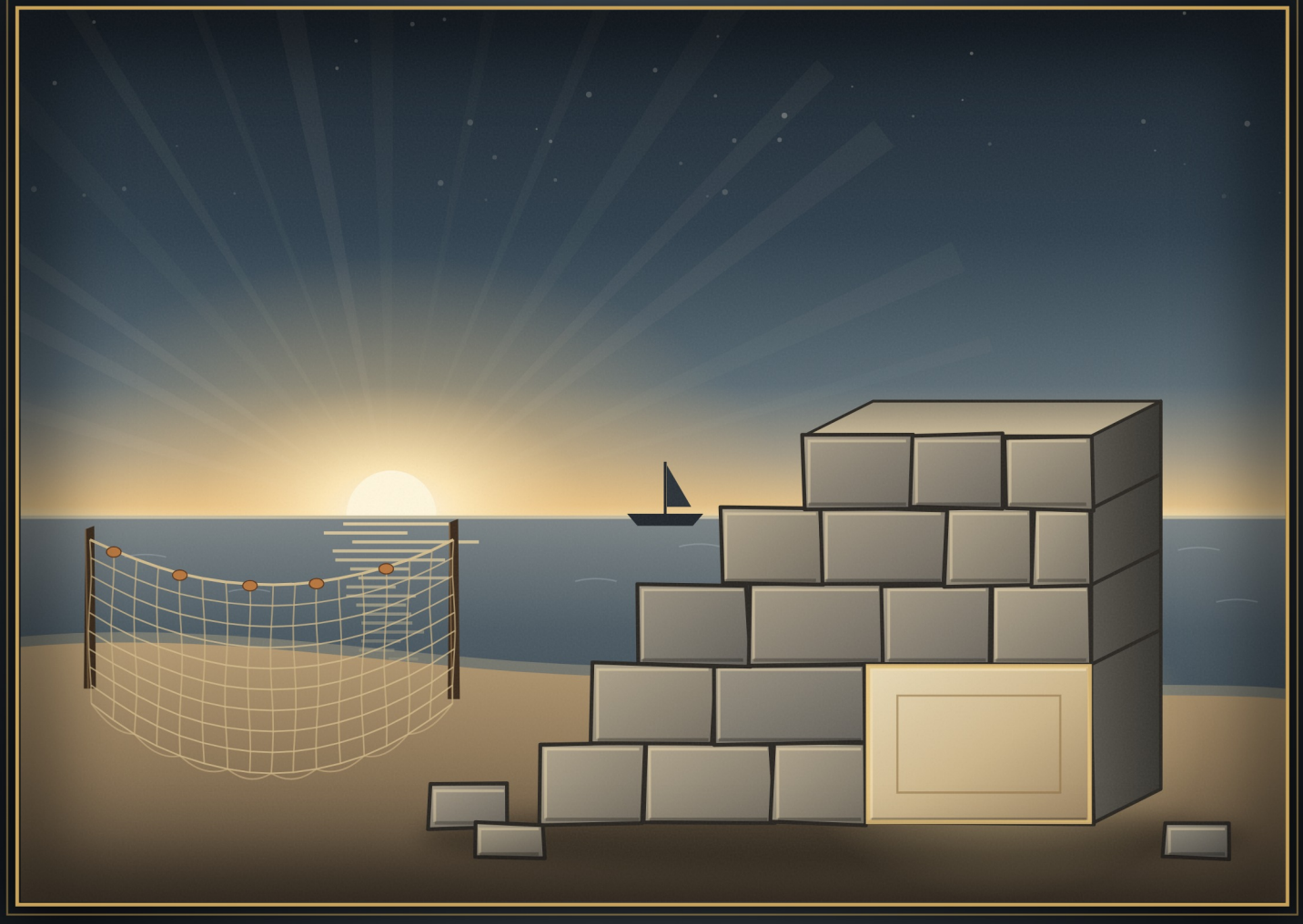
1 AND 2 PETER

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



A living hope, living stones,
and the prophetic word as more sure

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1 and 2 Peter Bible Study

A Verse-by-Verse Study

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1 and 2 Peter Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the books of 1 and 2 Peter. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

I am reminded that God is not done with me every time I read stories like Peter's. Peter failed loudly and was restored. I have failed loudly too. If God restored Peter, He can restore me.

