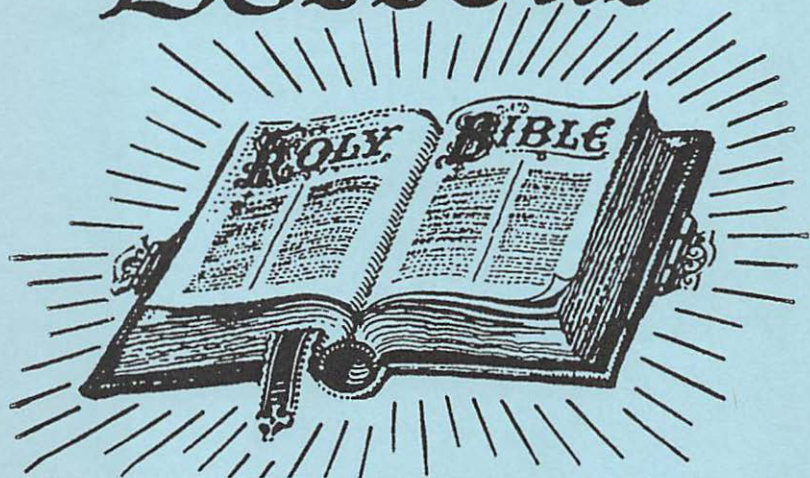


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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**Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church
Edited by Leslie C. Busbee and Willie E. Murphey**

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THEME FOR FIRST QUARTER, 2007

We are inspired for this series of Bible Lessons to study from the writings of Simon Peter, the beloved disciple and apostle of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We will endeavor to cover both of the epistles that he wrote, but our first lesson will be from the mighty message that he brought forth on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the one hundred and twenty who had been seeking and waiting for the promise of the Father.

We have been greatly blessed and edified through the years by the writings of this wonderful eye-witness of the glory and majesty of the anointed Son of God. We trust the Lord will bless these studies to everyone who partakes of their wonderful truth.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



JANUARY 7, 2007

PETER'S MESSAGE AT PENTECOST

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Colossians 3:1.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Peter proclaimed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus, Whom the Jews crucified, was risen from the dead and was exalted to sit at the right hand of God as Lord of all and God's eternal, anointed Son.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Acts 2:23), *"determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"*: This means that Christ Jesus was known and purposed of God from eternity.

(Verse 24), *"holden"*: Held in bondage.

(Verse 25), *"foresaw"*: Prophetically beheld far in advance.

(Verse 27), *"thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"*: The Greek word for *hell* is "hades," which refers to the realm of the dead where go the spirits of those who have died. This means that God would not leave Christ in the disembodied state in Paradise, but would bring Him back to His body which would be resurrected to immortality.

(Verse 29), *"patriarch"*: Father and ruler of a tribe or family.

(Verse 30), *"fruit of his loins"*: The fruit of his body, that is, from the line of his descendants.

(Verse 36). "*Lord*": One who is supreme in authority and control. "*Christ*": The Man God anointed as the King and Savior of mankind.

LESSON BACKGROUND

When Jesus of Nazareth refused to defend Himself before the Jewish leaders who sought to have Him crucified, His disciples were plunged into sorrow and confusion. Simon Peter had sought to defend his Master in the garden when the soldiers came to take Him and with a sword cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus rebuked Peter for his rash action and healed the man's ear. Peter was bewildered by this and, with the other disciples, forsook Him and fled. Later, when confronted by those who accused him of being with Jesus, Peter three times denied that he even knew Jesus and even cursed and swore about it. Jesus had told him beforehand that he would do this, and, when it happened, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly." Luke 22:61, 62. Jesus gave Himself to be crucified as a sacrifice to God for the atonement of the sins of mankind. Simon Peter and the other disciples were not aware of this.

When Jesus came back to life and was reunited with Peter and the others, through the teachings from the Scriptures that the Lord opened up to them, it began to unfold to their minds what was really going on. Jesus made Peter and the others to know that the "good news" of His death and resurrection must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. But He also instructed them to tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come and endue them with power from on high. In obedience to Christ's command, after they had beheld Him ascend out of their sight, Peter and the disciples went back to Jerusalem, and, in the upper room along with many others, (the number being about one hundred and twenty) they continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the blessed Holy Spirit to come.

When the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven like a rushing mighty wind and filled the souls of the disciples, they began to proclaim to the people gathered in Jerusalem "the wonderful works of God." And Peter, the man who had once been frustrated and afraid to acknowledge his Lord, stood up and declared to the people that what they were witnessing was the outpouring of the

Holy Spirit as had been prophesied by the prophet Joel. After he brought this out Peter began to preach about Jesus. For our lesson today we have this part of his message. He declares that Jesus has been raised from the dead by the power of God, quoting from the 16th Psalm where David spoke of Christ's resurrection. We see in our lesson that it was Jesus who David was speaking of. Peter also quoted from Psalm 110:1 of Christ being brought up to sit at the right hand of God until His foes would be made His footstool. He also alluded to David's prophecy in Psalm 132:11 about Christ as the offspring of David being given to be raised up to sit on his throne. This wonderful truth about Christ from the prophecies that went before about Him is the basis of the glorious everlasting gospel that we have before us today.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What three Scriptures did Peter use in his message?
2. Who was it that Peter said God raised from the dead?
3. How did Peter show that David spoke not of himself?
4. What had Christ shed forth from the right hand of God?
5. What did Peter declare that God made Jesus to be?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In Luke 24:44-47 Christ spoke to His disciples: "...These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled (brought fully to pass), which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." God gave the prophecies of Christ, His beloved Son, in the law, in the prophets and in the Psalms. In Peter's message he referred directly to three vitally important prophecies from the Psalms of David. All three of these Peter applied directly to Jesus of Nazareth Whom the Jews had crucified. It was the basis of Christ's victory. He allowed Himself to be crucified in shame and reproach, being rejected by His own nation. But God did not leave His Son's body in the tomb and His

spirit in paradise. He brought Him back to life, not to a fleshly and corruptible existence, but to everlasting immortality, never to suffer pain and death again. And He not only brought Him back to live forever, but He caused Him to pass from human sight into the Heavenly realm and to sit down in power and glory at His own right hand. There He must reign until the day when God would subdue all of His foes. In the meantime Christ is our intercessor, our great High Priest that we pray to and look to for mercy and help in time of need. And when the Almighty Father sees it is time, Christ will come and resurrect the dead and bring all to the judgment where He will reward His saints and punish His enemies with everlasting destruction. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The first verse of our lesson identifies Jesus as, "a man approved of God." At the time of His baptism the Holy Spirit gave visible witness of Jesus by taking on the form of a dove, descending from Heaven and lighting upon Him. At this time God also audibly voiced His approval of Jesus. Throughout the life of Jesus there were many upright men who recognized that He was truly the Son of God. Then there were many miracles that He performed, all attesting to the fact the Jesus was approved of God. Yet, after all of this evidence, the Jewish leaders still would not accept Him as their promised Messiah.

The evil attitude they manifested toward Jesus is illustrated by their words in John 10:20. Jesus had just revealed to them that He was the Good Shepherd and prophesied that He would lay down His life for the sheep and then the Scripture says, "And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" They refused to listen to the Son of God. Sadly, the words of Jesus were fulfilled and He did have to lay down His life for the sheep.

After Jesus had performed a wonderful miracle by raising Lazarus from the dead by the power of God, the Bible says that many of the Jews, which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them about what Jesus had done. The chief priests then gathered together a counsel to decide what should be done about Jesus. John 11:53 says, "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."

The Jews were very careful about washing their hands. Aaron and his sons were instructed to wash their hands and their feet when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation or when they came near the altar to minister. (Exodus 30:19-21.) In Mark 7:3-4 it says, "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables." The Jews were so careful not to defile themselves or the temple. They would not even allow the Gentiles to go into certain areas to keep them from defiling those areas. The Roman centurion who came to Jesus and asked for Him to heal his servant said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." To prevent their defilement, the Jews considered the Gentiles as dogs and tried to have as little to do with them as possible. However, no amount of ceremonial washing was able to cleanse their sin-blackened hearts and their "wicked hands" that gave Jesus, the precious, holy, Son of God to the Romans to be crucified. Then when Pilate washed his hands before them and declared that "I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." The Jews then answered, "...His blood be on us, and on our children." Matthew 27:25. Oh, the defilement and heartache they brought on themselves when they crucified the Prince of Peace.

Peter knew about the guilt that came upon the Jews for he too had transgressed against his Lord and fell under heavy condemnation. He also had experienced the forgiveness that was available for those who will humble their hearts and repent. The great love and mercy that Jesus showed to Peter was so typical of what He wants to do for every lost soul. After Jesus was raised from the tomb He gave Peter a special call to "feed my sheep." Peter yielded to that call and God used him in a wonderful way to proclaim the news of the risen Savior—the One Who had been crucified was exalted to the right hand of God. Many believed the message of Peter and found the blessing of salvation and his ministry continues to bless us.

May the desire of our hearts concur with the message presented by the song, "We'll Crown Him Lord of All."

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

JANUARY 14, 2007

**BLESSED HOPE AND HOLY CALLING OF GOD
IN CHRIST JESUS**

I 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.

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.

MEMORY VERSE: 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: I Peter 1:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has given to us a living hope of sharing in the resurrection from the dead that He gave to His Son, Jesus, a treasure laid up in Heaven for us to have after we have been faithful in the trials and tests of life in being obedient to be holy as He is holy.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 1:2), "*Elect*": Those who had responded with faith and obedience to the message of salvation in Christ as chosen and accepted with God. "*sprinkling of the blood*": This means the application of the blood that Jesus shed upon our hearts for cleansing from sin through our faith and obedience.

