3JO 1:12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Rather than imitating Diotrophes, it would be well for Gaius to imitate Demetrius. This man, like Gaius, walked in the light of truth. There were many

who would bear record of his good life. Even John was ready to commend Demetrius. The witness of John as an apostle could be trusted completely.

3JO 1:13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

John had written a very short letter. That did not mean he had little to say. Ink and pen is a laborious method of transferring thoughts. John looked forward to bypassing the pen and ink and seeing them personally. This was good news to Gaius and Demetrius. It was just the opposite for the evil Diotrophes.

Someday we will meet the Divine Author of the scriptures in judgment. Some will wail. Some will rejoice.

3JO 1:14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

This letter was a sort of holding action on the part of John. He fully expected to see Gaius and his fellow Christians very soon. They would then have the pleasant privilege of communing directly rather than through letters.

The letter ends with a note of Christian fellowship. John desires that Gaius be blessed with the peace which comes through obedience to God. He strikes a bond between the Christians who are

with him, and those who are with Gaius. One of the great wonders of the Christian family is that we have brothers and sisters whom we love, though we have never seen them.

It might be well to notice the division of verses in the various versions. Verses 14 and 15 are combined in some versions.

**The Book Of
Jude**

Introduction

The Author:

The writer of the epistle of Jude was the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, and also a brother to James. The reader will recall that at one time Jesus brothers were at odds with him. Later those same brothers were quite willing to support him and help in spreading his gospel.

The Recipient:

The letter is addressed to those who had been sanctified by God and preserved in Jesus Christ. They are also described as the called. This means that the words could have been addressed to true Christians in any age and in any place. The letter is sometimes referred to as the “General” epistle of Jude.

The Purpose:

The letter was intended to bolster the faith of the readers. False teachers were infiltrating the church and they must be identified and rejected as examples. Jude gives examples from the scriptures of what happens to those who follow false doctrine. To maintain their faith the readers needed to give themselves to prayer, to study, and to assisting their brethren in their walk with Jesus.

Chapter 1

JUD 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

Jude was the brother of James. The James which is most likely is the brother of Jesus Christ. This would make Jude the brother of the Lord. Some object that if Jude had been the brother of Jesus, he would have said so. This is not necessarily true. The more important relationship with Christ is the spiritual relationship. In that relationship, Jude was a servant.

He writes to those who have been sanctified by God the Father. Sanctification is a setting apart for holy purposes. God had, through the preaching of the gospel, caused these Christians to be set apart for his own use. Through the power and teaching of Jesus, they had been kept in that sanctified condition.

JUD 1:2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

Through the love and the mercy of God, his peace is available to us. While we were yet sinners, Christ was sent to die for us because God so loved the souls of the lost. When those lost souls respond to the love and mercy of God, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding may reign in their hearts. To be

multiplied is to be steadily increased as one moves along the highway of holiness.

JUD 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

It looks as though Jude had begun to write on the plan of salvation and was interrupted by some news which caused him to change his mind and write about the danger from false teachers. This danger made it necessary that they be ready to stand up boldly and defend the teaching which had been given to them.

This is one of the most important verses in the Holy Scriptures. It says, in no uncertain terms that the faith has been delivered once for all to the world. We need not expect any further revelation. God spoke in times past in various and sundry manners. Now he has spoken through Jesus Christ, his Only Begotten Son. He has declared, "This is my beloved Son, Hear ye him!"

The world constantly bombarded with religious ideas which are supposedly needed for a changing world. God himself says there is no need for a new gospel. Let us cherish and protect the one which is sufficient to lead us to a home in heaven.

JUD 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to

this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The church faces dangers from both without and within. Perhaps the most serious are the threats from within.

Men who have no respect for the teaching of the apostles seek to introduce wickedness into the lives of God's children. Lasciviousness is thought and action which gives free play to the appetites of the flesh. Those who would excuse lasciviousness among Christians, have denied the true and living God, as well as His beloved Son.

