

Bible Lessons



**Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED" II Cor. 3:18**

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Volume 32

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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 2000

For our lessons this third quarter of 2000 we will study the two epistles of Simon Peter, the beloved apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is wonderful that we have his wise counsels and words of comfort and consolation, preserved by the wisdom of our God through the ages. We will see that Peter addresses greatly the trials and adversities that the true followers of the Saviour will meet in this vain world. He points us to holiness, patience and true humility. We will see his counsel concerning modesty and the adorning of the spirit, the inward adorning, which is not corruptible. Peter points us to holy and pure separation from the spirit of this present evil world. In the second epistle we will hear concerning things that will help us to be fruitful in Christ, and have abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of the Saviour. He gives us dire and serious warnings concerning false teachers and their damning influence. And finally, Peter foretells the great day of the Lord when He comes to destroy the world and usher in the eternal new heavens and earth. Let us study prayerfully and may our hearts be open to receive the Holy Spirit inspiration that is contained in these two blessed epistles of one who was one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and who was an eyewitness of His majesty. —Leslie C. Busbee



JULY 2, 2000

A LIVING HOPE AND THE TRIAL OF OUR FAITH

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

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.

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,

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

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

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

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:

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:

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

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

11 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.

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.

MEMORY VERSE: For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Romans 8:20.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The great God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in His great mercy has given us, through the gospel of His Risen Son, a living hope of life eternal. But the obtaining of this eternal inheritance is preceded by a season of great tribulation which is to prove our faithfulness to Him and to make our reward more glorious and precious.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 1:1), "*Strangers scattered*": These were believing

Jews who had been dispersed and driven by persecution into other lands. They were strangers to the peoples among whom they were dwelling and they were also pilgrims and sojourners in this life whose hope and treasures were in heaven. These believing Jews had full fellowship and communion with any truly converted of the Gentile world. What Paul was ascribing to them of the grace of God can be ours also today.

(I Peter 1:3), "*Begotten again*": This means to be brought forth to life once more. We were dead in trespasses and sins and our hopes were destroyed. But by the resurrection of Jesus Christ we are regenerated to a living hope that is certain and unfailing.

(I Peter 1:6), "*Heaviness*": The real meaning of this word in the Greek is grief and sorrow.

(I Peter 1:9), "*The end of your faith*": Enduring the trials of our faith and being faithful to the Lord to the end will enable us to receive the purpose of our faith, and that is the salvation of our souls. The salvation of our souls, that is, the saving of our lives unto eternal life, is the grand purpose and end of our faith and obedience to God. It is the highest goal and most noble of life's achievements. All accomplishments and things to be obtained in life are vanity if we fail to save our precious inner man that God gave to us.

(I Peter 1:12), "*Not unto themselves*": All the spiritual things written by the prophets and Old Testament writers were written for our benefit. The psalms and prophetic utterances were principally written for us. I am sure it was good and beneficial for those who were inspired to write those foretellings of salvation and the kingdom of Christ. But they are fulfilled in us, the New Testament saints of God, far beyond what those who wrote them could comprehend, because we have the Holy Spirit in fulness, which applies the reality of the scriptures to our hearts.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider the first half of the first chapter of the first epistle of Simon Peter. It is wonderful to know that we are studying the very words and thoughts of the beloved apostle of Jesus Christ. Thank God, they have

been preserved down through the ages for us to feast on today! Simon Peter's two epistles are messages for our day. In our lesson today we are given comfort and consolation concerning the trials and tests of our faith. We rejoice in the living hope we have of an everlasting inheritance in the heavens that is untarnished and not polluted with the pride and vanity of this present evil world. And it is fadeless. It will never dim nor lose its value. Through God's abounding mercy He has given us this blessed hope through the death of His Son Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. And in this we greatly rejoice. When a person repents and believes the gospel and finds the joy of the risen life of Christ it does bring rejoicing to the heart. But it is not long before the child of God finds himself in adversity and much trouble. It comes from people, circumstances, hardships, dangers, and from Satan, our adversary, himself. Many different kinds of temptation come against us in the Christian life. We are tempted to faint and go down in despair. But no! Peter tells us that these are trials sent to prove our faith. If we will hold fast and fight the good fight of faith in the midst of these sorrows unto the end of our lives, we will be rewarded to share with Christ's glory.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of people was Peter directing his epistle to?
2. What does it take for us to be the "elect?"
3. What has God in His abundant mercy begotten us unto?
4. By what does this living hope come to us?
5. What does it bring us to?
6. Where is this inheritance incorruptible?
7. Who is it reserved for?
8. What must we be in heaviness with?
9. What is the purpose of our trials of faith?
10. What did the prophets testify beforehand about?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our memory verse from Romans 8:20 states that the creature (this is us who are saved) was made subject to vanity.

This means that we must tarry in this world of sin and vanity for a season. It would not be our will or choice to have it so. We would rather be saved and then go on up to our heavenly home to be with our beloved Lord and Master. But, no! The Lord wants us to tarry here for awhile. He subjects us to vanity, but He does it in hope. Yes, He has given us a hope of a great reward and a great deliverance from this realm of corruption. But we must first suffer the adversities and sorrows of being mistreated and cast off by the world like Jesus was. We must bear affliction and hardship and grief. We must bear reproach, disgrace and shame for the Master's sake. It is hard to endure the close places of persecution and affliction. But it is God's way of bringing us to glory. Hebrews 2:10 says that the captain of our salvation (Jesus) was made perfect through sufferings. Jesus had to go through the sufferings. He was abused, rejected, buffeted, smitten, condemned, laughed at and finally slain upon a cross. He was misunderstood, falsely accused, unjustly tried and condemned. But the glory followed all that He suffered. We who believe in Him and seek to share in His eternal glory must arm ourselves with the same mind to suffer as He did. We must take it like He took it, meekly and without threatening and getting back. Christ is gone into the heavens and we are to live with Him in view, counting lightly what we suffer with respect to the joy that is set before us! Let us look away from the cross and the shame we suffer for the Lord. Let us consider the crown that the Lord, the righteous Judge, has promised to all who love His appearing. No cross, no crown. It would be far better to suffer for Christ here and share His glory, than to seek for glory here and have to suffer shame and contempt forever.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Who are kept by the power of God..." Let none of us consider our own inner strength to be sufficient to keep our souls from the impositions of Satan. We are weak within ourselves. That is why God is willing to exert His power to preserve our souls. The only reason any of us can hope to reach heaven is because God keeps us by His strength.

"...through faith..." That is, God does not keep us by the mere exertion of power, but He inspires faith in our hearts and makes that the means of keeping us. As long as we have faith in God and in His promises, we are safe. When faith is weak, the soul is weak—and should faith altogether fail, inasmuch that we forsake God, we cannot be saved. (Heb. 11:6.)

"...unto salvation..." There are several definitions which come from the Greek word for salvation. Among them are "heal" and "preserve." By the power of God, which is exerted through our faith, we have the ability, not of being partially saved, or saved for a short duration, but completely, even unto the ultimate fulfillment of salvation which will be our entering into heaven.

—Wayne Murphey



JULY 9, 2000

**HOLY, OBEDIENT AND BORN AGAIN
BY THE WORD OF GOD**

I Peter 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;

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

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

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

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:

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;

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

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

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.

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:

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

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:

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

MEMORY VERSE: For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Titus 2:11-12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Seeing that we have been regenerated of incorruptible seed, the Word of God, and purchased by the precious blood of Christ, we must, as obedient children, be sober and holy and love one another, holding fast to the hope of the gospel to the end.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 1:13), "*Gird up the loins of your mind*": This means to bring into strict control your mental and physical powers to the spiritual wisdom and honour of God. Do not allow your thoughts to cater to the empty dreams of earth; stay your mind and affections on things above where Christ is in glory waiting for you and all His saints to join Him in that great day. "*Sober*": Not intoxicated with the wine and spirit of this vain, foolish, and lustful society, but with a sound mind and wise counsel make your sojourn through this life. "*Hope to the end for the grace*": Hope completely and without wavering on the grace that has been brought to you through the revelation of Jesus Christ to your soul.