(Verse 3), "*begotten*": Regenerated or made a new creature. "*lively*": Living.

(Verse 4), "*to an inheritance incorruptible*": This means an undecaying possession that has been made available to us. "*reserved*": Guarded and kept safe and secure.

(Verse 5). The Greek Interlinear renders this: "For you who are guarded by the power of God through faithfulness until this salvation will be unveiled at the end of time." We obtain forgiveness and purification from sin now in His triumphant grace, but there will be a finishing and completeness of His salvation when He comes again.

(Verse 6). The Greek Interlinear says, "In which you exult (jump for joy), yet for a little it is needful to be grieving by manifold (different kinds of) trials." This hope and assurance in Christ is so wonderful, but for the present we are allowed to

remain in this troubled world where we will suffer many different kinds of adverse and painful sorrows.

(Verse 7), *"trial of your faith"*: These grievous things we meet in life are given to test and make full proof of our faith. If our believing in God and Christ cannot endure adversity and hardship then it is not real and is not what God is pleased with. *"more precious than gold"*: It will be rewarded with God's wondrous gift of eternal life and joy. *"might be found"*: Will prove out to be to our eternal profit.

(Verse 8), *"yet believing"*: Regardless of our treasures in Christ being unseen and yet to come, we still believe in them and rejoice with all assurance and confidence.

(Verse 9), *"end of your faith"*: The faithful keeping of our faith in Christ will have the blessed result and purpose fulfilled of being in the resurrection unto eternal life.

(Verse 11), *"searching"*: Inquiring, seeking, looking for and investigating with all desire and interest.

(Verse 13), *"gird up the loins of your mind"*: apply your minds with fresh and keen interest and decision. *"sober"*: Solemn, serious, sincere and watchful. *"revelation"*: Appearing or coming.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we begin a series of lessons from the two epistles of Simon Peter. Peter is writing this to Jewish converts who were dispersed among the Gentile nations. But these writings are full of spiritual light and edification for us today. What God did through Christ in that day and time is still fresh with power and grace to bless the souls of those who are hungry for the Word of God. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation for every one who believes clear down through the ages to the end of time. He is writing to the "elect" which is made up of all who sincerely with an honest and good heart have heard the gospel, believed it and obeyed it. We today can be part of the "elect" and chosen of God in Christ. This "elect" is not any certain nationality or race of men, but for whosoever will drink of the water of life and be led by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Peter starts out with exultation of spirit about the blessed hope that we are begotten to by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, what it consists of and who it is for. It is far superior to any thing of earth or this present evil world. It is

everlasting, never to fade away. It is reserved in Heaven for those who through their unfailing faith are kept from the evil of this world and are counted worthy to obtain it in the last great day. He warns that there will be trials to test and prove our faith, but gives great assurance that it will be fulfilled. He mentions that the prophets have prophesied about it and that the angels in Heaven long to investigate it. Then Peter counsels us to apply ourselves for this great vocation, conforming ourselves to God and His holiness instead of to this world. Then he quotes from Leviticus 11:44-45 for us to be holy, for God is holy.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How can we be part of the "Elect" of God?
2. What has God begotten us to by Jesus Christ?
3. What kind of inheritance does this hope afford?
4. Why do we need to endure manifold temptations?
5. What must we do if we would obtain this hope?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Consider our mortal state and the need we have for the hope that Peter speaks of. Our human bodies are corruptible, diseased and soon to go back to the dust. Everything of earth that we use is defiled and full of corruption. The air is polluted, society is degraded with sin and immorality; wickedness and dishonesty prevail everywhere. Death is paramount and taking its daily toll of the young as well as the old. There is not one part of our mortal body that is not subject to disease and corruption. At our best state we are altogether vanity. (Psalm 39:5.) This world is weighed down with iniquity and transgression and it is doomed for destruction. The world is stained with covetousness, pride, lust, hatred, murder, theft, dishonesty, corruption and strife. No program or effort of organizations will solve humanity's woes. It will never get any better no matter what people try to do. Medical science is falling short of solving the health problems of humanity. People are sick, overweight, miserable and pitiful. The hospitals, asylums, nursing homes, jails, penitentiaries and reform institutions are teeming with people in trouble. Our only hope is in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no other escape from the woe and destruction that is creeping upon us. The morals are gone and society is full of deceptive error and evil. Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God and is still able to save

man from destruction. But without faith and obedience to the will of God there is no way that man can save himself. God wills to rescue us but we must take the initiative and be willing and obedient to Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"What kind of inheritance does this hope afford?" It is a question worth considering. I asked the same kind of question to a dear friend of mine recently, as we were studying the book of Ephesians together. Paul mentions our inheritance in the first chapter, verse eleven: "In whom [Jesus] also we have obtained an inheritance...."

My friend, Pat, who is middle-aged, has had cerebral palsy from birth. She has now been in a nursing home for seven years. Times of joy and freedom from physical pain are few and far between. Her only hope and joy is in her Savior, Whom she loves very much. Her simple faith and keen grasp of spiritual truth astounds and challenges me. She says she has little to give to me, being crippled and bedfast. But she is wrong. She constantly gives joy and encouragement. We have precious times together in prayer and study of God's Word.

Together, we explored the greatness of our inheritance. We talked about the "down-payment" that God gives us, His Holy Spirit, and the righteousness, peace and joy therein—the kingdom that is within us. We mentioned the heritage that Isaiah pointed to in chapter 54, verse 17. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;..." Then, we began to look ahead to the "redemption" of the purchased possession, when the Lord shall say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, **inherit**..." How, we wondered, would it really be to rise up with the Lord in the air and ever be with Him? What would it feel like to be changed into that immortal body, with no handicaps, disfigurements or limitations; to praise God forever and ever without the boundaries of time, space or humanity?

"Oooh," Pat laughed. "You're making me homesick!"

That is exactly the way a child of God is supposed to be. Homesick. We enjoy a little part of our inheritance every day, but we realize what awaits us when this life is over. We are willing to go through any tribulation, just to see, first-hand, what is "**Reserved** in Heaven for us."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

JANUARY 21, 2007

THE WORD OF THE LORD, THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

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

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.

I 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.

MEMORY VERSE: The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. I Peter 1:25.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: As human beings we are mortal, corruptible and soon to pass away. We cannot be saved by corruptible things of this earth. But Jesus Christ died and shed His blood for our redemption in obedience to the will of God. Therefore we must lay aside the sinful ways of life and obey the Word of God that Christ gave us.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 1:17), "*without respect of persons*": Not considering or being influenced by the outward appearance of a person. It is even as the Lord said to Samuel as he considered Eliab as possibly being chosen to be anointed to be king: "...Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." I Samuel 16:7. "*fear*": Alarm, fright. Paul advised in Philippians 2:12 to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Again in Hebrews 12:28, 29 he says, "...let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:..." Proverbs 9:10.

(Verse 18), "*vain conversation*": The Greek says, "worthless way of living." "*by tradition*": Handed down. One generation sets the pace for the following generation. Christ brought the truth to us and we must break the cast that the influence of the world around us has put over us and conform to what Christ and His Word teaches.

(Verse 21), "*gave him glory*": This refers to the honor, majesty, power and brightness that God rewarded His Son Jesus with for the humility, obedience, suffering and death that Christ submitted Himself to. II Peter 1:17 spoke of how Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration "received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent (magnificently bright) glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That was a marvelous display of brilliance and wonder. The account of it in Matthew 17:2 says that His face shone as the sun. Paul, in Acts 26:13, relating of Christ's arrest of him on the road to Damascus, said that at midday he saw a light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun. God has given His Son, Jesus Christ, a glory and a dominion of power that no one else ever had before Him. That glory He will share with all who are willing to bear the cross and follow Him all the way.

(Verse 22), Let us notice the Greek Interlinear: "Having purified your souls in the obedience of the truth through the Holy Spirit to unpretended (real, genuine) brotherly love, from the pure heart love one another intently." Intently means earnest, firmly directed and fixed.

(Verse 23), "*born again*": Regenerated, made spiritually alive with Christ in God.

(I Peter 2:2), "*desire*": Yearn for, dote upon (be excessively fond of), and intensely crave. "*sincere milk of the word*": This is the pure spiritual milk that feeds the soul.

(Verse 3), The Greek says, "If indeed you tasted that the Lord is good."

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we continue with our beloved Brother Simon Peter's epistle written to the believers in Christ of his day, still spiritually beneficial to us in our time. Previous to our text he has spoken for us to soberly hope for what is ahead for us, obediently following God in His holiness rather than what we pursued while we were in worldly ignorance. He then urges us to pass the time of our short sojourn of mortal life in fear and reverence before God. Why should we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear? It is evident and we should be aware that we are not redeemed with material wealth and means, but with the blood of His Son, the spotless and blameless Lamb, before known and predestined, before the world was created.

There are things that we as human beings must be fully conscious and aware of. In obeying the truth of the Gospel of Christ we come in contact with the true Spirit of the Almighty God, and that Spirit is the essence of love so intense and warm that it causes us to reach out and love our brother and fellow man. There are factors involved that makes us to know that we must be diligent to keep that love warm and tender. We must bear with one another and live above hurt feelings and bitterness that satan would like to sow seeds of. Paul counsels us in Ephesians 4:1-2 to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." Such is one of the evident fruits of the regenerating power of Christ and the new creature we are made in Him. We were brought forth in physical birth to mortal life, but now we are spiritually recreated in His image of love and goodness.

This mortal life is compared to grass and the glory and excellence of mortal life is like the flower of the grass. It all withers and falls away, but if we are born of the incorruptible

seed of the Word of God and will follow it through all the way we will have hope of living and abiding for ever, just like the Word of God will live and abide for ever.