The men who were teaching such things were probably the forerunners of the gnostics. This group taught that there was such a contrast between the spirit and the flesh, that the spirit could remain holy, even if the flesh dominated the actions. Both God the Father, and Christ the Son abhor such a system of thought. Remember the words of Paul in Romans 6:1 "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*"

JUD 1:5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

In case they had forgotten, Jude reminded them that men who have once been in the grace of God

can, and have been, removed from that blessed state. It would be possible for his readers to do the same.

He used several examples. The first is that of the people of Israel who were granted release from the bondage of slavery in the land of Egypt. One would think an attitude of gratitude would exist among those who had been so blessed. Yet, they turned away in murmuring and rebellion. God, therefore, showed his displeasure by destroying thousands of them in the wilderness, and preventing all but Joshua and Caleb from entering Canaan.

JUD 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

The second example is a band of angels who rebelled against the authority of God. These angels had been given certain dominion and certain residence. They abused these privileges and are to be punished. They are presently restricted in their freedom and are waiting to be judged at the time of the resurrection.

These appear to be the same angels as are mentioned by Peter in 2 Peter 2:4 *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

It is not likely that this is related to the account in Genesis 6:1ff. The sons of God there are probably

righteous men who were foolish enough to marry wicked women (the daughters of men).

JUD 1:7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

A third example is that of Sodom and Gomorrah. These two cities were filled with homosexuality and fornication. As a result they were destroyed with fire from heaven. It seems that they were not only destroyed by physical fire, but are now awaiting the eternal torment of the lake of fire pictured in Revelation.

JUD 1:8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

The false teachers of which Jude warned were persuading men they could sow according to the appetites of the flesh without reaping a corresponding harvest. They refused to accept the authority of God and spoke with contempt about both civil and divine government.

JUD 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him

a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Michael is the one angel who has supervision over the entire host of angels. There are not seven archangels as has been suggested by some. Nor are there three. The Bible never speaks of archangels, but always speaks in the singular. Satan is the supervisor of the wicked angels, and Michael is the head of the faithful angels. See Revelation 12:7. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*

There is an invisible spiritual world, populated by intelligent beings. We are occasionally given a hint of their existence in passages such as the ones mentioned here, as well as Ephesians 3:8-11.

JUD 1:10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

These false teachers spent large amounts of time condemning and blaspheming authorities about which they know very little. In the meantime, they abuse the flesh, about which they do know something, and in living like irrational animals, they rot their own souls.

JUD 1:11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily

after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

The false teachers are obsessed with themselves. Cain ignored the instruction of God with respect to worship. It is clear that his sacrifice was not by faith. Faith comes through hearing the Word of God. After murdering his brother Abel, Cain was severely punished and made a wanderer upon the earth (Gen. 4). Baalam placed his desire for personal reward above the welfare of the people of God (Num. 22-24). Korah rebelled against the authority of Moses and was swallowed up by an earthquake (Num. 16).

Jude warns his readers of the terrible ends which fell upon those who misused their opportunities in past days. The false teachers of his own day were traveling down the same road.

JUD 1:12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

When Christians gathered to enjoy fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ, these false teachers were like mold on the bread. The false teachers were not interested in feeding the flock that which would nourish them. They were interested only in feeding themselves at the expense of the flock. This is exactly the condemnation God placed

on the evil and false shepherds of old in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel.

These teachers made great promises, but failed to fulfill them. They were like clouds announcing a rain, and then disappearing without a sprinkle. They were like fruit trees at the harvest time, bearing no fruit. They were once dead because of their lack of fruit. They were twice dead because they had no root in the true source of spiritual nourishment. They left only disappointment behind them.

Compare the entire second chapter of 2 Peter with the material recorded in these few verses.

JUD 1:13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

The waves of the sea create a great roaring disturbance. Then they recede, leaving only trash behind them. Like shooting stars, the false teachers burn brilliantly for a short time and then go out to spend eternity in darkness.

JUD 1:14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

The quote mentioned is from Enoch 1:9. Enoch is a non-Biblical document. This has caused some debate as to the inspiration of Jude. However, there

are other quotes in the Bible taken from non-Biblical sources. For instance, the book of Jasher is mentioned, as well as others. The reader should compare Daniel 7:10, Heb. 11:5, Deuteronomy 33:2, Zechariah 14:1-9, Matthew 25:31 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

JUD 1:15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

When Christ appears, men such as these false teachers, and also those who follow their lead, will have to meet him. The word convince might well have been translated as “convict” in this verse. Evil men will be both convinced of the seriousness of their ways, and convicted of their guilt. Their hard words against Christ will then come back to haunt them.