(I Peter 1:15), "*Holy*": There are various words that define this wonderful and vital state. They are: pure, clean, undefiled, sacred, consecrated, venerated, blameless, sanctified, and separate from all pollution and defilement of sin. "*In all manner of conversation*": In all conduct and behavior.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Peter speaks of what God, through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, has brought down to us. He does not command nor charge us to do anything in the bringing out of the truth of salvation and victory in Christ. But in today's lesson is found the imperative expressions of command and responsibility. "Wherefore," or, in other words, "Because of all of this wonderful grace and salvation that has been brought to us from God the Father through His Son," Peter names out the things that we are responsible to see that we do about it. Most of these things are positive. 1. Gird up the loins of your mind. 2. Be sober. 3. Hope completely and without wavering. 4. As obedient children, be holy in all behavior and conduct. This is accompanied with the stipulation, "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." 5. Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. 6. Love one another with a pure heart fervently. Now these are things that we are responsible to carry out in our lives, by the help and grace of God, of course. But we are going to have to pray earnestly for the help of the Lord that we might be able to faithfully execute them. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important to gird up our minds?
2. Why is soberness so necessary for us to have?
3. What are some of the ways we must give up to be holy?
4. What all does being holy take in?
5. What kind of fear should we pass our time in?
6. By what means were we redeemed from our sins?
7. For what purpose did God raise up Christ from the dead?
8. What is the incorruptible seed that we are born of?
9. Without God's Word in our life what will happen to us?
10. How is this eternal Word of God brought to us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What God has brought to us and made available to us is not only blessed and wonderful, but it also bears with it great responsibility and challenge. There is a part that is ours to

play. God has His part which none of us could ever fill. But God is wise enough to bring us into the realm of obedience and dutifulness as it befits us being recipients of such wonderful blessings. People who fail or refuse to address the challenge and responsibilities of what the Lord says have but themselves to blame. He is not asking too much. All that He tells us to do can be bountifully executed if we will be willing and obedient to His Spirit and seek earnestly His help and grace. All of these things that Peter mentions for us to do are contrary to the lustful and rebellious society we live among down here in this sinful dark world. Men are by sinful nature so prone to be loose and careless in their habits and the way their minds run. There are so many fleshly and earthly delights to get infatuated with. It takes strict discipline and self-control to bring our thoughts and ways into conformity to holiness and the fear of God. We have to have a vision and an understanding of God's purpose and rewards to stimulate a desire and a decision to press for the spiritual values of the Word of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

On one occasion when William Dawson, a minister from England, was giving out a hymn, he suddenly stopped and said, "I was coming once through the town of Leeds, and saw a poor little half-witted lad rubbing at the brass-plate, trying to rub out the name; but the poor lad did not know that the harder he rubbed, the brighter it shone. Now friends sing—

'Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness 'rase
Those everlasting lines."

Then, as though he saw the devil rubbing, he said, "Satan cannot rub it off—

'His hand hath writ the Sacred Word
With an immortal pen."



JULY 16, 2000

**CHRIST THE PRECIOUS STONE
AND A STUMBLING STONE**

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

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

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

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.

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.

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

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

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:

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.

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

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

MEMORY VERSE: (Jesus said), And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. Matthew 11:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: By eating of the good Word of God found in the gospel of Christ we build upon Christ as a foundation for our hope and faith in God, but by taking offence and rejecting the Word of God we throw away the golden opportunity to be a part of God's special people.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 2:1), "*Malice*": The Greek word means badness or moral corruption. "*Gulle*": Trickery or deceit. "*Hypocrisies*": Pretense; feigning or making a false show. "*Envies*": Ill will and jealousy with intent to hurt.

(I Peter 2:2), "*Sincere milk of the word*": The pure basic principles of the Word of the Gospel. These are truths of Christ that reveal His love, mercy, salvation, forgiveness, faithfulness and goodness. They are called the milk for they are nourishing to the soul who is just newly born to the faith. They are easily understood and digested in the heart and mind for strength, encouragement and the building up of one's confidence in God.

(I Peter 2:6), "*Believe*": To believe means to be persuaded and have confidence; to trust and be constant in one's trust. In the Old Testament the word "believe" means to build up or support, to render firm and stable, to be trustworthy, secure and dependable; and to be sure and steadfast. It is greatly associated with the word for "truth." "*Not be confounded*": In Isaiah 28:16, that Peter is quoting from, the phrase is, "shall not make haste." He that believes from the heart and is steadfast and constant in that belief will not give over to hasty and rash decisions of doubt and despair, and will not waver nor falter. Such shall by no means be ashamed nor be disgraced and cast down.

(I Peter 2:7), "*Head of the corner*": This is referring to the main and principle stone in the foundation of a building that is true and accurately square, and to which all the building lines up. Jesus Christ was that foundation stone upon which Zion, the Church of God, was established forever.

(I Peter 2:8), "*Whereunto also they were appointed*": This does not necessarily mean that God appointed them to disbelieve and stumble at His word. The Greek word means

"purposed or decided." They themselves chose to reject the Saviour, being influenced by pride and ignorance and the vanity of their mind.

(I Peter 2:9), "*Peculiar people*": A people purchased, possessed and saved. This means a special, particular and separate people, severed from the ties of this present evil world and the sinful lusts thereof, and united by the Spirit unto Christ. As Moses said of Israel it is now fulfilled in the true Israel, the souls of men who build upon Christ the living Stone: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." Deuteronomy 14:2.

(I Peter 2:12), "*Conversation*": Our conduct and behavior. "*Day of visitation*": In the Greek this means "a day of inspection for help and relief." What he is saying here is: "Be diligent to maintain an honest and worthy conduct and behavior before men, so that, even though at first they speak against you as wrong, yet, by beholding your blameless life, they will be persuaded and glorify God when His Spirit convicts them of their need and works the transforming power of His grace for their salvation."

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Peter spoke about all flesh being as grass which will wither and fall away. "But," he said, (quoting from Isaiah 40:8) "the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." In our lesson today Peter starts out by telling us of things to lay aside, and for us to be as newborn infants whose hunger reaches for the nourishing milk of this eternal Word as it comes in the gospel of Christ. We will have this kind of appetite if we have tasted of the Lord and found Him precious to our souls. We will be reaching out for more of Him and the taking in of His Word will become the means of us getting more of His presence in our lives. We are coming to a living Stone. Jesus was a Man, but He was a Stone. He was solid, unfailing, true, faithful and steadfast for all that is good and well-pleasing unto God. He is truly a worthy Rock to build upon. But Peter

reminds us that while He is precious to us who believe, He is not that way to everyone. Sad to say, to many He becomes a stumblingstone and cause for offence. He is a stumblingstone because they are not willing to submit themselves to Him and His Word. But we do not have to be that way. We could if we would stiffen up and draw back in unbelief and rebellion. But in the light of the gospel we see the glory and blessing of living for Christ. We surrender and give all to Him. We find ourselves in a world we never knew before of joy and happiness unbounded. We rejoice and praise Him daily for His goodness to us. We were once lost and hopeless, but now we are part of the great nation of holy men and women who have found the joy of God. His light is marvellous and we are happy in the glorious way of the Lord. So we have a great challenge to steer clear of the lustful spirit of this present evil world. We must conduct ourselves in a godly and righteous manner, following Christ's example of humility, love and obedience to the will of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the things we must lay aside?
2. Why did Peter liken us as to newborn babes?
3. What is the "sincere milk of the word?"
4. Who is the "living Stone" we are coming to?
5. Why is He disallowed of men?
6. How is He chosen of God and precious?
7. Why is He a stumbling stone as well as a precious stone?
8. Why do people stumble at the Word, and how do they stumble?
9. What will we be if we believe and not stumble?
10. Why should we abstain from fleshly lusts?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A newborn child is not here very long before it becomes hungry for food. God made a child with an appetite for food And so it is with the soul of man. A newborn soul in the kingdom of God will be craving spiritual nourishment as much as a baby seeks to have his hunger satisfied. This spiritual

milk is the Word of God. The thoughts and communications of our God and His Son enter into our minds and they move the inner man, inspiring and comforting, enlightening and unfolding. This is spiritual food that every child of God must feed his heart and mind on. This food that Jesus said endures unto everlasting life is vital and critical for us to partake of. To fail to feed one's soul will bring spiritual death eventually. One must not neglect the daily feeding of his soul. Also, while we are feeding on the good Word of God and drinking of His Holy Spirit, we are building our lives on a good foundation, the solid Rock, Christ Jesus. We receive the counsels and admonishments of the precious Word and obey them and let them be fulfilled in us. It is a weighty and yet joyful responsibility for us to attend to the feeding and activities of the soul. Great treasures are opened up to us as we become habitual partakers of the vast resources of the Holy Scriptures! But there is a warning here. The same Rock upon which we build with rejoicing can be a stumbling stone if we stiffen up and draw back from obedience to His Word. Not everyone is going to obey. Everyone should obey, but there has been, now is, and always will be those who fail to follow through and go all the way with Him. It does not have to be, but that is the pattern that mankind has followed.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Recently someone riding with me in the van picked up a little compass which was on the console. He looked at it for awhile and said, "Yep, we're going south." It was almost as if that person's knowledge of what direction we were going was verifying that the compass was right. The truth of the situation is, it didn't matter what direction he thought we were going, the compass was going to be right.

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious:..." The soul which has come in touch with God and has been magnetized by His love will always turn towards Him. It doesn't matter how much you shake a compass and agitate its needle, it won't rest until it is again aligned with the earth's poles. Neither does it matter how much resistance is put upon

the Christian, he will not rest unless his feelings are in alignment with the One he finds precious. —Wayne Murphey



JULY 23, 2000

FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF JESUS

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

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

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

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

17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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.