Then in chapter 2:1-3 we are enjoined to lay aside all of these evil habits and attitudes that carnal and worldly people allow to rule in their hearts. We are to go after the Word of God and Christ with the same kind of appetite that a newborn babe has for his mother's milk. We are to intensely crave and desire the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God and the teachings of Christ. And just as sure as an infant will grow as he partakes of his mother's milk, so will we grow spiritually if we partake of the pure and wholesome teachings of the gospel of Christ. And we will do this if we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Psalm 34:8.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is reverent fear for God so vital?
2. What has the blood of Christ redeemed us from?
3. What does obeying the truth bring us to?
4. From what seed is a man born again?
5. What kind of desire should we have for God's Word?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The real Christian life and experience lifts a man above the corruptible things of this present world. Although we are still a part of this earthly realm and have to use its commodities to a certain degree, yet the central and most important matter is the health and well being of the spirit part of us. These things of earth are temporary and but for a short time. Money, property, cash flow, houses, cars, airplanes and such like are such a vital part of so many of us mortals. We have to have some of it, and, as the apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 7:31, "...use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." The Greek word for "abusing" refers to misuse or overuse. We can use this world, but we must be careful to use it only as it pleases God. Why? It is because the fashion of this world is constantly changing and will one day pass entirely out of existence. What we need to do is have the right sense of values and realize that spiritual things are our only real possessions. Material things will perish with using. Only in God and His Son Jesus Christ is

found the real treasures worth our seeking. Let us pass our sojourn in fear, seeking for that eternal life by being faithful to God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The word *fear* seems to be highlighted in the Scriptures and comments already given in this lesson. Fear is a healthy emotion. Not the kind of fear that describes terror or fright but one that builds respect for whatever dangers are out there.

A three-year-old, a tricycle and a sloped driveway all make for free wheeling fun—except that the end of the driveway intersects with a busy street. I (the three-year-old) learned through a firm, loving hand of discipline to never, never go out into the street. I do not remember the dangers of the traffic at all. But they were very real. I do not even remember the punishment for the time of disobedience. But I do remember skinned up tennis shoes and ankles that provided a quick stop for my tricycle so that I could turn around and start back up the driveway. I was spared great injury or even death through that emotion of fear. Fear of the busy street? No, but fear of disobedience to my parents.

As I grew into my teenage/adult years, that fear took on a different meaning. It turned into a deep respect. I was more interested in pleasing my parents than doing something that would cause them to be hurt or disappointed in me. Once again, I really was not aware of the dangers that were “out there,” but this respect/caution spared my parents, and ultimately me, a lot of heartache.

We have a heavenly Father that loves us so very much and when He corrects us. He is only interested in our well being. When we consider working “out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” we must do this with that same respect in mind. Our lives should be governed by the fear of disappointing or hurting our Lord. It will affect our conversation, our attitudes, where we go, who we are with and what activities we participate in. We are still very much like a hapless three-year-old and are unaware of the dangers out there. But keeping ourselves in obedience to God’s correction and having a desire to seek His good pleasure will spare us much heartache and grief. —Sis. LaDawna Adams

JANUARY 28, 2007

A HOLY NATION FOUNDED UPON THE SOLID ROCK

1 Peter 2:4 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.

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.

MEMORY VERSE: 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. I Peter 2:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Built upon Christ Jesus, the everlasting Foundation, we must live a life separate from the evils of this present world, manifesting a righteous bearing of godliness, love and humility to all men.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 2:4), "*To whom coming*": To Christ Jesus drawing near. "*disallowed indeed*": Truly and in fact rejected and refused. "*precious*": Valuable, desired, honorable, and dear.

(Verse 5), "*lively stones*": Living stones, as (in verse 4) He, Christ, is a living Stone.

(Verse 6), "*chief corner stone*": A corner foundation stone. This is the stone that is set first straight and true, and all the rest of the foundation lines up with it. Paul described it like this in Ephesians 2:20, "...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." The prophets in their Holy Spirit inspired prophecies and the apostles of the Lord Jesus are part of the foundation of the Church of God, but Christ is the Chief Corner Stone, and they all line up with Him. "*not be confounded*": The Greek says, "not at all or by no means ashamed."

(Verse 8), "*stumble at the word*": Strike at or surge against the Word of God in rebellion and disobedience. "*whereunto also they were appointed*": To which indeed they were placed. God predestines no one independent of their own voluntary will. But, He who weighs the spirit and searches the heart, knows what man will do and has arranged this for such as are proud and foolish to be placed. Each man chooses the course he will take and the reward he will receive. How sad that man blindly deprives himself of the blessings of God because of his stubborn and rebellious attitude!

(Verse 9), "*peculiar people*": A purchased people, purchased to be owned and possessed by God in Christ.

(Verse 11), "*war against the soul*": Are contrary and foreign to spiritual life.

(Verse 12), "*in the day of visitation*": Many times those who persecute the people of God are won to the Lord by beholding the good works and beautiful attitude the saints manifest. Paul said in II Timothy 2:24, 25: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure (if ever or perhaps) will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;" God visits them with conviction and they are won to Him through the faithfulness of the child of God.

(Verse 16), "*cloke of maliciousness*": A cover-up of evil freedom. Some people count their freedom to do as they please as a righteous factor in their life, but it is really an evil excuse for indulging in fleshly pursuits. In Christ we are free, but we are not to use this liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13.) Though we are free yet we are servants to Christ. (I Corinthians 7:22.)

(Verse 17), "*Love the brotherhood*": Back brotherly love with the love of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Peter counsels us to lay aside all hindering faculties to spiritual progress and go after the pure doctrine of Christ and God, "if so be," he said, "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." This will be as we have drawn near to Christ, Whom he pictures from the Scriptures as a Living Stone which is, to a great extent and in a general pattern, disallowed of men. Christ Jesus is this Living Stone and He is disallowed and rejected of men because of His humility and discipline to the will of God rather than the desires of the flesh. Peter quotes from the Scriptures here and it is good to identify these Scriptures and where they are found in the Old Testament. First, in verse 6, he quotes from Isaiah 28:16. Let us notice how it reads: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Peter is quoting, as most New Testament writers do, from the Septuagint Greek translation. Along with this, Peter brings in Psalm 118:22, the same scripture that Jesus referred to in Matthew 21:42. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." Peter referred to this in Acts 4:11 calling the unbelieving

Jews as the builders who set at nought the stone which is become the head of the corner. But Peter declares that though Christ is disallowed, rejected, set at nought, and refused by men, He is chosen of God and precious; precious to those who truly from the heart believe in Him.

Peter also quotes in verse 8 from Isaiah 8:14 where the prophet prophesied that the LORD of hosts would be "for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence" to Israel. But, because Christ is precious and dear to us who believe, we become that chosen generation and peculiar people who are called out of darkness into His marvelous light.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Christ so disallowed and rejected of men?
2. What makes Christ so precious to those who believe?
3. What do we become in believing and obeying Christ?
4. What kind of life are we to live as followers of Jesus?
5. Why should we be obedient to the ordinance of man?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To those who, being convicted of their sinful and condemned state before God, seek and find refuge in Him as their Savior and hope, Jesus Christ becomes the treasure and joy of their heart and life. It is not hard to obey Him when He is so precious to a person. But to those who refuse to acknowledge their sinful way of life Christ is of no value, but rather a stumbling block to be cast aside and rejected. This is truly the real cause of Christ being either loved and made precious or rejected and despised. We who truly have found the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Friend have tasted that He is gracious, sweet, enjoyable, rich and satisfying. We do not mind having to deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Him. We do not mind leaving all of the world to follow Jesus. We do not mind being persecuted and despised as He was because we know of His great worth and value to us now and what He will be to us in the future. "Take the world, for Christ is mine: in His kingdom I would shine!" We can sing that with gladdened hearts. What we once were in is but darkness to us now, and we are glad to be delivered from that darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, as Paul said in

Colossians 1:13. We see the vanity of fleshly lusts and recognize that we are strangers, sojourners, aliens and pilgrims in this short fleeting life. Our treasures are in Heaven where our citizenship is, from whence we look for the Savior Who will change these bodies of humiliation to be like the body of His glory! Philippians 3:20-21. How wonderful to have Christ so precious to us!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Occasionally, I do what is called a field survey: I'll go to a store and measure walls, receptacles, columns, carpeted and tiled areas, etc. Then I draw a floor plan with dimensions. I can measure a column and get its height and width, but if I don't relate it to other objects in the room the designers really don't know where it is and they do not know how to plan for a new shop.

What are our points of reference spiritually? What am I looking at to determine where the lines are in my life? We should have lines or convictions: things we accept and things we will not accept. The devil would like to blur our lines for us. He would like for the lines to become confused or to have them in the wrong place. What do I use as a point of reference to establish good practices, habits and principles.

I remember one time reading a scripture then I began thinking, "How does this fit with what I see in the world?" I was looking for a point of reference, a point of interpretation. The Lord spoke to me and said, it doesn't fit. If we are looking to the world, those that don't know God, to know where to draw our convictions, we will fail. This seems rather obvious, yet we are human and influences can be subtle.

Psalms 37:37 says, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." We can get good from those that know God and have lived good examples. Yet, there is a scripture, II Corinthians 10:12, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." There can be a false sense of security when measuring ourselves among ourselves. Just because other Christians are, doesn't mean I should.

It is all-important to us to be in alignment with the Cornerstone. To keep focused on Christ by keeping our heart sensitive and submissive to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



FEBRUARY 4, 2007

FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

I Peter 2:18 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.

I 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.

MEMORY VERSE: 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. I Peter 3:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must follow Christ's example of taking mistreatment and abuse from others patiently and with no desire for revenge in our dealings with humanity and as husbands and wives to each other.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 2:18), "*with all fear*": In all due respect and submission. "*froward*": Perverse and crooked.