At that time **every** knee shall bow, and **every** tongue shall confess him as the Son of the Living God.

The word “ungodly” is used four times in this one verse. How deeply God must feel about those who mislead others for the sake of greed and selfish gain!

JUD 1:16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words,

having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

The word used here is the same as that used in describing the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness. Such persons are never satisfied with their lot in life, especially not with God's care for them.

They continually brag about their own accomplishments, and do not hesitate to use flattery to accomplish their selfish ends.

What a terrifying picture this is! Love is far away. Greed controls all.

JUD 1:17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Rather than listening to these liars, one should listen to the teaching of the apostles of Jesus Christ. There would be great advantage in turning away from the false teachers and hearing what the apostles had to say.

JUD 1:18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

The apostles had warned numerous times of the dangers of men such as these. Paul had warned the Ephesians elders (Acts 20:29-31). He had also spoken of these dangers to Timothy (I Tim. 4:1-3 and 2 Tim. 3:1-2, 13).

These warnings were coming to pass just as had been predicted. How foolish these liars were! God knew beforehand just what thoughts and actions they would show forth.

JUD 1:19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

How do they separate themselves? They do so by feeling that their superiority raises them above the laws of moral purity. They also do so by the wicked and evil deeds they commit, lowering themselves to the fleshly and carnal level and living as animals rather than men. They are a perfect picture of Paul's man who walks by the flesh rather than the Spirit of God (Rom. 8).

JUD 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

The false teachers tear themselves down through their falsehoods. God's faithful are to build themselves up through faith. The Christian may have to live in the world. He does not have to be of the world. Faith in Christ will cause a man to separate himself from the fleshly and carnal ways.

Prayer is a most important part of the building up process. Communication with God causes us to take on the image of God. One is made to wonder if the mockers ever prayed, other than for outward show.

JUD 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

No man can keep himself without divine aid. Prayer and devotion will tie a man to God so closely that no force is able to tear him away (Rom. 8:39). Keeping one's self in the love of God involves keeping the commandments of God. It also involves loving the other children of God (I John 5:1-2).

It is the hope of eternal life which inspires us to seek the Way of the Lord.

JUD 1:22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

The Christian is to always be aware of the weak members who are in danger of falling into sin again. Some of these are simply misled and will need to be handled very gently.

JUD 1:23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

There are some who must be handled with great care. While trying to pull them from the fiery wrath of God, the faithful Christian may well be taken down with them. The filth of these is such that one must be cautious that he is not contaminated just by making the slightest spiritual contact with them.

It is difficult to make the distinction produced

above. Some need to be handled quite differently from others. Our human wisdom is stretched to the limit in deciding just what methods to use on those we see walking into danger.

JUD 1:24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

The one who is able to keep us from falling is Jesus Christ. As one of the three persons of the Godhead, he is able to:

- (1) Establish us (Rom. 16:25).
- (2) Do more than we can ask (Eph. 3:20).
- (3) Keep us from slipping (Jude 1:24).

Every step of the way, Christ is able to keep us pure and clean through the power of his cleansing blood (I John 1:5-7).

The picture is remarkably similar to that of a child whose hand is held by its father while walking through the mud puddles. It is necessary to be spotless to appear before God in judgment.

JUD 1:25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

It is God who is our leader, not greedy and selfish false teachers. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ is God.

This verse is but one of several declaring His divinity. God is our Saviour. But Jesus is God. Therefore the verse refers to both the Father and the Son. The Father has arranged it that only through the Son may we be presented spotless before the throne.

The book of Jude closes with the song of the angels, also sung in Revelation 5:11-13.

Jude is a short book of only twenty-five verses. That does not subtract from the importance of its message. We must contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. If we do not, selfish false teachers will feed themselves at our expense, resulting in the eternal destruction for both us and themselves.

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