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

MEMORY VERSE: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: By patiently suffering for doing the will of God and pleasing Him we manifest the beauty of Christ to others. And in this way we are following in the steps of Jesus who endured the death of the cross even though He had done no sin and was innocent and pure before God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 2:16), "*Cloke of malitiousness*": A cover up of evil and selfish indulgence. It is the nature of the depraved and deceitful heart to justify unholy practices under the guise of demanding rights and liberty. Such are not free, but are slaves of their own corruption.

(I Peter 2:17), "*Honour all men*": The word "honour" here is from the same Greek word as "precious." Esteem every man as precious and of great value.

(I Peter 2:19), "*For this is thankworthy*": The Greek says, "It is a grace." It is a blessing, and benefit, and special bestowal and manifestation of Christian character and excellence to be meek and inoffensive in the times of abuse and evil treatment. "*Wrongfully*": Unjustly, and unfairly.

(I Peter 2:23), "*Reville*": To vilify, that is, to slander or defame. Jesus was talked down, ridiculed, lied upon, falsely accused and rejected of men, but He himself would not do the same in return. "*Threaten*": To make a statement or expression of intention to harm, punish, or retaliate. "*Committed*": Yielded, surrendered and intrusted.

(I Peter 2:25), "*Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*": The Caretaker, Provider, Feeder, Overseer, Guardian and Keeper of our precious eternal souls.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a continuation of Peter's teachings on the honorable behavior that we as followers of Christ should engage in to accompany our profession of faith. He stresses especially that our good behavior as Christians is best exemplified in times of mistreatment and suffering unjustly. If one does wrong and suffers for it, he needs to take that patiently and meekly, but that does not glorify God. But if a person is

blameless and faithful to God and his moral excellence incites the malice of the wicked to provoke them to abuse and do him evil, his meek and inoffensive attitude and spirit will really show up and stand out as a witness of the true grace of God. We are called to experience this kind of suffering because Christ Himself was thus treated on account of our sins. We are to imitate Him, walk in His steps and be meek and lowly as He was. It is a great challenge to diligently pursue this kind of character and spirit. But we are called to this, and we prove our love for Christ when we not only believe and testify of Him, but are willing to suffer for His sake. One of the hardest things for a person to take sweetly and in good attitude of faith and submission is to be treated unfairly. And yet, when we examine the things that came to Christ from the world, we see that it all was wrong, unfair and not warranted at all. But it had to be, as this was the way God chose to bring about the forgiveness and remission of our sins that we were so greatly needing. Peter's expressions of "by whose stripes ye were healed" and "for ye were as sheep going astray" are quoted from the vivid prophecy of Christ's sufferings in Isaiah 53.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the Lord want us to be submissive to every ordinance of man?
2. How can we with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men?
3. We are free and yet we are not free. Can you explain this?
4. How can we honor even those who are evil and wrong?
5. Why is God so pleased when we suffer wrongly for His sake?
6. Why has He called us to suffer like this?
7. Why did Christ have to suffer?
8. What was Christ carrying when He suffered those things?
9. How did Christ react to the abuse heaped upon Him?
10. For what purpose did Christ die on the tree?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Christ suffered on our account. It was the wisdom of God to rescue man from his sinful and polluted condition by requiring the suffering and death of a pure and innocent Victim. But in His plan to rescue man thus He did not permit the Victim to stay dead. He resurrected that One who took upon Himself our sins and iniquities. He brought Him back to life again. He came right back to those for whom He had died. He showed Himself alive. He had suffered and paid for their sins by His death. But He did not stay dead. Now He lives forever. And by the virtue of what He did we also can die to sin forever and be risen with Christ to walk with Him in a new and living way. Oh, how wonderful that Jesus was so willing to suffer for us! God knew what the effect of such love and goodness would be. It would melt our hearts and win all of our love and affection and devotion. He permitted Christ to suffer unjustly. It was evil and wrong for those ungodly rulers to lay hold on Christ and have Him arrested. They ran Him through a mock trial. The witnesses were false and they did not agree. The main thing that they condemned Him for was His honest confession that He was the Son of God. And He *was* the Son of God and He proved it to be so. Besides being denied a fair trial, Christ was also not allowed to be put in the seclusion of a prison to give a chance for tempers to cool and feelings to subside. No, they arrested Him, tried Him, convicted Him, sentenced Him, and executed Him all within less than a day's time. The whole thing was wrong, unjust, a sham, just the offshoots of their hatred and vain pride. But God permitted it to be so. Why? It was to show us how much He loved us, how much Christ loved us, and how willing He was to redeem us to Himself. It gave us an example that He wants us to follow.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"It was a favorite charge against the early Christians that they were plotting the overthrow of the Empire and the dethronement of Caesar, in favor of 'One, Jesus.' Their private meetings were supposed to be convened for unlawful political purposes.

"It was therefore necessary that men's minds should be disabused of the impression that any violence was contemplated. Peter, therefore, exhorts them to conform, as far as they were able, to the demands and usages of the people amongst whom they sojourned. For the Christian man is one who recognizes the necessity of social order. Note how wise were the words of exhortation given by the apostle.

"We may not all be called to the ministry of the pulpit or platform, yet we may all exercise the ministry of seemly behavior."
—Taken from *Handfuls on Purpose*



JULY 30, 2000

THE KEY OF MEEKNESS AND INWARD ADORNING

1 Peter 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;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

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;

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.

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:

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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

MEMORY VERSE: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matthew 11:29.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The child of God must be meek and submissive to his or her fellow-creatures of earth, whether it be husband or wife or neighbor, being compassionate, loving, merciful and courteous.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 3:1), "*Won by the conversation of the wives*": By the righteous and godly behavior of the wife she will win his confidence and cause him to be more apt to make a change for the good of his soul.

(I Peter 3:2), "*Chaste conversation coupled with fear*": Pure and holy behavior in the fear of God.

(I Peter 3:3), "*Adorning*": Decoration or ornaments. "*Plaiting the hair*": Elaborate braiding of the hair, usually entwining colorful and eye-catching cloth or ribbons with the hair. "*Wearing of gold*": Putting all around, or decorating one's self with jewelry. "*Putting on of apparel*": Dressing up with showy, extravagant, and fancy clothes with the purpose of being attractive to others.

(I Peter 3:4), "*Hidden man of the heart*": That part of man which is not seen by the natural eye. It is an inward beauty of the attitudes, affections, desires, interests and emotions. This is the real man. Outward beauty and what is seen by the

natural eye will deceive and hinder one's real self from being in view. The inward beauty, though not beheld by the natural eye, will shine out in a much greater way, in one's behavior and manifested spirit shone by actions and ways. *"Not corruptible"*: That which will not decay nor fade away. The outward beauty that is so much made over and held high by the carnal mind will fail and fade away with age and the blight of sickness, disease and misfortune. But the inward beauty of holiness, meekness, kindness, patience and gentleness is the beauty of the soul and can be retained and worn forever. This is the beauty that shines in the Bride of Christ, the holy saints of God.

(I Peter 3:6), *"Lord"*: One who rules or controls. *"Not afraid with any amazement"*: The Greek says simply, "fearing no terror." When one follows after good, and pleases God with their spirit and ways, the fear of what man can do is taken away, while confidence and trust rules the heart.

(I Peter 3:7), *"According to knowledge"*: In accordance with the enlightenment and counsel of the true knowledge of God and His holy will. *"Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel"*: Bestowing honour and special consideration upon the female for she is the weaker and more delicate part of the marriage bond.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Peter spoke of the blessing of suffering for well-doing, and how that was what Christ experienced in His death on the cross, having done no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. In our lesson today Peter carries this thought to us, namely first, wives to their husbands, then husbands to wives, and finally for all of us to have this spirit of meekness and tenderhearted attitude toward our fellow man. Then he quotes from Psalm 34:12-16, which is pretty well, thought for thought, brought out. In our lesson today we witness some plain counsels concerning the way the Lord looks upon the spirit of pride in people that shows up in outward adorning of jewelry, gold, pearls and costly array, even as Paul spoke in I Timothy 2:9. We have had godly men through the ages who denounced this spirit of outward

adornment as contrary to the will of God. John Wesley, Charles G. Finney and Adam Clarke are among the Holy Spirit-filled men who voiced their disapproval of the ungodly fashions of their day. The spirit of self-promotion and the disregarding of the happiness and welfare of others is also rebuked in these sacred writings of Peter. And, as he quoted from the 34th Psalm, if we would love life and see good days, we must control the communication that proceeds out of our mouth, and follow after that which makes for peace and good will, not only with our fellow man, but also with God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How can a woman show her husband the Spirit of Christ?
2. What kind of behavior are we supposed to manifest?
3. What kind of adorning did Peter show his disapproval of?
4. What kind of ornament is of great price in God's sight?
5. What causes a person to want to dress in a showy way?
6. Is it necessary for us to heed Peter's counsel today?
7. What are the rewards for pleasing God and doing good?
8. What should be the feeling of a man for his wife?
9. What kind of attitude should we cultivate for others?
10. What must we do if we desire life and good days?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I remember hearing an account that shows well the effect that a godly and submissive wife can have upon an unsaved husband. A certain man who was not living a Christian life was blessed to have a wife who loved God and sought to please Him with all of her heart. She won his confidence and respect. He knew what she was, and though he gave her a hard time, he secretly honored and highly esteemed her. Sometimes he would go out at night and play cards and meet with other men of like folly. One night after midnight he was with his friends at play and they got to talking about their wives and what they thought of them. This man spoke up and told his friends that he had a wife that would go beyond any one of their wives by far. He said to them, "I'll tell you what kind of wife I have. I can take all of you with me this very hour and go to my house. We