(Verse 19), "*thankworthy*": An action of grace that God is pleased with.

(Verse 20), "*buffeted*": Beaten or rapped with the fist. "*take it patiently*": Remain submissive and obedient.

(Verse 22), "*guile*": Trickery or intentional deception.

(Verse 23), "*reviled not again*": Jesus was abused, slandered and defamed, but He did not do it in return. "*threatened not*": Did not express intention of punishing or hurting. "*committed to him that judgeth righteously*": Resigned Himself to the care of God's righteous judgment.

(Verse 24), "*tree*": The cross. "*stripes*": Wounds, bruises and cuts.

(Verse 25), "*Bishop*": Overseer.

(I Peter 3:1), "*Likewise*": Meaning similarly, both in this verse and verse 7. Peter had just brought out about Christ's submission and meekness in not reviling or threatening those who mistreated Him. Now he brings out for husbands and wives to do "likewise" to one another, as Christ did. "*without the word*": Though not hearing the word, the disobedient will be influenced by the word showing in his wife's behavior.

(Verse 2), "*chaste conversation with fear*": Pure behavior in godly reverence.

(Verse 3), "*adorning*": Decoration. "*plaiting*": Braiding or weaving in ornaments. "*apparel*": Fancy clothes.

(Verse 4), "*hidden man of the heart*": The inward beauty of the graces of Christ in the heart and attitudes and behavior. "*meek*": Mild, humble, plain, not showy.

(Verse 6), "*lord*": One supreme in authority; controller. "*not afraid with any amazement*": Fearing no terror.

(Verse 7), "*according to knowledge*": As being enlightened by the real truth. "*prayers be not hindered*": Having one's prayers cut off and not respected by God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we continue our study of the first epistle of Simon Peter. He speaks especially in the first verse to those who are servants and how they must be subject to their masters with all fear. And he emphasizes that this must be, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward and those who are inconsiderate and cruel. The master and servant way of life has been in operation a long time. It has been abused and the subject of much controversy, but it still is carried on today. Our Lord and Savior Jesus, the anointed of God, "...took upon Him the form of a servant...." Philippians 2:7. "I am among you as he that serveth," He said in Luke 22:27. Being hired and working for someone for wages is one form of servitude. Another form is what we call slavery in which the servant is owned as property and absolutely subject to the will of another. Slavery has had its turn in the realm of humanity. If the lord or master is fair, kind, considerate and protective of his slaves, the system of slavery is not so bad. But there has been also the froward and cruel masters. Peter counsels servants to be subject to their masters regardless, even if they suffer wrongfully. And he calls as a witness the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered for us. He did nothing wrong, but was reviled and shamefully treated, and He took it meekly, entrusting Himself to the righteous judgment of the Almighty God. Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:5,6 concerning the healing we obtain through Christ's sufferings for us who were as sheep going astray.

Peter's counsel for husbands and wives is so good and wise. His language is so plain concerning the attitude of both. Especially he counsels the wife and his language is very easy to be

understood. It is plain that the real beauty of a person is not in his or her outward appearance. It is rather that of the inward man and the heart. The outward adorning is vain and empty, but the inward adorning is in God's sight valuable and very precious. If women could but see this truth, there would be much less stress on artificial adornments, and plainness and modesty of dress would be more greatly practiced. And Peter's brief but very pointed word to the husbands is very worthy of every man's consideration.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of suffering is more acceptable to God?
2. Who was the prime example of suffering like this?
3. How shall a wife relate to an unbelieving husband?
4. What is the real beauty that a woman should seek to have?
5. Why should a man be kind and considerate of his wife?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price." This statement in our lesson today is worthy of our attention and thought. To be meek requires vigilant and diligent effort on one's part. It does not come naturally, but we have to discipline ourselves very carefully. One must never relax and feel confident in himself about this matter. We have an example in Moses who was said to be "...very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Numbers 12:3. This was spoken of concerning the time that his sister Miriam and brother Aaron spoke words antagonistically against him. God stood up for Moses and his anger was kindled against Miriam and Aaron. Miriam was smitten with leprosy. But later when Israel was complaining because there was no water and the LORD told Moses to speak to the rock for water to come forth, Moses in his anger smote the rock, saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And the LORD rebuked Moses and made him know that he would not bring the people into the Promised Land. (Numbers 20:10-12.) The account of this in Psalm 106:32, 33 says, "They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

Let us be warned that we must continually be on our guard and seek earnestly God's help in this matter of having a meek and quiet spirit. Just because we manifest a meek attitude in one situation does not forego the need for vigilant carefulness in the future. In husbands and wives there must be careful and diligent self-control exercised continually. Why does Paul warn husbands to be not bitter against their wives? Oh, we can lose our meek and quiet spirit if we don't watch out. We had better pray for grace to keep sweet and humble and meek in our attitudes toward others. People can try you in many ways, and it is not always easy to be meek. But when we consider our dear Savior and what He suffered and how meek He was, it will help us to assume that meek and quiet spirit —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are many people who become offended at the way of the Lord when they realize what it means to truly have the spirit of Christ. There must be a dying-out to self to follow our Savior's example. The spirit of the world causes one to try to get even with another or to go farther and take advantage of others, but Jesus taught His followers to, "resist not evil," "love your enemies" and "pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Peter was ready to fight and defend Jesus with a sword, even to death. But when Jesus told him to put up his sword, he was at a loss in winning the big battle that warred in his spirit. Jesus' teachings were so different from what he understood.

This big battle must be won on our knees before the Lord in earnest prayer. When Jesus was agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane the disciples fell asleep. Jesus told them to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The events that immediately followed this admonition clearly illustrated the weakness of the disciples. It is also an admonition for us to watch the door of our heart lest the tempter sow some evil seed that will trouble us. The enemy tries to present various alternatives for us rather than taking the way of the cross. Some folks find satisfaction in wearing Christian jewelry and it is quite fashionable in some circles. People wear the cross thinking it makes them more Christ-like or that it is a good luck charm to protect them from evil. However, there is no record of Jesus walking around with

a crucifix dangling around His neck to broadcast His spirituality. When people exhibit the true spirit of Christ it is easy for others to recognize that there is something very different about them. It comes from within the heart and changes everything, including the external way they look, dress and conduct themselves.

Romans 8:9 makes this simple statement, "...Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." With this statement in mind we should diligently seek to humble ourselves and follow His example even if it is contrary to the ways of the flesh.

When offenses and persecutions come there is a temptation to grab for Peters sword and effect a carnal solution, but Jesus has shown us a better way that will bring His approval upon our life and give us an entrance into His glorious presence. If we are truly looking for the favor of God then let us follow Christ's example carefully and prayerfully. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey



FEBRUARY 11, 2007

THE SECRET OF HAPPY LIFE AND PEACE

1 Peter 3:8 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?

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 evil doers, 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.

MEMORY VERSE: 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. I Peter 3:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is better to save your soul and suffer evil from the world in doing the right to please God than to have the praise of men and be lost forever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 3:8), "*pitiful and courteous*": Tenderhearted and friendly.

(Verse 9), "*railing*": Slander and abusive speaking.

(Verse 11), "*eschew*": Turn away from. "*ensue*": Pursue; follow after.

(Verse 15), "*sanctify*": Love with holy reverence and deep respect.

(Verse 18), "*quickened by the Spirit*": Made alive in the Spirit of God. The Almighty God has all power and "quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." This was the God that Abraham believed and trusted in

Who quickened the deadness of his wife Sarah's womb and his own body "now dead when he was about an hundred years old," bringing about the birth of their son, Isaac. Romans 4:17-19. Here Peter was speaking of Christ, our Savior, whose physical earthly body was put to death, but was on the first day of the week quickened to immortality to live forever. All praise and honor to our great Almighty God!

(Verse 19), "*the spirits in prison*": This is referring to the souls of men in the prison house of sin unto whom the gospel is proclaimed.

(Verse 20), "*sometime were disobedient*": Many times, sad to say, the souls of men in the prison house of sin do not obey the gospel of Christ. It is preached to them as a witness and an opportunity to find deliverance, but too many are not willing to obey the truth. "*when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah*": This is an example of people who were not willing to be obedient to the gospel. Noah, a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5), gave warning to the people of his day of the coming flood, but no one obeyed his message, but indifferently continued their pursuit of sinful pleasure, eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:27 and Matthew 24:38.) The longsuffering of God permitted Noah to have time to build and to prepare the ark. "*wherein few, that is, eight souls*": Just Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives were the only ones who escaped the flood. "*saved by water*": Carried safely through the flood waters in the ark. Two other parallel expressions similar to this are found. One is in I Corinthians 3:15 where it says a man "shall be saved; yet so as by fire": This means that he will be carried safely through the fires of God's wrath. Then in I Timothy 2:15 Paul said that women "shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." This means that they will be carried safely through the times of bringing children to birth.

(Verse 21), "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*": The Greek expression is: "Which figure, baptism, also now saves us." The term "figure" here means a representative, antitype, counterpart or what is corresponding. What he is saying is that, like as Noah and his family were saved and carried safely through the waters of the flood, so we shall be saved from death and the grave through the power of the resurrection of

Jesus Christ, which baptism typifies or is a figure of. This is brought out in Paul's writing in Romans 6:4. "We are buried with him (Christ) by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." It is being saved from spiritual death and resurrected to a new life now and being resurrected from death and the grave in the last great day. Water baptism points to all of this. *"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"*: Baptism is not a cleansing of the flesh, but is the response of confidence and clearness of conscience before God, rejoicing in the bright and blessed hope we have through the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

LESSON BACKGROUND

After Peter's wise and good counsel for husbands and wives, he turns his words of wisdom to all of us who are striving to follow in the steps of Jesus. Love, pity, compassion, friendship, forbearance and good will are vivid marks of the child of God. We are called to receive the blessings of God and it follows that we should reciprocate and pass blessings on to those around us. Peter quotes in verses 10 to 12 from the inspiring 34th Psalm verses 12 through 16, which is a recipe for victorious and successful living for the Lord. It is normal for us to love life, but we must love it in the right way. To love it selfishly and with no regard for pleasing the One Who gave us life will bring trouble and sorrow upon us, and we will miss the real purpose of the gift of life. Verse 12 declares that the "face of the Lord is against them that do evil," and Psalm 34:16 adds: "to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

Several times in Peter's writings he stresses the special favor God has for those who suffer for righteousness. In verses 14 and 15 of our lesson he mentions it again and quotes from Isaiah 8:12-13. The prophet says that the Lord instructed him to not join the confederacy of the people, "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." Then he compares Noah and his family being brought safely through the flood with our deliverance from death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and declares that He is gone into Heaven and is on the right hand of God with all things made subject unto Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of attitude toward others are we enjoined to have?
2. What kind of life should we follow if we really love life?
3. What should we be ready to testify to others about?
4. How is the meaning of baptism compared to Noah and the flood?
5. Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ so important to us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Oh, how vital are the counsels of Peter and the Scriptures! They are instructing us and pointing us to that blessed hope that Christ Jesus died and rose again to bless us with. It all leads and instructs us to a beautiful life of love, humility, faith, submission to God and blessed assurance of eternal treasures in the world to come. God has been so good to preserve these sacred writings for us to be enlightened and comforted by. Christ Jesus was our example of humbling Himself to obey the will of God and suffer as the Just for the unjust that we might be reconciled to God. In the gospel the door of the prison house of sin is opened for us to escape and be saved forevermore. It is for our best advantage to take heed and obey all the counsel that is given to us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What particular thing do we have in common with Noah, David, Jonah and Jesus? It has already been mentioned in our lesson that Noah's experience in the ark during the Great Flood parallels with Christ in the grave. But David also echoes this thought as he compared his hardships and sufferings to being buried in great waters. Psalm 42:7, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." We know that many of David's personal experiences are prophetic images of Christ's own sufferings, and when we read these words, we can see Jesus in them.

Jonah also mirrors Christ's experience in his own "baptism" in the bottom of the sea. "For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me...The waters com-

passed me about, even to the soul:...I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me..." Jonah 2:3-6. We read that Jesus compared His own three days and nights in the belly of the earth to Jonah's stay in the belly of the whale.

When we are baptized, we identify ourselves with Jesus' death and resurrection also. We follow the ceremonial rite, not to cleanse ourselves from sin, but to witness that we are buried with Jesus, crucified to our old life forever, and rise to walk in the power of His resurrection. The Great Flood swept away every vestige of the former earth. It was unrecognizable. Life was new. Jonah certainly had a new direction after his plunge into the sea. Jesus rose from the borrowed tomb with a glorious, new body. Think of this—He still bore the marks in His hands, still could eat bread and meat with His disciples, but yet, could go through closed doors, appear and disappear, and rise to sit at the right hand of His Father.

We testify through baptism that we are made new. We also witness to the fact that we are willing to go through the baptism of suffering, pain and death with the Lord Jesus. Sometime in our experience, we will be able to say, "ALL THY waves and billows are gone over me." We will bear about in our bodies, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that His life also may be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Corinthians 4:11.) —Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



FEBRUARY 18, 2007

**BEING FAITHFUL THROUGH SUFFERING
AND FIERY TRIALS**

1 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.

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

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

happened unto you: 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. I Peter 4:12-13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: What we have to bear and suffer for giving up the ways of the sinful world around us to follow Jesus, are to be accounted as partaking of His sufferings and an assurance that we will also partake of His glory.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 4:1), "*am yourselves likewise with the same mind*": Be prepared to suffer in the flesh as Christ suffered. "*ceased from sin*": What we suffer in the flesh will not begin to compare with the deliverance from damnation we obtain by ceasing from sin and its curse.

(Verse 3), "*the time past of our life may suffice us*": We have had enough of the bondage of sin and we are glad to get rid of its blight on our lives. "*lasciviousness*": Uncontrolled passions and lusts. "*excess of wine*": Drunkenness. "*revellings*": Parties full of fleshly indulgences. "*banquetings*": Noisy and merry gatherings of drinking liquor. "*abominable idolatries*": Worshipping of idols foreign to the worship of God.

(Verse 4), "*excess of riot*": Uncontrolled indulgence of unsaved people.

(Verse 5), "*who shall give account*": People who live this kind of shameful indulgence are going to stand before God one day and receive their due reward. "*quick*": The living.

(Verse 6), "*to them that are dead*": Dead in trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2:1.

(Verse 7), "*watch unto prayer*": Be attentive and keen minded to earnest prayers.

(Verse 8), "*fervent charity*": Intense and ardent love and affection.

(Verse 9), "Love to be hospitable to one another without murmurings." Greek.

(Verse 10), "*good stewards of the manifold grace of God*": Wisely handling and sharing the various ways of the grace of God and how it makes itself manifest to others.

(Verse 11), "*oracles*": Words spoken by Almighty God. Let it be spoken by us with such reverence and devotion that it will reflect the goodness and beauty of God.

(Verse 15), *"busybody"*: One who meddles in things he should leave alone.

(Verse 17), *"judgment must begin at the house of God"*: As holy saints we must be able to endure adversity and hard trials if we want to be accounted worthy to escape the punishment that will be meted out to the ungodly. We must bear the judgment of God first as proof of our worthiness of the salvation of God.

(Verse 19), *"commit the keeping of their souls"*: In faithfully obeying the good will of God we can entrust our souls in His care and protection, knowing that He will be just as faithful to deliver us as He was to create us in the first place.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we must learn that Christ's sufferings for our salvation not only frees us from the destruction of the wicked, but it also puts upon us great responsibilities of submission to the will of God and endurance of sufferings as well. We are to arm ourselves as He did with a mind to faithfully endure the sufferings that come upon us while we tarry in this mortal body. We have left all the world and its vanities to follow Jesus, and that in itself brings adverse and evil pressures and hardships from the world because they are angered at us for not running with them as we have before. In taking up our cross to follow Jesus we set ourselves in variance with the spirit of this present evil world. But we are reminded that in our faithful endurance of the sufferings that are heaped upon us, we will escape the woeful end of those who obey not the gospel of God. The end of all things is at hand. Those who resist the call of the Word of God and persecute those who are obedient to Him are making themselves a prey to the sore judgments of the Almighty. But we that suffer because of our faith in Christ are to be glorified with Him in the eternal resurrection at the last day. And, as our lesson expresses it, the judgment of God begins first upon His House, that is, His people, His saints. The things we endure are tokens of His salvation as well as His righteous judgment upon the wicked. And if we who will receive His salvation and escape His wrath have to suffer, how much more will they suffer who

reject His mercy and grace? Verse 18 of our lesson is a quote from the Septuagint Greek translation of Proverbs 11:31. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." Let us accept the fact that being saved from eternal damnation will mean tribulation and suffering in this present life and the price that Christ had to pay for our redemption will be shared by those who receive it.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What can we expect in life if we choose to follow Jesus?
2. Why can we rejoice in the fiery trials that we meet?
3. What things must we be diligent to keep in this life below?
4. How does judgment first begin at the house of God?
5. What will be the reward of suffering for Christ's sake?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When Jesus knelt in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane He was facing the awful death of being crucified. He knew it was coming and He knew that it was the will of God for Him to suffer this horrible death. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," He prayed. (Matthew 26:39.) He prayed again in verse 42, "...if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." There is a cup for each one of us to drink in fellowship with our Lord's sufferings. There is no way that we can attain to the resurrection of the dead with Christ without the fellowship of His sufferings. Many think that just believing in Christ seals their hope of Heaven. But there is much more to attaining eternal life and the resurrection of the dead than a mere head belief. It takes obedience to the Word of God and possessing living faith in Christ, knowing Him, knowing the power of His resurrection in our life, partaking of the fellowship of His suffering, and being made conformable unto His death, if we would attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:8-11.) If we would be crowned with Christ in eternal glory we must first bear every man his cross. We must give up the world, its styles, fads, pleasures, fashions and riches if we would have eternal life.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Being an American has brought both a blessing and a curse. We are thankful for the freedom in this country and the prosperity it has brought us. But it makes me wonder sometimes if it has been to our spiritual demise. Overall, we experience very little adversity. And when we do have a trial or two, we think that God must be punishing us or that we have done something wrong. Our focus has become so self-centered.

We desire a happy life without suffering—on this earth. We want our mansions—down here. We do not want to have to endure sickness, old age or affliction—in this life. All of the beautiful things that Heaven has to offer, we want right here and we want it right now. And furthermore, if we do not get them, we pout and murmur. Does this not sound like a spoiled rotten child?

Yet, the Lord designed for us a much different path. A path of suffering so that His glory might be revealed. It is only in weakness that you find the power of God. It is in poverty that the true riches of God are revealed. It is in sickness and old age that we realize that this body really was not made to last forever. It is sometimes in trauma or tragedy that we find out that we are really not in control after all.

Bro. B. E. Warren penned these words in song, "For too well thy Savior loves thee, To allow thy life to be One long calm unbroken summer, One unruffled, stormless sea. He would have thee fondly nestle, Closer to His loving breast. He would have that world seem brighter, Where alone is perfect rest."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



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FEBRUARY 25, 2007

FAITHFUL IN SERVICE AND STEADFAST ENDURANCE

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 steadfast 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.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Being faithful and responsible in the Christian life and the work of the Lord through trials and

temptations of this life will bring a rich reward of eternal glory at the last.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Peter 5:1), "*elders*": This means the older senior ones who have been established as being worthy of confidence and support. "*exhort, who am also an elder*": Encourage, comfort and intreat as a fellow-elder.