can go in and I can get her up and tell her to fix us a big meal and she will obey without one word back." His friends voiced their unbelief that such a thing could be. "All right," he said, "Come with me and I will show you!" So they all converged upon his house at that late hour. He went into the bedroom where she was sleeping. He said, "Wake up, wife, my friends are all here and we are hungry. Get up and fix us a good dinner!" To the amazement of this group of men, this little woman got up and dressed and came into the kitchen. She fixed a sumptuous meal. She never said a word of complaint or criticism. She showed a sweet spirit through it all. Well, the outcome was that it so struck her husband to see her do it with such a sweet spirit, that he ended up surrendering to the Lord and was saved. This has been a challenging thought to me in the Christian life. It means much to be submissive and meek to others even when we are abused and wrongfully treated. It is one of the greatest sermons we can ever preach.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Peter's lengthy and detailed counsel to Christian wives may imply that women outnumbered men in the churches to which he addressed this letter. This sounds rather modern. The lot of women was difficult in those days; they were definitely regarded as inferior to, indeed the property of, men. They had few rights, they could be easily divorced, they were for the most part circumscribed in their privileges and possibilities. And yet, as so often has been the case in Christian history, even in pre-Christian times women have been almost unbelievably influential by reason of their home relationships, even in those societies where they had little or no status beyond the home. Many of these wives to whom Peter was writing no doubt were married to pagan husbands. Their position seemed to be even more difficult than for those who were not Christians at all. Pagan husbands of Christian women could make life most miserable for their wives.

"As Christian wives, they may redeem this most intimate relationship between man and woman from its pagan perversion by an inward attitude. They can remove some of the

prejudice of non-Christians by their conduct, and by their gracious, meek and quiet spirit use this Christian liberty in Christ to help break down the wall of misunderstanding and ignorance which separates the non-Christian from the gospel."

—Taken from *The Interpreter's Bible*



AUGUST 6, 2000

MORE ON SUFFERING FOR WELL-DOING

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

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

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.

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

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:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

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

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:

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

I Peter 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;

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.

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:

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing. I Peter 3:17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Since Christ in obedience to the will of His Father suffered in the flesh for our sake, we must be ready and willing to bear whatever God permits to come our way with the same faith and steadfastness that Jesus had.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 3:15), "*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*": Give the Lord God and His approval the most worthy honor, respect, reverence, consideration, and esteem. Let Him be holy and sacred to you, and you will be holy and sacred to Him.

(I Peter 3:19), "*The spirits in prison*": This same Jesus who died and was quickened to life by the Spirit of God is now being preached to the souls of men who are spiritually dead and in the prison house of sin. The Greek renders this scripture thus: "In which also going to the spirits in prison He proclaimed."

(I Peter 3:20), "*Which sometime were disobedient*": This is referring to the rejection that so many have had through history to the everlasting gospel of Christ and the Word of God. "*When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah*": This is one instance that illustrates the disobedient and rebellious spirit that rules in the spirit of carnal men who reject the Word of God and the offer of escaping His wrath. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. (II Peter 2:5.) It is evident and very probable that Noah preached to his generation and warned them concerning the flood that was coming.

Hebrews 11:7 tells us that, by Noah moving with fear in obedience to God and preparing the ark for the saving of his house, he condemned the world. Noah's warnings went unheeded. They were spirits in the prison house of sin who had God's message of warning and His salvation offered to them. But they were disobedient just as people today who are not willing to obey the gospel.

(I Peter 3:21), *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us"*: The Greek says, "Which figure also now saves us, baptism." The word "figure" here means: "That which corresponds or represents; a counterpart or antitype." What he is saying here is that Noah's being saved and brought through the flood waters is likened unto what baptism is a figure of. He is speaking of death and the grave. When we are baptized we are saying that we are risen from spiritual death to walk in newness of life, AND, that we believe that Christ will redeem us from death and the grave to endless life with Him. *"Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"*: He is telling us here that baptism is not a cleansing of sin. Baptism does not wash away sins, as some teach. It is rather the response of a heart that has been justified from sin through the blood of Jesus and the forgiveness of God.

(I Peter 4:1), *"He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin"*: This saying can be applied first to Christ, and then to us. By Christ suffering and dying in His fleshly body, He brought an end to the reign of sin. "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Romans 6:7. He was made sin for us. (II Corinthians 5:21.) He died to sin and for sin. This can also be applied to us, and it MUST be applied to us if we receive the benefit of what Christ did for us. We must also suffer in the flesh. Our departure from sin and the ways of the world brings difficulty, pressure, persecution and abuse from our former counterparts in sin.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a continuation of Peter's writings, pursuing further the thought of us triumphing in sharing the Saviour's sufferings in the flesh, and being delivered from the corruptions of sin and the world. Verses 14 and 15 are taken

from Isaiah 8:12 and 13 which says, "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." This confederacy mentioned here can be applied to any unlawful alliance or association with the world and its spirit and ways. The true followers of God have always been at variance with the spirit of this present evil world. To live to please God means breaking fellowship and friendship with the world. It was true with Noah, it was true with our Lord Jesus, and it will be true with us if we would follow Him today. People think it strange when someone leaves the world and its folly to serve the invisible God and things unseen. But this is what has taken place in every age, and the carnal minded reacts the same. But we are following One who has the words of eternal life and whatever we suffer in following Him will be recompensed in eternal glory with Him. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What fear must we overcome to really follow the Lord?
2. What does it mean to sanctify the Lord in our hearts?
3. What reason could you give of the hope that you have?
4. How can one have and maintain a good conscience?
5. Why is it better to suffer for well-doing than for evil?
6. How is Jesus preached unto the spirits in prison?
7. How were people disobedient in the days of Noah?
8. How is Noah's passing through the flood like baptism?
9. What kind of mind should we arm ourselves with?
10. Why is it so hard for people to give up the world?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The translation from sin to righteousness is no small matter. To really be saved we must quit the sin business. This involves giving up our formerly empty and fleshly way of life. It also means breaking away from worldly ties of friendship and association. This can be critical and difficult. We can be kind and friendly in one sense, but in another sense it is "Good-bye, old world, I'm through!" To many the change from the old life to a new creature in Christ Jesus has brought much

pain and distress. But the joy in finding Christ and having Him revealed to you will far more than make up for what you have to bear and suffer. We seek to do the will of God instead of the will of the lusts of the world. We have been risen from the dead state of sin by the resurrection of our Lord, and it has set our affections on things above. And all the suffering that we meet because of our love and obedience to Him we bear with courage and patience, knowing that great is our reward in heaven.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is good to have Christian convictions and not simply be religiously opinionated. You have probably known those who are always ready to give an answer, whether the answer is right or not. These are the type who have an opinion about everything. The apostle Peter exhorted that Christians should be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh, but he qualified how the answer should be given—with meekness and fear. It is easy to ignite an argument with an opinionated person but it should not be so with a Christian. A godly conviction is obtained through a personal contact with God. It is done in humility, carefulness and respect. What we learn in this manner should be given out in the same way. It is hard to argue with those who humbly and carefully submit what God has revealed to them.

This should not only be done with friends, but enemies should be shown equal respect. This, then, is living a triumphant life in the face of opposition. One thought to consider; it can only be done as we maintain a good conscience toward God and towards man. Otherwise we will be irritable in our answers.

There may be but few who will listen to us, but that should not discourage us or be reason to keep this gospel self-contained. Noah was only successful in saving seven souls besides himself, yet he was faithful in telling what God had witnessed to him. And as we have the power of the Holy Spirit working today, who can say what great things might be accomplished?

—Wayne Murphey

AUGUST 13, 2000

FERVENT CHARITY WITH FIERY TRIALS

I Peter 4:6 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.

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

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

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. James 1:2.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord is counting on us to be sober, prayerful, with fervent love for all, and endure the fiery trials that come that we might be accounted worthy to share with Christ's eternal glory.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 4:7), "*Watch unto prayer*": The Greek says, "Be sensible (or attentive) to prayers."

(I Peter 4:8), "*Fervent charity*": Earnest and intense love.

(I Peter 4:10), "*Manifold*": Various, or different kinds. The grace and mercy of God shows itself in many different forms and manners. We have different gifts and abilities and callings. But God manifests Himself in that manner, working in many various ways to bring about His purpose.

(I Peter 4:11), "*As the oracles of God*": As if God was speaking.

(I Peter 4:15), "*Busybody*": Meddler.

(I Peter 4:17), "*Judgment must begin at the house of God*": It has been the manner of God in various times, when about to bring judgment and punishment upon humanity for sin and evil ways, to first visit His people with adversity and difficult times. In doing this He prepares His people, draws them closer to Himself, and gets them ready for the time when He visits evil upon the wicked. The fiery trials and sufferings that His saints endure is really a safeguard and means of preparing them to be able to escape the judgment that is coming.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we see the apostle projecting our vision away from this present time of tribulation and fiery trials to that great day of judgment that God has promised and prophesied since the world began. Jude 14-15 tells us that God is coming with His saints to bring judgment upon the ungodly. Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand (or near)." We should live with this end in view, to be able to escape the

judgment of God upon the wicked, and be presented before Him without fault in that day. We are to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world looking for that great day of His coming. The things we suffer and endure will help keep us from going astray, keep us humble, prayerful, and on our guard. We are bearing the judgment of God aforetime. His judgments must begin with His people. So in our trials and sufferings for His sake we can take consolation in the fact that it is all for our good. Verse 18, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear," is the Septuagint rendering of Proverbs 11:31, which says, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." In all that Peter has said about suffering for righteousness' sake, this can be a clue to what its purpose is. To be saved we are going to have to go through the fire. So then may we be subject to the will of God and endure faithfully to the end, committing to our faithful Creator the preserving and salvation of our precious souls unto eternal life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who are the "dead" that the gospel is preached to?
2. Name out the things that Peter charges us to be careful about.
3. Why must we be diligent to keep our love fervent?
4. What must we do to be able to speak as the oracles of God?
5. Who is glorified when we do things on our own and in our human strength?
6. Why does God allow us to go through fiery trials?
7. Why should we rejoice in the fiery trials?
8. How can fiery trials be a part of Christ's sufferings?
9. Why and how does God's judgment begin with His people?
10. What attitude should we take when we suffer for Him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In a recent time of distressful things that were coming upon some of the saints, the Lord inspired me with Peter's

writings about the strange and surprising fiery trials that we will meet as the children of God. When Bro. Bob Sallee passed away in April of 1998 I was so distressed and sad for his precious family. But the Lord gave us this scripture. Even though we were shocked and dismayed to have to face up to this sorrow, we were counselled by this scripture to look on the bright side. In bearing these difficult and sad trials we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. And, when His glory shall be revealed, we shall be glad also with joy, exceeding joy! And then the Lord opened up Peter's words about judgment first beginning at the house of God, or, in other words, with His people. It is God's way of preparing us for the great judgment day and the time of the punishment of the wicked. Think about what an awful day that is going to be! All nations will be gathered before the great white throne. The proud and lustful and covetous and cruel people will meet all their wicked words and ways. They will give an account for how they have treated the people of God, how they have criticized and talked evil about them, and persecuted them. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. They will be cast out into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The righteous will be rewarded for their faithfulness and love for Christ. But, as a preview to this woeful day of judgment, the saints of God will have their tribulation right here in this mortal life. Let us look forward to what is before us. We will be glad with exceeding joy when we see Jesus coming to take us home to be with Him! Oh, what rejoicing that will be!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"When the apostle uses the phrase, 'If the righteous scarcely be saved,' he does not assuredly mean that there is any doubt about the absolute and infinite sufficiency of the ground of their salvation; or that there is any uncertainty in the result; or that there is any stintedness or imperfection in the final enjoyment; or that, when believers come to stand before the judgment seat at last, it will go hard with them, so

that they may barely come off with acquittal, the poised balance vibrating in long uncertainty, and barely turning on the favorable side, the justifying righteousness of their Lord forming no more than a counterpoise, and hardly that, to their demerits. He means none of these things. His language refers to the difficulty of bringing them through to their final salvation; to the necessity of employing the rod and furnace; the process, in many instances severe, of correction and purification; of bringing them 'to the wealthy place through the fire and the water'; of their being 'chastened of the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world.' If 'fiery trial' be required, and His hatred of sin and His love to His children will not allow Him to withhold it, to purge out the remaining alloy of their holiness, what must His enemies have to look for from His abhorrence of evil, in whom sin is not the mere alloy of a better material, but all is sin together?"

—Taken from writings by Ralph Wardlaw




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Bible Lessons



"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED . . ." R. C. C. 3d8

ADULTS — YOUNG PEOPLE

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HUMILITY AND WATCHFULNESS FOR ALL

1 Peter 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:

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;

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

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

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.

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

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

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

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.

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life. Proverbs 22:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: From the oldest saint to the most

newly saved, God is calling us all to diligence, humility, soberness, watchfulness and steadfastness in the faith of Jesus through all the trials and sufferings of this present life unto the end.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 5:1), "**Elder**": This word in the Greek means "older," or a "senior." In the Greek, Peter's expression of himself was that he was a co-elder, or an elder along with those elders to whom he was exhorting. In most businesses and organizations, the leaders are generally senior members who have been in the line-up for a length of time and who show dependable and faithful qualities that merit responsibility, honor and respect. So it is in the Church of God. One must prove his or her faithfulness and trustworthiness to be able to fill the position of an elder.

(I Peter 5:3), "*Neither as being lords over God's heritage*": This means not exercising lordship or control over the inheritance of the Lord's, that is, the souls of men. There is a temptation that accompanies being an elder or leader of God's people. It is the inclination to want to rule and have the preeminence. This can happen and it has happened many times in the realm of Church association. The power of position too often "goes to the head" and a leader becomes domineering and thinks he has to tell everyone what to do. Peter is warning us against this attitude. Much rather we should be "*ensamples*" to God's sheep, which means to be a "*model for others to imitate.*"

LESSON BACKGROUND

Simon Peter was one of the beloved disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, he took no special rank over anyone else of the holy leaders of the Church of God. He called himself a co-elder, and counselled all else to the same spirit of unity and brotherhood. He recognized Jesus as the chief Shepherd and the elders as under shepherds to Jesus, called to care for, oversee and feed His sheep. This was to be done, not in a lordly manner of being a boss or master, but as setting forth by one's

life and behavior, an example for others to follow. The teaching that Peter is keeper at the gate of heaven is entirely false and fictitious. That he was the first pope is also false and without foundation. The spirit of Peter's writings is a rebuke to such theories. Along with the injunction for the younger to submit to the elder is the loving entreaty to all to be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. Then Peter quotes as did James 4:6 from Proverbs 3:34, which says, "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." He mentions again the forecast of the children of God suffering for their faith. He presents it as our adversary, the devil, working against the saints that are in the world. But he gives to us the wonderful truth that the God of all grace, who has invited us to share in His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, will perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle us in Him if we will be faithful through the patience and suffering. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Peter as a co-elder charge the elders to do?
2. How and why can an elder be tempted to be a lord?
3. What kind of spirit can you see in Peter's eldership?
4. Who is the Chief Shepherd?
5. What does it mean for us to be subject one to another?
6. What will we be if we do not put forth the effort to be humble?
7. What does it mean to humble ourselves under His hand?
8. Who is it that Satan will be able to devour?
9. What does it mean to resist Satan steadfast in the faith?
10. What will we obtain if we faithfully suffer for God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It means much for an elder to feed the souls of men, be watchful for their spiritual welfare, be ready and eager to assume responsibility and service, and at the same time keep the humble spirit that God wants him to have. In our world today there are many cults and groups professing to be God's people whose hub is some leader who rules everyone with a strong hand. It seems that so many are not able to assume a

leadership position and, at the same time, keep from being a lord over the flock. One of the warnings concerning a leader Paul gave in I Timothy 3:6 was "not a novice (one newly converted), lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It has happened that many ministers have been lifted up with pride. It is an evil disease that takes hold of a man when he allows an exalted feeling to take hold of his heart. I was told of a baptizing where someone wanted to take a picture of the group as they were standing out in a line in the water. One of the women who was to be baptized called out, "I want to stand next to the preacher!" The devil sowed the seed of pride in that preacher. Oh, how we need to take heed to put on humility! God is not going to make a person be humble. This is something we need to get wise to and work on ourselves about. God will take us through times of adversity and suffering, where we will have to discipline our attitudes to keep submissive and patient. He will exalt us in the right time to victory and joy if we will keep low down in humility. The proud will not allow himself to suffer the things that God allows His saints to suffer. No, he will seek a way out and will not submit himself to wait patiently on God. This is one of the places where the true and faithful are separated from the ungodly. Only by humility and the fear of the Lord can spiritual riches, and the honor of God, and the quickening life of Christ be ours.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The story is told of a tour guide driving a bus through Palestine. As he drove, he directed the passengers' attention to points of interest and proudly explained that shepherds in Palestine differ from shepherds in other cultures. In Palestine, shepherds lead their flocks, and the sheep trustingly follow the shepherd to safe pasture and restful waters.

As they passed through the countryside, they came upon a man with a flock of sheep. To everyone's surprise, the man was scrambling along behind the sheep, yelling, throwing stones and driving them over the steep embankments of the road. Embarrassed, the tour guide stopped the bus and got

out. Within hearing of the crowded tour bus, he began shouting to the man, upbraiding him.

"What are you doing?" the guide yelled. "I've been telling these tourists that shepherds in Palestine lead their sheep and here you are driving these poor creatures, throwing things at them and cursing. What kind of a shepherd are you?"