(Verse 2), "*Feed*": Tend, guard, protect, nourish and oversee as a shepherd. "*not by constraint, but willingly*": Not being forced or compelled, but voluntarily. "*not for filthy lucre*": Not eagerly for base gain. "*but of a ready mind*": Eagerly, lively and readily.

(Verse 3), "*ensamples*": Models for others to follow.

(Verse 7), The Greek expression of this verse is so good: "All your anxiety casting onto Him, because to Him it matters concerning you."

(Verse 8), "*sober*": Sensible, sound and level-headed. "*vigilant*," Wide-awake and watchful.

(Verse 9), The Greek says, "Whom resist firm in the faith, knowing the same sufferings in your brotherhood in the world are being completed." This present evil world is no convenient place for the heavenly and spiritually hearted child of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God"; (Romans 8:7) and the conflict that ensues often means sufferings for the godly in Christ Jesus.

(Verse 10), "*suffered a while*": The Greek says, "having suffered a little." II Corinthians 4:17 says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:"

(Verse 11), "*dominion*": Power, might, strength and over-coming rule. "*for ever and ever. Amen*": The Greek says, "To the ages of the ages. So be it."

(Verse 12), "*By Silvanus*": The brother through whom Peter sent this epistle. "*as I suppose*": Or, as I esteem or account. Peter is stating that he esteemed Silvanus as a faithful brother in the Lord. "*the true grace of God*": The genuine truth of God's love and goodness without pretence or deceit.

(Verse 14), "*Greet*": Salute, give welcome and embrace. "*kiss of charity*": Kiss of love. The general meaning of the word "kiss" is to touch or caress with the lips. It could also mean a light and

gentle touch of warmth and affection. A kiss of love is an expression of affection, care, tenderness and concern. It should be administered not lustfully, but tenderly and conscientiously with godliness and sincere respect. "Let all things be done decently and in order." I Corinthians 14:40. It is not godly ethics for men and women to carry on promiscuous fleshly embrace such as kissing on the lips and enfolding each other bodily. Such is indecent and out of order. Let it be brothers embracing brothers and sisters embracing sisters. In this society stained with inordinate affection and unholy relations, God's saints must conduct themselves toward one another with reverence and godly fear.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have Brother Peter speaking first to the elders and exhorting them to the faithful fulfilling of their calling in the Church of God, the Body of Christ. Here he uses the Biblical theme of God's people likened unto sheep and their leaders as shepherds. It is a very familiar and well fitting term to thus portray the saints of the Lord. For from the 23rd Psalm we have the Lord Jehovah pictured as a tender loving Shepherd, under Whose care we shall never lack for food, nourishment, protection, guidance, comfort, hope and security. From Ezekiel 34 we have Jehovah portrayed as seeking out and bringing His people as sheep to a good pasture and a good fold on the high mountains of Israel. Psalms 95:7 and 100:3 declare that we are the sheep of His hand and the sheep of His pasture. Then from the teachings of Jesus in John 10 we have the beautiful lesson of Christ Himself being the good Shepherd of the sheep. And here in our lesson we have it brought out again, only this time Peter exhorts those who are called to be pastors and teachers of the precious Word of God to be diligent to feed the flock of God and oversee them willingly and earnestly in the love and fear of God. They are not to be domineering lords over the Lord's people, but to faithfully live that holy and yielded life to God that is a proper example for the sheep to follow. And then Peter declares that the chief Shepherd, when He appears or comes again, will give them an unfading crown of glory.

We are also encouraged and counseled in our lesson to be humble followers of the elders, being submissive to them; and

then he points us all to a submissive and meek attitude toward one another, being clothed with humility. Then he quotes from the Septuagint version of Proverbs 3:34: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." This text from the King James version reads thus: "Surely he (God) scorneth the scornors: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." James 4:6 quotes this same scripture as Peter did. Then Peter addresses us in verse 6: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Then we are urged to be on our guard against the devil and be valiant to firmly resist him in the faith of Christ, a conflict that is fulfilled in all the saints of God. How encouraging is the assurance Peter gives that God will bring us all to completeness and eternal glory if we are faithful in all that we suffer for Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the elders in the Church exhorted to do?
2. What will be the reward of being faithful to God?
3. What is the general attitude and spirit we should have?
4. How can we overcome the devil and all he tries?
5. What does Peter exhort and testify in this epistle?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The hope of the gospel is one of the great drawing cards to the Christian life. The apostle Peter mentions it several times in his two epistles. And in this 5th chapter he refers to it again: the crown of glory to be received when Christ appears and the eternal glory that the God of all grace has called us to. It shines before our spiritually enlightened vision. We walk by faith now and all of our treasures are in Heaven from which we look for the Savior Who will change the bodies of our humiliation to be like the body of His glory. (Philippians 3:20-21.) This hope we have fled for refuge to lay hold upon is an anchor of our souls, both sure and steadfast and entereth into that within the vail. (Hebrews 6:18-19.) For we are saved by hope, a hope by us unseen now, but "with patience wait for." (Romans 8:24.) Christ spoke of it in John 17:24 in His prayer to the Father "...that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me;..." "For the

grace of God...hath appeared...teaching us that...we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:11-13. To attain to the fulfillment of this hope and the resurrection of the dead is our greatest endeavor as we pass these fleeting mortal years. May we keep this shining vision and never be moved from this blessed hope.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Doesn't it make sense that since God sees that the harvest is so great and the laborers so few that the few would invest and focus more of their life (time and energies) into the harvest. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." II Timothy 2:4. There are many distractions in this world and cares that can keep us from attending, working and being effective in the Lord's vineyard. There are also disappointments, divisions, trouble and perplexities to contend with.

There is a little scripture that has been a goad to me many different times along the way. It is found at the close of Colossians 4:17. Paul wrote, "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." I have inserted my name there in place of his and have taken it personally when it seemed difficult to go on.

Paul also instructed Timothy "Neglect not the gift that is in thee,...Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." I Timothy 4:14-15.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



MARCH 4, 2007

VITAL INGREDIENTS FOR ENTRANCE INTO LIFE

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.

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: II Peter 1:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We who have obtained this precious faith of Jesus Christ must diligently and abundantly add to our faith fortitude, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly kindness and the love of God that we be fruitful and successful in gaining an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 1:1), "*servant*": A slave, or one who is completely submissive and subject to his master. "*to them*": The Greek renders this phrase thus: "to those equally precious with us, having obtained faith."

(Verse 2), "*knowledge*": The Greek says, "full discernment and recognition."

(Verse 3), The Greek renders this verse: "As His Godlike power has given to us all things as to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of the One calling us by way of glory and virtue."

(Verse 4), "*precious*": Valuable, costly and honorable. "*divine nature*": A disposition and quality of character that is Godlike. "*corruption in the world through lust*": This is the moral and spiritual decay and ruin in which the souls of men are entrapped because of unholy and uncontrolled passions and desires.

(Verse 5), "*beside this*": Also in this very thing. "*giving all diligence*": Summoning and bringing into one's self a fervent and wholehearted speed and eager determination. "*add*": Add superbly and abundantly. "*faith*": Confidence and trust. "*virtue*": The Greek meaning is "fortitude, valor and manliness." "*to virtue*": Along with virtue. "*knowledge*": Science, learning, comprehension and discernment.

(Verse 6), "*temperance*": Self-control. "*patience*": Faithful and untiring endurance. "*godliness*": Piety; deep reverence and respect for God.

(Verse 7), "*brotherly kindness*": The Greek word "Philadelphia" means brotherly love and fraternal affection. The Quaker, William Penn, named his capital city that name because he wanted it to be a city of brotherly love. "*charity*": The Greek word is "agape" which is the love of God. This goes beyond brotherly love and takes in the great love that God has for all humanity.

(Verse 8), "*abound*": Ever increasing.

(Verse 9), "*cannot see afar off*": Short-sighted.

(Verse 10), "*the rather*": More in a greater degree. "*calling and election*": Invited and chosen.

(Verse 11), "*abundantly*": Richly and with plentiful room.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This second epistle of Simon Peter may have been written not too long before he was martyred, for he stated in verse 14 that he knew that he must "shortly" (or soon) put off his tabernacle as the Lord Jesus Christ had showed him. John 21:18 tells about Christ's foretelling to Peter "by what death he should glorify God." And we can see that this epistle was written with a desire to stir up the Church to keep in memory the vital truths of the gospel that he and the other apostles had proclaimed in their hearing.

In our lesson today we have wonderful counsels that are indispensable in the quest for obtaining entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ. He is writing to us who have escaped the corruption of the ungodly lusts that defile this present evil world, and who have obtained the true faith of the Lord Jesus. He is stressing the importance of going forward in the Christian profession to attain to a successful and fruitful life for God. We want to identify the eight "things" that we are to lay hold of in an abundant manner and make them an actuality in our lives. He is writing to us who have obtained this precious faith in the Lord Jesus. This is the faith that Paul mentions in Philippians 3:9, the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. But, we are not to stop and be content with just this faith. We are to add some important things to this faith: vital things, that are to accompany our faith if we want to truly reap its benefits. We need to memorize these things: "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity." And we need to know their meaning, and exercise our hearts to adapt them into our Christian walk. Putting them together we could say, "In our faith we must be men, ever reaching forth for greater concept and understanding, bringing ourselves in proper control, not being affected or moved by any other influence, always exercising ourselves unto godliness, and applying the principles of brotherly kindness and heavenly love to our Christian profession." This is a full time every day job. We must "never think our victory won, nor once at ease sit down." We must keep working on our experience with God with effort and decision to improve and bring it up more and more to perfection.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the things we are to add to our faith?
2. Why do we need to be manly in our faith?
3. What are some of the things we need to keep in control?
4. Why is patience such an important part of the Christian life?
5. Where will we be if we fail to have brotherly love and charity?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I recall a time when someone spoke something to me that provoked my displeasure and I felt real "hurt" inside. I tried to throw it off, but it kept "bugging" me. I took it to the Lord in earnest prayer but it kept bothering me. All of a sudden the Lord spoke to my soul in such a way that it jarred me to attention. He said, "Be a man!" Oh, what a help that was to my soul! I knew what He meant and I got victory over that thing immediately. I saw how important it was to add virtue to my faith. At the same time it opened up doors that increased my knowledge of Christ and how to be like Him. Each one of the things Peter mentions in our lesson are so necessary to success. Consider temperance and how vitally important it is for us to learn how to control our feelings, our thoughts, our appetites, our anger, and every other part of the structure of our being. And how about patience? A person who does not develop a patient spirit and fails to learn how to wait on the Lord about things will never make a success for God. Hebrews 6:12 counsels us to "...be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Then Abraham is mentioned and how that "...after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." We must constantly be on our guard to keep and progress further a godly spirit and attitude. We can be godly today, but tomorrow may bring a situation that will call for more and greater godliness in our disposition. And then, we must, with all our zeal and godly convictions, add brotherly kindness. We must be tolerant and longsuffering with our fellow creatures. And, above all and permeating into every part of our Christian profession, we must let the love of God have full sway. If these things be in us abound, we will be fruitful and with unfailing hope lay hold on life everlasting.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The children of Israel were given a marvelous deliverance from the harsh taskmasters they served while in Egyptian bondage. They were also given a bright hope of a new land that was flowing with milk and honey. However, they encountered some hard times between Egypt and Canaan that proved their hearts. They would have benefited greatly had they possessed more of the eight attributes presented in our lesson today. If one will consider most any event that occurred during their journey it is likely that one or more of these attributes would have helped them to please God rather than incurring His wrath. In some instances there seemed to be a severe lack of faith to begin with and at other times temperance, patience or brotherly kindness would have blessed them. We remember how the Lord blessed Joshua and Caleb for having some virtue with their faith when they returned from spying out the land of Canaan.

It is easy for us to look at others and see how much they need more of these attributes. It is also easy for us to overlook how much we need more of "these things" in our own life. The fifth versesays, "giving all diligence." That phrase describes the effort one must put forth to obtain these things since they are contrary to the carnal nature of man. However, when one does pay the price to obtain these valuable spiritual commodities, they will cause them to be like an oasis in a desert land. The blessings of God will flow from their lives like honey and they will be assured of an abundant entrance into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



MARCH 11, 2007

OVERCOMING SPIRITS OPPOSING THE TRUTH

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

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.

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:

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: The gospel of Jesus Christ was given with overwhelming proof of the power and glory of the Almighty God, but there are and will come false preachers and false doctrines who will rise up and oppose the truth and cause many to go astray from the way of the Lord.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 1:16), "*fables*": Myths or tales of fantasy which are man-thought.

(Verse 18), "*the holy mount*": This was the "high mountain apart" from the multitudes where Jesus took Peter, James, and John, "and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Matthew 17:1-2. Luke 9:28-29 says that He took them up there to pray, and that "...as He prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening (radiant and dazzling)." And Luke said further that "...there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Luke 9:30-31. This was magnificent glory beyond anything these disciples had ever seen. The three disciples were "...heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." This was a great experience for these men, unforgettable and persuasive to their minds as to the glory and majesty of their precious Savior and Friend. Peter was an eyewitness of this majestic glory and we can receive his testimony with all joy and assurance.

(Verse 19), Let us read from the Greek Diaglott text: "And we have the prophetic word more firm, to which you do well taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a filthy place, till from which a day may shine through, and bringing light may arise in your hearts." Oh, what wonderful truth in these words! The term "more firm" means to be completely fulfilled and made official, ratified, established and confirmed. This is what Christ has done to the Holy Scriptures and writings of the prophets. He has fulfilled them to the letter. These are the main credentials and proofs of His Messiah-ship. We would do well to take heed to the Scriptures because Christ has brought them to pass even as they were given so long ago. If we will give attention and take heed to the word of the prophecies, a great light will shine upon us as the rising of the sun, illuminating our hearts into a golden day. Christ is the "...root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Revelation 22:16.

(Verse 20), The Greek says, "Every prophecy of Scripture did not come into being of its own loosing." This means that it has to be revealed by the Holy Spirit Who inspired and moved the

prophets to bring it forth. Just reading it or having it read will not render its content and application. It takes the Holy Spirit enlightening the soul to get the message.

(II Peter 2:2), "*pernicious*": Destructive.

(Verse 4), "*the angels that sinned*": This is not talking about angels in Heaven, as so many suppose. But rather it is speaking of the "sons of God" (Genesis 6:2), who were in the time before Noah and who went after women and became so wicked that God was moved to destroy them with a flood. Peter speaks about that in verse 5.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the first part of our lesson we have Peter's testimony of him being an eyewitness of Christ's majesty rather than devising just a myth or made-up story. He wants it to encourage us to take his words with all confidence and assurance. And he also wants us to know that Christ has confirmed and ratified the prophecies of the Scriptures by fulfilling them to the letter. The real content of the Scriptures is spiritual and it must be spiritually discerned and revealed to the heart and mind by the Holy Spirit.

In the second part of our lesson, from chapter 2, Peter brings out the conflict and opposition that false prophets and teachers will raise against the truth of Christ, even as they did in the days of the prophets of old. They will bring in heresies and false teachings, going right against what Christ taught and stood for. This is something we need to be aware of and be on our guard against. It is even this way today, in our time. There are many false doctrines loose in the world. They deny the way of holiness and the power of Christ to deliver from sin and enable us to live holy and free from sin. Oh, we have to watch and pray for God to reveal the truth of Christ to our hearts!

Peter mentions the people in the time of Noah who sinned against God in going after the lusts of the flesh. God called Noah to build an ark to save himself and his family as God's wrath was to be poured out upon humanity. And, along with this, Peter mentions the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah who were condemned to an overthrow and destruction with fire from Heaven. He mentions just Lot and how he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. The immoral acts of sodomy and lewd behavior were going on all around him right out in broad

daylight. Peter says that if God did not spare those back there who sinned against Him, but saved Noah and his family and, in the time of the destruction of the wicked cities of the plain, delivered Lot and his two daughters, then He still today knows how to deliver the godly and punish the wicked.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Peter say he was an eyewitness of?
2. What has Christ done concerning the prophetic Word?
3. What can we expect to meet in this deceived world?
4. What is going to happen to the false prophets and the wicked?
5. What does the Lord know full well how to do?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Since man fell from the favor of God into transgression and the control of lust and passions of the flesh, there has been a powerful influence in humanity against God and His holy way. Isaiah 53:6 says that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;..." Proverbs 19:21 says, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." Man has been led astray from God by his own ideas and thoughts. From Cain and on forth into history we see this horrible trend and what it brings man to. But, thank God, there have been those who have sought the counsel of God and were submissive to Him. We today are faced with the very same challenge. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." Isaiah 55:7-8. It means so much for us to forsake our desires, ideas, mannerisms and inclinations and submit ourselves to seek to know the will of God and be obedient thereto. Every man has to make the decision. God has given each one of us a will and the power of choice. It is up to us what course in life we would take: whether it be our own will or the good pleasure of Him Who created us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How was it that Noah or Lot survived the dangerous environment in which they lived? As we study, we can determine several qualities that made them able to keep from succumbing to the evil elements around them.

(1). Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." What this really means is that Noah sought for and obtained divine aid to live righteously in a world where there was only evil continually. He didn't live carelessly, and one day, accidentally, find **Grace** knocking him in the shins. No, he obviously lived in close communion with God. To do that, in an environment hostile to truth, you have to seek earnestly, fervently, often and with deliberate and firm purpose.

(2). Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." He didn't just live quietly to himself, although it would have been easier and safer to do so. He made himself visible; he became a spectacle to the world when he obeyed God's call. He was active, not passive with his faith.

(3). Lot kept his spirit "vexed" with the evil around him. He had made a dangerous mistake, living so close to these wicked cities. No doubt, this righteous man let himself be drawn in by his wife and children. His errors made him lose his family, but obviously, he kept his personal life clean before God, because the apostle calls him "righteous" several times. He didn't succumb, even in his mind. He hated sin and called it sin. He didn't develop an insensitivity to it.

(4). Lot also was active in the duties of his faith. He watched the gate for people to whom he could show kindness and hospitality. He didn't just hide out at home, although it would have been safer and easier to do so.

These are the same qualities that we must develop if we are to overcome in our time, which Jesus said would be equal to Noah's and Lot's world.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



MARCH 18, 2007

THE WOEFUL ERROR OF THE WICKED

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

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: As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. Proverbs 26:11.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The worst thing a person can ever do is to turn back to the ways of this sinful world after he has been forgiven of his sins and made righteous before God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 2:10), "*chiefly them*" He is speaking now of those who most of all are displeasing to God and an offense to His work. "*walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*": To go after the lusts of the flesh that contaminate and defile the soul. "*despise government*": Lightly esteem and speak against rulers and those in authority, both in civil earthly rulership and the leadership in the Church. "*presumptuous*": Daring and not restrained by a sense of shame or propriety. "*self-willed*": Self-satisfied, content to do their own pleasure with no remorse. "*dignities*": Those who have been faithful and richly blessed of God and manifest the glory of holiness. Ungodly people do not tremble at speaking evil of them.