The man stared at the tour guide with contempt and shouted, "I am not a shepherd. I am a butcher!"

The mark of a shepherd truly called of God is that he is able, through humility, to lead, feed and pull the flock together. His handling is so opposite that of an overseer who is only interested in what he can get out of the sheep for his own benefit, even at the expense of their spiritual lives. Naturally, sheep under this type of constraint scatter.

We should admire, support and submit to the overseer who shows true shepherding qualities, for such are ordained of God to be a blessing and comfort to the flock.

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 27, 2000

ESSENTIAL ADDITIONS TO OUR FAITH

II Peter 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:

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

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

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.

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

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

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.

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.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Proverbs 3:1-2.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Faith alone will not take us through to a triumphant end. There are qualities of spiritual life and character that we must constantly and abundantly add to our faith if we would have the abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 1:5), "*Knowledge*": Being acquainted and familiar with facts, truths and issues. It is information and comprehension of the ways and doings, the nature and disposition, and the very character and Spirit of God and His salvation and grace.

(II Peter 1:6), "*Temperance*": Self-control. "*Patience*": Endurance in suffering and adversity, not being moved or affected by prolonged hardship and denial. It is the bearing of suffering, provocation, delay, etc. with calmness and self-control. "*Godliness*": Piety. Piety is defined by Webster as loyalty and devotion to God and to religious duties and practices.

(II Peter 1:7), "*Brotherly kindness*": This is fraternal love

and affection, the love and tender friendship of family and friends. The Greek word is "philadelphia". Philadelphia, PA, was founded and named by William Penn as the city of brotherly love. "Charity": The Greek word is "agape," which means divine love.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will begin our studies in the second epistle of our beloved brother Simon Peter, the apostle of our Lord Jesus. It is evident that Peter wrote this epistle to the congregations of his time in an effort to stabilize their faith and assurance in the things that he and the other apostles had brought forth in the gospel of Christ. Our lesson today takes in his counsels concerning the things that we must add to our faith to be successful and happy in Christ. Peter was confident that the hour of his departure from this world was soon to come, and he wrote this epistle for the purpose and aim of stirring up the Church to greater diligence and to remember the great work that our Lord Jesus had accomplished. There are seven things that he mentions in this first chapter that we are to add to our experience with God. These must be added to our faith: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. He stresses their importance and indispensable values for our success in bearing fruit in the Lord. We will consider these things in our lesson and how we can add them to our life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How do we obtain this precious faith?
2. What has His divine power given unto us?
3. What has the Lord called us to?
4. What is given to us through the great precious promises?
5. What is it that we must escape from?
6. What are the things that we must add to our faith?
7. Just how important is it for us to have these things?
8. What happens to the man who lacks these things?
9. How can we make our calling and election sure?
10. What will having these things assure us of?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We must work at our Christian experience every day. If we are going to be successful and fruitful in the graces of Christ we are to add them to our experience by diligent effort and prayer. It is so vital for us to have an understanding and a vision of what God wants us to be. Without a vision of what God is calling us to, there will be little or no effort on our part to get there. We are blessed with the knowledge and experience of the divine nature of God and His precious will. We have obtained joint-access to faith with all the redeemed in Christ. But we must also, beside this, diligently pursue and work into our life and experience these important things that Peter mentioned to accompany our faith in Christ. It is direly essential to have these things. To be without them is a sure cause of spiritual failure. Satan is crafty and he will resist our efforts to get these things working in our hearts. We must put strength, fortitude and manliness into our faith. A faith that will not endure opposition and adversity is worth very little. We must be strong to stem the tide of the adverse powers of Satan that we will meet in the world. To this virtue we need to add knowledge. We will ever and always have something to learn about the Lord and His wondrous ways. To study the science of God and His great plan for the ages is a wonderful and absorbing course to take. And the Holy Spirit is a wonderful Teacher! To knowledge we must add temperance. We must learn and exercise self-control. Our appetites and desires need strict monitoring and control. You cannot let down in this. It is a daily occupation for the saints of God to keep a guard and watch on all the things we allow to come into our conversation. We must have and maintain a patient attitude. We must learn to take privations, delays, denials, mistreatment and other hard things, and do it with no hard feelings or resentment. This is being truly meek like the Master. Though we start out godly, we must keep adding godliness to our lives. We must be more godly and more reverent toward our Creator. We must let brotherly love be added to our godliness. Without brotherly love our godliness might get to scraping and irritating others. And the crowning grace of divine love we must put above all, for it is the bond of perfectness. (See Colossians 3:14.)

Abounding in these things will assure us of fruitfulness and success in the Lord. To lack them will bring nearsightedness and blindness. By having these we will make our calling and being the chosen of God sure and unfailing. And, best of all, it will furnish us a welcome and entrance into those realms of eternal glory where Christ already dwells for ever!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“...ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” These are certainly bold and striking words. They are staggering in that this was the fondest dream of all the ancients. But now, through Christ, it is offered to us, the common crowd, the ordinary people.

How do we access this great benefit offered to all? It is through “exceeding great and precious promises.” Note how the apostle Peter piled up the adjectives. I doubt he had to work at it to come up with a descriptive way to describe these promises from God. It flowed from him by Holy Spirit inspiration as he described what God has made available to the common man.

As Isaac Watts lay dying, he observed, in conversation with a friend, that he remembered an aged minister who used to say that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they came to die, have only the same plain promise of the Gospel for their support as the common and unlearned. “And so,” he said, “I find it. It is the plain promises that do not require much labor and pains to understand, for I can do nothing now but look unto my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that.”

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 3, 2000

THE WORD OF PROPHECY CONFIRMED IN CHRIST

II Peter 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

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:

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

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.

MEMORY VERSE: 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. II Peter 1:19.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Keeping in remembrance the truths taught by Christ and those who were eyewitnesses of His majesty, we must take heed to the prophetic word that has been confirmed and fulfilled in Christ, and allow its light to break forth a new dawning of faith, hope and love in Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 1:12), "*These things*": This term "these things" is mentioned in verses 8: (If these things be in you), 9: (He that lacketh these things), 10: (If ye do these things), in this verse, and in verse 15: (Have these things always in remembrance). What are "these things" that he is speaking of? They are listed in verses 5-7, namely: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. These eight attributes of Christian character are indispensable to success in the Christian life and profession and in being accounted worthy of standing before our Lord in the last day. "*Present truth*": The truth that has been brought near and made manifest in Christ.

(II Peter 1:14), "*Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me*": Jesus said to Peter, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." John 21:18-19. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified head down, at his own request, for he felt unworthy to be crucified as his Lord because he had denied Him those three times the night of Christ's arrest and trial.

(II Peter 1:20), "*No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*": The Greek says, "Every prophecy of Scripture did not come into being of its own unloosing." The word for "interpretation" means explanation or application. What the apostle is saying here is that the Holy Scriptures can only be understood by means of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit through which the holy men of old were inspired to bring them forth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Peter brought out eight very weighty and important things for us to furnish our souls with in order to be fruitful in Christ and to make our calling and election sure. In our lesson today we continue to consider

what he says about these things and how he desired to bring these things to our remembrance, and for us to retain them always in our remembrance. It is easy for us to let these things slip away from our minds and not esteem them as important to seek after as we should. We need self-control, the power to govern our emotions, desires, feelings, etc. We need much patience and endurance to be able to stand the hardships, sufferings, delays and long periods of sorrow and persecution. We need to increase and reinforce the spirit of reverence and godly fear in our souls. This great salvation was not the idea of mortal man. It was a manifestation of the glory and majesty of the Almighty God in His holy Son Jesus. Peter was one of the eyewitnesses of this majesty, portrayed on the Mount of Transfiguration. There the face of Jesus shone like the sun and His raiment was exceeding white. There Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah in glory, and discussed the upcoming suffering and crucifixion He would soon encounter in Jerusalem. So Peter was greatly concerned that our faith would triumph and that we would not be moved from this wonderful truth in Christ. He also stressed the Scriptures and Prophecies that Christ had ratified and fulfilled, and how we need to take heed to them. All of these things Peter earnestly sought to leave with the Church, and perhaps in this way, he greatly fulfilled the admonition of his Lord, when He said, "Feed my sheep."

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were "these things" Peter spoke of?
2. Why did he so want us to keep them in remembrance?
3. Why was Peter so sure about the truth of Christ?
4. What had he been an eyewitness of?
5. How was the word of prophecy made more sure?
6. How did he say the prophecies came in old time?
7. By what means alone can we understand the Scriptures?
8. What does it mean to take heed to the prophecies?
9. What will come to us if we take heed to them?
10. What does it mean to have the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Peter speaks much of the Scriptures and the Word of God in these two epistles. He spoke of the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to come to us, and how the Spirit of Christ in them testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. He also mentioned that the prophets ministered not to themselves, but unto us, and that these things are now reported by them who have preached the gospel by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Then he spoke of how we purify our souls in obeying the truth, and how we are born again by the incorruptible seed, the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. All flesh is grass, he quoted from Isaiah 40:6-8, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And he said that this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you. He stated that we should desire the Word, hungering for its milk as newborn babes. He spoke of those who, instead of building on Christ as the living Stone, stumble at the Word and are disobedient. So the Word of God is the great important means of our communication with our Lord. We have in Christ the Scriptures and prophetic Word established beyond all dispute and doubt. Christ fulfilled the Scriptures to the letter. All that was prophesied of Him came to pass. This proved that what God had spoken hundreds of years before was true, and that we can count on the Bible to be right beyond all question.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"It is interesting to compare the Epistles of Peter with those of Paul. Peter's Epistles tell of grace—Christ on this earth; Paul's of glory—Christ in the Heavens. Peter saw the Transfiguration on the earth; Paul was caught up to the Heavens and saw the God of Glory. Peter tells of the things he saw here; Paul of the revelation and of the word 'unspeakable.'"

—Taken from Handfuls on Purpose



SEPTEMBER 10, 2000

**DELIVERANCE FOR THE GODLY,
PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED**

II Peter 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.

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

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.

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.

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;

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;

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

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

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:

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

MEMORY VERSE: The Lord knoweth how to deliver the

godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. II Peter 2:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: As God preserved and delivered all who feared and obeyed Him and brought judgment and destruction upon the wicked in the past, so even now He will deliver us who are faithful and true to Him from the perils of this age of false teachers and abounding wickedness.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 2:1), *"Damnable heresies"*: Teachings that bring about divisions, and cause destruction, ruin and loss to the spiritual life of the souls of men.

(II Peter 2:2), *"Pernicious ways"*: Ways of destruction.

(II Peter 2:3), *"With feigned words make merchandise"*: With well-turned and smooth, yet artificial and false words they will use you for gain. People are easily swayed by eloquence regardless of the corruption in the speaker. History proves this to be so.

(II Peter 2:4), *"The angels that sinned"*: I do not believe that these that Peter labels as angels here refer to the angelic beings in heaven who are ministering spirits to the righteous. To me it is rather the godly people in the days before the flood who, for a time stood out against the evils of the world, but gradually yielded to the influence of the wicked and turned away from the favor of God. We can see that there were two different classes of people. There was the lineage and posterity of Cain. These followed the way of the flesh and its lusts and pleasures. Then there were the descendants of Seth, the third son of Adam. These were the godly who called upon the name of the Lord, among whom was Enoch and Noah. Through the allurements of the beauty of the women of Cain's offspring the sons of God went after them and took wives of all which they chose. (Genesis 6:2.) The wickedness of man after that escalated and increased so swiftly that soon God purposed to destroy them. *"Chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment"*: These wicked and violent hosts of men and women who were destroyed in the great flood are

still held in outer darkness awaiting the day of their punishment. When God pours out His wrath against sin and apostasy, it is not just physical and earthly loss and ruin. It is eternal damnation, the sense and awareness of despair and torment that will never pass away. It does not pay to rebel against the holy will and ways of the Lord.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Peter brought out how the holy men of God spake in old time as they were inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit. He continues in the second chapter by stating that there were also false prophets among the people in those times of old and that there would be false teachers among us likewise. Paul issued a like warning in his writings. False religions and erring doctrines that are contrary to the holy standard of God's Word are the greatest curse and most evil influence in the world throughout all history. Jeremiah had false teachers to deal with. One, named Hananiah, withstood and contradicted Jeremiah in Jeremiah 28 and declared that God was not going to fulfill what Jeremiah had spoken concerning captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah let him speak and even said, "Amen, the Lord do so." But God caused that vain prophet to die that very year and Jeremiah's words prevailed and came to pass. It is pitiful and sad to see the confusion and darkness in our world today because of false preachers and teachers. But it is even as Peter said that it would be. God is letting them have their say now, but their judgment will soon come. Peter refers to Noah and how God saved him from the flood that destroyed the world in his day. Peter also recalls how Lot was delivered from the destruction of Sodom. Since that is true, (and we can think of other saints through the ages who have been delivered likewise), we know that the Lord has things well in hand. Let the wicked prevail and have his day. God knows that it is but for a little while. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What else was there among the people besides the

holy men of God who spoke by the Holy Spirit?

2. What did Peter say would also be among us?

3. Why can the ungodly so easily speak against the true ministers of the Lord?

4. By what method does the false prophet sway the people?

5. Why is the judgment of God against evil so long delayed?

6. Where are all those wicked men today who died in the flood?

7. In saving Noah and delivering Lot what did God show that He knows how to do?

8. Why does Peter use Noah and Lot as examples for us?

9. Why is it so important to deny the flesh and live to the Spirit?

10. Why does a man who lives after the flesh despise leadership and authority?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our Saviour warned us in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." He prophesied in Matthew 24:11, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." The apostle Paul spoke of such in II Corinthians 11:13-15, saying, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." So we have plenty of warning in the Bible concerning the perils of false teachers. There are many preachers in our world today that are false. They talk eloquently and make a big show. People are swayed by the power of their tongue and their seemingly godly bearing, and money is sent to them by the millions of dollars. Every now and then one is caught up with and exposed publicly. Many preachers build themselves an

earthly realm of popularity and praise and lavish support. They preach some truth, but they do not preach all of the truth. Paul spoke to Timothy about people who will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. (II Timothy 4:3.) It means much to preach for the Lord and not the praise of the people. It means much to preach the Word when it is in season with folks and preach it when it is not in season with folks. To reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine is the work of a true minister. His life must live up to his preaching. God will be with the true minister and back him with His power and blessings. He will let His true ministers suffer many trials and sorrows. He will permit them to go through privations and close places financially. The true ministers will not beg for money and make gain through the people. The holy saint minister will pray and tell his needs to the Lord, and God will hear prayer and supply his needs and the needs of his family. We have proven it to be so. It is shameful how many leading preachers today are getting gain from the people, and not telling them the full truth. But God is looking on. He knows them that are His, and who are faithfully preaching the gospel of His Son. The false prophet will be rewarded according to his works. And the Lord will deliver the faithful from every evil work and preserve them unto His heavenly kingdom.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Peter lived many years and experienced much of that which occurs in the Christian life. Therefore we can accept what he says as authoritative, knowing that it is not just a fine theory or simply head knowledge.

One of his most encouraging statements was, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

An excellent example of this in Peter's life is recorded in

the 12th chapter of Acts. King Herod had killed James and since it was a popular move with the people, he decided to kill Peter as well. Peter was arrested and put in jail. The chance of living looked bleak. But God knew how to deliver him. He sent an angel to Peter who led him to liberty.

Herod's end turned out differently. Although things seemed to go well and people praised him as a god, the Lord struck him down and he died a loathsome death.

God's knowledge is all encompassing. He knows the godly when they are in trials of which no one is aware. He understands them when they are in temptation and can hardly discern their own feelings. He knows the unrighteous even in their secret sins. He knows them even when they appear to be pious and blessed with temporal honors.

God's ability to work in the lives of both the godly and the unjust is likewise unsurpassed. He knows how to make a way of escape for those who believe in Him and just when to work to their advantage. He is able to bring fear and unrest upon the oppressors and to bring them down when their cup of iniquity is full.

God is a God of justice and in the end justice will be meted out to all. Let us watch lest we be brought under any influence which would deprive us of eternal life.

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 17, 2000

THE WRATH OF GOD AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS

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

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;

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;

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:

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;

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

MEMORY VERSE: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Matthew 7:15-16.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: A false prophet or teacher is motivated by his own ideas and desires instead of the Holy Spirit of God. With fair speeches and great powers of logic

and reason a false teacher can charm and deceive many who are unaware of the danger.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 2:11), "*Angels, which are greater in power and might*": These are the ministering spirits with might and power beyond and above the ministers of the gospel. But even they will not withstand nor bring a reproaching charge against the servants of God before the Lord.

(II Peter 2:12), "*Natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed*": Fleshly, unreasoning beasts born for capture and corruption. Peter is likening these ungodly men who profess to be of Christ and who rise up to contradict the servants of Christ to animals whose future is to be captured and slain. What a terrible comparison, and yet, how true!