(Verse 11), "*angels bring not railing accusation against them*": The angels of God highly respect and pay honour to those who have overcome the world and are filled with the glory of the spiritual life of Christ, and dare not speak against them.

(Verse 12), "*made to be taken and destroyed*": The Greek says, "made for capture and for slaughter." Those who live to the lusts of the flesh are on no higher plane than the beasts of the field, and are truly fit for the horrible judgments coming upon them.

(Verse 13), "*pleasure to riot in the day time*": They count it pleasure to seek for and enjoy luxury and fleshly ease right in the day of the gospel and the warnings thereof.

(Verse 14), The Greek says, "Having eyes full of an adulteress and unrestrained from sin, alluring unstable souls, having a heart trained for covetousness (love of money); children of a curse."

(Verse 15), "*the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness*": This is the Balaam, who went lustfully after the princes of Moab in prospect of their unrighteous reward. Numbers 22:21. They had come to get him to curse Israel, and he went against the counsel of God in going with them. After trying to curse God's people and only blessing them, he told the king of Moab what to do. Our Bible does not tell this in the account in Numbers, but Revelation 2:14 speaks of it, and Josephus told about it in Antiquities of the Jews, Book 4, Chapter 6, and Section 6. He counseled the Moabites to give their

most beautiful young women to the Israelitish youth, that they might be enticed to commit adultery with them. His thought was that, since he could not curse Israel, if they could allure them to do wrong, it would bring God's displeasure upon them. He did all of this with the hope of getting the reward of unrighteousness.

(Verse 18). "*wantonness*": Unbridled and uncontrolled lusts and passions.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a continuation of the thoughts in our previous lesson. Verse 9 states that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. This lesson picks up just who these unjust ones are. Peter is chiefly and most of all speaking of them who walk after the flesh in the unclean lusts and count lightly those who are leaders in civil law and in the Church. In Hebrews 13:7 it says: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end (the final reward) of their conversation." Then in verse 17 it says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." In I Thessalonians 5:12-13 Paul says, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know (recognize and remember) them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake...." This shows the seriousness of having the right submissive attitude and spirit toward the spiritual leaders God has set in the Church. And it includes our obedience to civil laws as long as they do not conflict with the law of Christ and God.

It is a serious thing to go against those who have God-given authority and leadership. To disregard their counsel and advice and "do our own thing" is to invite disaster and destruction to our souls. Oh, the language in Peter's writings here is severe and worthy of our respect and careful consideration. He is warning us about these false teachers who can talk big and make a real impression of being spiritual, but whose doctrines are false and whose ways are worldly and of the flesh.

Peter mentions Balaam, a man who was offered a rich reward if he would come and curse Israel. At the messengers first approach God told Balaam to not go with them and not to curse the people for they were blessed. (Numbers 22: 12.) So Balaam obeyed the Lord and sent the princes of Balak away. But they came again and God let Balaam go with them this time. But it proved to be his downfall. He went after the reward of unrighteousness. Peter is warning us here to be on our guard against covetousness and the lusts of the body not sanctified and controlled by the fear of God. He warns us about returning to the ways of sin after we have been saved and brought into the truth. Let us be wise and be on our guard against the tactics of satan that we be not deceived to go the broad way to destruction.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What would you say is the main evil Peter is warning about?
2. What should be our attitude to the ministers and leaders of the gospel?
3. Why are the wicked esteemed as brute beasts?
4. What are the things we dare not be overcome with?
5. What does he liken a man to who turns back to sin?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Peter was an eyewitness of the majesty of Jesus, the Son of God. He heard that voice from Heaven declare: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He knew that it was the true voice of Almighty God. And he also knew that Christ confirmed and fulfilled the prophecies of old. This was all so wonderful and precious. But he also knew that we who believe in Jesus Christ will face the contrary elements of satan and his deceiving power. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, but there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you." This is something we will encounter in this sinful dark world. But through Christ and the Holy Spirit we can know the truth and triumph over all the dark deceptions around us. Let us be strong and valiant for the truth and go all the way with Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Historians say that these Scriptures were written about 68 A.D. And yet, they are so timely for our world today—almost 2,000 years later. I believe we can add our own societal problems to this passage:

11 Peter 2: 10 But chiefly them that walk after the fashion of celebrities and movie stars and are so discontent with the government. They are not afraid to make fun of innocence and virginity. Unrestrained and bold are they when they speak against the family unit and promote same sex marriages.

12 Since they believe they evolved from animals, they now live like animals; co-habiting with one another and choosing to abuse or abort their young.

13 They count it pleasure to riot in the day time as life is one big party and they enjoy your discomfort when you are the object of their mockery and jokes.

14 Having eyes full of soap operas, they choose fornication and divorce over faithful marriages and make it look "okay" to mindless television viewers. Money is their goal and children are only a curse/hindrance to their selfish lifestyles.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest and are the very reason that hell hath enlarged herself.

20 Many escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but they were dissatisfied and chose to seek a religion or church that "works for them."

21 For it would have been better for them not to have been raised in a Christian home nor heard the sound of the gospel at church and camp meeting.

22 But they have tossed the truth aside as worthless and have chosen to return, instead, as a dog to his own vomit and as a pig to wallowing in the mire.

(I am thankful for the King James Version Bible and trust that no one is offended by the above passage. I have no desire to add to or take from the precious Word of God.)

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

MARCH 25, 2007

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

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 longsuffering 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: 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. II Peter 3:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because of the long suffering of God in delaying the appearing of His Son in the last day, men will be inclined to have doubts about it, but, at the appointed time of almighty God, Jesus will come in power and great glory to destroy the world and bring all men to the final judgment.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Peter 3:3), "*scoffers*": Those who deride and make light of.

(Verse 5), "*willingly are ignorant of*": They are not willing to know it. "*out of the water and in the water*": The Greek expression is: "by water and through water." The account of the creation in Genesis 1 gives evidence that everything was one big mass of water, and that God brought an expanse or opening in the midst of the waters and brought in dry land with the waters. Psalm 104:6-8 describes the waters standing above the mountains, but at God's command they hastened away to the place He founded for them. Just how that all was we may not comprehend, but it was all done by the power of the word of Jehovah. This wonder of creation so many do not believe, and therefore they will have doubts about Jesus coming again and destroying this world through the power of His word.

(Verse 7), The Greek renders this: "But the heavens and the earth now by the same word, having been stored up, are being kept unto a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

Just as the Word of God constituted the earth and the waters before Noah and the flood, even so now the Word of God is preserving it and holding it together until the day that the Almighty brings it to an end.

(Verse 8), *"be not ignorant of this one thing"*: Let not this one thing be hidden from you."

(Verse 9), *"as some men count slackness"*: God is not slow about keeping His promise as some deem to be slow. He is just so merciful and slow to anger and patient and longsuffering that He lets things go on and on and on. But the day finally comes when He will act.

(Verse 10), *"great noise"*: With rushing sound. *"elements will melt"*: The elements of all nature will be dissolved, or loosened. The power that holds the atoms together will be loosened and fire will be released from this instantly. That power is the Word of God. *"burned up"*: Wholly and completely consumed.

(Verse 11), *"holy conversation"*: Heavenly pure and sinless behavior.

(Verse 12), *"hasting"*: Rushing and hurrying up His coming. The godly, whose hearts and affections are above, are yearning for the Lover of their souls to come. As Philippians 3:20 says, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...." II Thessalonians 1:10. And Hebrews 9:28 states that "...unto them that look for (are expecting) him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

(Verse 18), *"grow"*: Enlarge and increase.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today Peter declares that, regardless of the scoffers and those who discontinue their belief in the coming of Christ and the destruction of this world and the judgment of all mankind, it will come to pass. He declares the reason why God lets the world go on and on. It is because of His longsuffering and patience with people. The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing. God takes His time in bringing about His purpose. Man likes to hurry things up and it

is hard for people to learn patience and how to wait on God. So, while God tarries, too many of us pushy, self-willed humans give up. But, employing one of the eight things Peter told us about in chapter one, (patience), we can be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Romans 8:25. And of that day Peter speaks very plainly. The whole earth is going to be destroyed when He comes in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. In flaming fire the Lord Jesus will be revealed from Heaven. This should stir our souls to be diligent to be in all holy conversation and godliness in peace without spot, and blameless.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What causes people not to believe in the coming of Christ?
2. What are people so apt to be ignorant of?
3. What will become of the heavens and earth which are now?
4. What should this cause us to seek after and to be?
5. Why are holy saints looking for and hasting unto His coming?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The second coming of Christ will bring an end to this present evil world. All mankind will be brought before the judgment seat of Christ, there to be rewarded for the things done in each one's mortal body, whether it be good or bad. There will be no second chance to get right with God. As you are when you breathe your last breath, so you will be when you stand before the Judge, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The first heavens and first earth will be gone and there will be a new heaven and new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Luke 21:34-36 records some solemn words that Jesus spoke concerning being ready for that last great day: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (overeating), and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall

it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." This goes along with Peter's admonition for us to be diligent that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. In that day God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel. (Romans 2:16.) It is something to daily pray about. The end of time is coming soon. Sin will never enter there. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." I Timothy 5:24. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him...." Revelation 1:7.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"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 stedfastness." It is wise for us to recognize the signs and spiritual climate in which we live. We live in a backslidden generation. Evil is being called good and good evil. There has been a moral downfall from godly standards of the past. Perilous times are here, evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse. These conditions will put pressure and doubts on the true children of God. Is it necessary to be so careful or strict? Does God really require that? We can begin to entertain a questioning spirit. My spiritual vision then becomes blurred and truth gets obscured and I begin to gradually slip into the world.

Revelations 3:2 says, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die:..." They were losing some ground they had one time possessed. In verse 3 he tells them to hold fast. We do well to spend much time in prayer before God and to recognize the time we are in.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



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