(II Peter 2:13), "*Count it pleasure to riot in the day time*": The Greek text says, "Deeming indulgence in the day as pleasure." The day is for work and accomplishment. The day of the gospel is for labor and accomplishment for spiritual success and riches. Time and opportunity comes to all, but so many indulge in the material and fleshly lusts with no thought of their eternal consequence. "*Spots and blemishes*": Stains and defects, flaws and blots. "*Sporting themselves with their own deceivings*": The Greek says "Revelling in spots and blemishes, in their deceits feasting along with you." These fake and cheap imitations will try to go right along with the pure and holy and put on a front that they are just as spiritual and enjoying the things of God as much as anyone.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In today's study we will continue with Peter's discourse concerning the awful condition brought about by the work of false teachers and preachers. It is really a deplorable state that things develop into because of corrupt leaders. This is true in the home, in the governments of the world, and, above all, in the religious world, that is, the Church. All this

is brought about by evil men who rise up against the true ministers and the pure gospel of Christ. Balaam is mentioned who sought to curse Israel with prospects of the reward offered to him. He seemingly had at the first been in contact with God and had a reputation of pronouncing blessings or curses upon people. Through the pressure of promises of great rewards Balaam went with the messengers of Balak, king of Moab. The way of Balaam is to fall under the influence of money and financial gain. It is an allurements and trap that many preachers have been caught in. And, to get the money coming and to keep it coming from the people they preach to, they must preach things that the people like to hear. Oh, the terrible condition that prevails in this sort of thing! To think of men getting into this spirit of covetousness and lust who at one time were godly, humble and spiritual is a fearful thought! But the facts are laid out by the apostle Peter and it is for us to take diligent heed and be directed by the Lord and kept by His power from this awful spirit.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were these false preachers guilty of that even angels greater in power and might would not do?
2. In what way are they like brute beasts?
3. What are the temptations that befall preachers?
4. Why is a false preacher like a well without water?
5. What is "the way of Balaam?"
6. Why is eloquence and excellency of speech not a true sign of a minister of God?
7. How can we hope to escape from these deceptions?
8. What are some of the things that we can get in bondage to?
9. How can a person believe in the doctrine, "once saved-always saved" in the light of these scriptures?
10. What was the true proverb that Peter mentioned?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The liberty that many people are desiring and working

toward is a social liberty. They want our society to be free from crime, injustice, racism, poverty, sickness and disease. There are foundations, clubs, organizations, drives and many other seemingly noble efforts to bring these civil and mortal liberties about. One of our former presidents is remembered for his "War on Poverty." One famous and outspoken senator from the south a number of years ago set a goal for a re-distribution of the nation's wealth, setting a certain income for every household to be insured of. Many worthy goals have been achieved in our society to bring about better living conditions and higher standards of social and economic standing. Preachers and ministers of people's praise get on the band wagon of these activities. Cleaner air, purer water and better nutrition are among the great endeavors of our day. All of these things would be a great blessing to humanity. But there is one need that so many people overlook. And that is the salvation of men and women from the power and dominion of sin. Sin is not in the list of their culprits. And this is really man's greatest need. The worst bondage that a man can be in is the slavery to sin and the lusts of the flesh. For this cause the Son of God came into the world. He came to save people from the power of sin. He instituted no programs for bettering the society. But Jesus had the one great and true answer and cure for society's ills and problems. Sin is to blame for all the trouble in the world, and until sin is exposed and eliminated out of the heart and nature of man, there will still be problems regardless of all the noble efforts of man to get rid of them. Concerning the awful massacre in the Colorado high school about a year ago, much has been said about what to do to avoid such horrible occurrences. But not a word is spoken by the leaders about the real problem. As long as sin rules the heart and mind there will be these things happening and even worse. The standard of people's lives rises no higher than the leaders and when the leaders have no vision of sin and true righteousness, how can we have a society that is any better? People today need to be born of the Spirit of God and set free from the bondage of the lusts of the flesh and transgressing

the laws of God. But they need to know about it, and this is where godly preachers are needed.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is a saying that, "Light that is trifled with becomes lightening." How true that is in relation to the light of the gospel. Something which has the power to change the soul is something to be respected and handled with reverence. Otherwise, that which is beautiful and of great benefit, can become instant destruction.

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 24, 2000

WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING?

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

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:

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

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.

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:

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

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.

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.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

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.

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

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?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

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.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

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.

MEMORY VERSE: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. II Peter 3:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Regardless of how much doubt is in the world concerning the promise of Christ's coming, we know that the day of the Lord will come and all of the present heavens and earth will pass away. In all holy conversation and godliness, we must be diligent that we may be found of Him in that day in peace, without spot, and blameless.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 3:5), *"Willingly are ignorant of"*: There are several different ways of saying this, namely, "They choose to be ignorant," or "They are disposed to overlook," "They are inclined to be ignorant, not seeking to know," "They are glad to be ignorant and not mindful," or "They are determined to not know." *"The earth standing out of the water and in the water"*: The Greek says, "The heavens were of old, and the earth by water and through water, having been held together by the word of God." The carnal mind unenlightened by the Holy Spirit cannot comprehend the wonders of how God fashioned the earth. Psalm 24:2 says, "For he hath founded it (the earth) upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." The Word of God made an opening in the midst of the great mass of waters and ordered the dry land to appear. The Word of God had some of the land above the waters where vegetation and man and beast could live. God designed it and spoke it all into place.

(II Peter 3:10), *"Elements"*: The basic fundamental substance of all matter, and the atomic structure. *"Melt"*: The meaning of the Greek word here is "loosened." It is the same word which is translated "dissolved" in verses 11 and 12. All things are held together by the Word and unfailing Decree of the Almighty God. His Word holds the atoms together, the structure of which forms all material substance. When God brings an end to time and His Son appears in His power and glory to punish the wicked and reward the righteous, the elements will be loosened. The atomic structure will no longer be held together, and its dissolving will be in a fervent heat and burning never known before. It will be greater than any atomic or hydrogen bomb ever imagined when all the elements are loosened. A ten thousand pound atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima Japan causing 90,000 casualties. That was one bomb. The elements and the atoms in that bomb were loosened creating a fire ball of many millions of degrees. Concrete and steel flowed together. People were incinerated on the spot. Great street cars were melted in a

lump. What will it be like when all the elements are loosened? This is what we are facing in the great day of the Lord.

(II Peter 3:12), "*Hasting*": Speeding up, urging on diligently and earnestly, awaiting eagerly.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Peter seeks to stir up our minds concerning the prophecies and the commandments of Christ and His apostles. Time has passed, the years have fled away. One by one, the fathers of the gospel of Christ were passing off the scene. Scoffers began to make their voices heard. "Maybe there is nothing to this belief we have had of Jesus coming back again!" Doubts began to form in the minds of the people. Yes, it seemed to many that the whole thing was a fraud. "He said He would return. Where is He? Why doesn't He appear?" Peter knew that this reasoning would try to invade upon our faith. And now another 1900 years have passed. Still the Lord tarries. Why has it been so long? Peter declares that the Lord is not slack as some think, but it is that He is so long suffering and patient. God is that way. He bears long with His creation. He decrees judgment and just retribution for sin, but He is so long bringing it to pass. Peter points us to the time of the destruction of the earth by the flood. He already mentioned in I Peter 3:20 about how "the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." God also allows time to pass and delays His promised judgment to try and refine the righteous. But be it known to us assuredly that the day of the Lord WILL COME.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

- 1. What caused doubts to arise concerning Christ's coming?**
- 2. Why are some people "willingly ignorant?"**
- 3. By what power and means were the waters and land separated in the beginning?**
- 4. What caused the world to be overflowed with water?**

5. What is that same Word holding us back from now?
6. Why does time mean nothing to God?
7. If the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, why does He yet delay His coming?
8. What will take place in that day when the Lord does come?
9. What should we be diligent about, seeing that all of these things are soon to be destroyed?
10. What, according to His promise, are we looking for?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"The day of the Lord will come." Regardless of how many vain and light-hearted people scoff and are indifferent to the idea of the sudden return of Jesus Christ to this earthly realm, God has promised it and it will surely come to pass. People who do not believe that Jesus is coming to judge the world will surely not make any preparation. People who do not believe in a hereafter will live solely for this present world and all the gratifying of this vain mortal flesh. That is all they see, and that is all they care about. But we who have been transformed by the power of Jesus Christ from the dead state of sin to a blessed hope of eternal inheritance with Him are filled with joy and anticipation of meeting the Lord in the air and ever being with Him. There have always been scoffers in the history of mankind and there always will be until time is no more. There will probably be mockers and scoffers spewing out their folly right at the moment when the wrath of God will start pouring down. We have two scenes in the Scriptures that portray the wrath of God in destruction upon mankind. One is the flood in the time of Noah, and the other is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha. One only has to read the scriptural account and use a little mental art and imagination to get the picture of how it might have been. In both accounts we have a little handful of those who escaped and were saved. Let us live with that terrible and yet glorious end in view.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Many have speculated as to the time of Christ's second appearing. Some have quit their jobs, taken their children out of school, and holed up to await the coming of Christ. They blindly overlook the Scripture which states that no man knoweth the day nor the hour of the coming of the Son of Man.

One particular sect of people believe that Christ returned in 1914. They claim that His return was recognized only by them, through their spiritual eyes. The Bible states that "Every eye shall see him"—not a selected few.

God's timing is perfect; much more so than ours. God alone knows the time when this sin-laden earth will be ripe for the plucking.

A gentleman traveling in a stagecoach attempted to divert the company by ridiculing the Scriptures. "As to the prophecies," said he, "in particular, they were all written after the events took place. A minister in the coach, who had hitherto been silent, replied, "Sir, I beg leave to mention one particular prophecy as an exception, 'Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers.' Now, sir, whether the event be not long after the prediction, I leave the company to judge." The mouth of the scorner was stopped.

—Wayne Murphey



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