1 and 2 Peter are two short letters from the fisherman Jesus called to follow Him. Peter wrote the first letter to believers scattered across what is now Turkey, people who were being slandered and mistreated because they belonged to Jesus. He wrote the second letter near the end of his life, knowing he would soon die, to warn the church about false teachers and to remind them that the Lord is coming. In eight chapters Peter gives suffering believers a living hope, shows them how to live well among people who do not know God, and calls them to grow in grace while they wait for the day of the Lord. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on these letters. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand what He has given us in His Son. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in 1 and 2 Peter. These are real letters from a real man who walked with Jesus, saw Him on the holy mountain, denied Him three times, and was restored by Him (Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-19). The first letter was written to believers under pressure, not yet facing the full fury of Rome, but already treated as outsiders by their neighbors. Peter does not promise them that the pressure will stop. He tells them who they are in Christ and how to suffer

well. The second letter was written a few years later, when Peter knew his death was near (2 Peter 1:14). By then the danger was coming from inside the church, from teachers who twisted the truth and mocked the promise of Christ's return. When we read what Peter says about suffering, about husbands and wives, about false teachers, and about the end of the world, we need to keep that setting in mind. If we keep the letters in their setting and compare them with the rest of Scripture, the plain meaning comes through clearly.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate

context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written. These letters teach plainly, and this study takes Peter at his word: God really has given His people a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, Christ really did bear our sins in His body on the cross, Scripture really did come from God through holy men moved by the Holy Spirit, and the day of the Lord really will come. I believe, as I explain in this study, that Christ will come for His church before the seven-year Tribulation and will return visibly to the earth at its end. A few passages in these letters are among the hardest in the New Testament, such as the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19-20) and the angels cast into Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4). Where good Bible teachers see those passages differently, I give you the main views fairly.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Greek, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.
- Old and New Testament links: after many verses you will find a short line in small type that lists the places where the other Testament quotes, fulfills, pictures, or echoes that passage. "Quoted" means the New Testament quotes the Old Testament words. "Fulfilled" means the New Testament tells us a prophecy or promise came true. "Pictured" means the New Testament itself points to an Old Testament person, event, or object as a picture of Christ. "Alluded to" means a clear echo in shared words or pictures. Every link is listed again in a table at the back of the book.

Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. Here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: eight weeks, five for 1 Peter and three for 2 Peter. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Overview and Background of each letter together.

- Half a chapter a week: fifteen weeks. The Scripture for every chapter except 1 Peter 5 is printed in two parts, and the start of the second part is a natural place to stop. Many groups will also want extra time on 1 Peter 3:18-22 and 2 Peter 3, which raise questions people often ask.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Some parts of these letters touch painful subjects: suffering and mistreatment for the faith (1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-19), servants under harsh masters (1 Peter 2:18-25), wives with unbelieving husbands, and the truth that a wife's submission never means accepting abuse (1 Peter 3:1-7), God's judgment on false teachers and the ungodly (2 Peter 2), and the warning about those who turn back after knowing the way of righteousness (2 Peter 2:20-22). Some in your group may be suffering for their faith at work or at home, may be in a hard marriage, or may have loved ones who have walked away from the Lord. The passages on the spirits in prison, baptism, and the end of the world are also places where good Bible teachers disagree, and the study gives the main views fairly. If you lead a group, read those sections ahead of time and be ready to listen. If someone shares something that puts them or another person in danger, help them get help right away.

I look forward to walking with you through 1 and 2 Peter. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of 1 Peter

1 Peter is the twenty-first book of the New Testament. It sits between James and 2 Peter. It is one of the seven short letters near the end of the New Testament often called the General Letters (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude). They are called that because most of them were written to a wide group of believers instead of to one church or one person.

Peter writes to believers who were hurting. Their neighbors called them evildoers (2:12), mocked them for no longer joining in the old sins (4:4), and made them feel like strangers in their own towns. Peter does not tell them the trouble will go away. He tells them that their trials are testing their faith like fire tests gold (1:7), that Christ suffered first and left them an example (2:21), and that the suffering lasts only "a little while" (1:6; 5:10). Above all, he points them to the hope God has given them:

1 Peter 1:3 (SLB)

"Blessed ***be*** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begot us again to a living hope through ***the*** resurrection of Jesus Christ from ***the*** dead,"

That verse holds the whole letter. Our hope is alive because Jesus is alive. The words suffer and suffering show up again and again in these five chapters, but so do hope, grace, and glory. Peter wants us to see that the path of Jesus went through the cross to the crown, and so does ours. Along the way he gives some of the most practical teaching in the New Testament: how to live under a government that does not honor God, how to work for a harsh boss, how to live with an unbelieving spouse, how to answer people who ask about our hope, and how elders should care for God's flock.

1 Peter has 5 chapters and 105 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: Who We Are in Christ (chapters 1 and 2)

- Chapter 1: A Living Hope and a Holy People
- Chapter 2: Living Stones and Living as Strangers

Part Two: Suffering Well Until He Comes (chapters 3 to 5)

- Chapter 3: Homes, Hearts, and Suffering for Doing Good
- Chapter 4: Suffering as a Christian
- Chapter 5: Shepherd the Flock and Stand Firm

Background of 1 Peter

Author: The letter opens with "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). Peter's given name was Simon. He was a fisherman from Galilee, the brother of Andrew, and Jesus gave him the name Peter, which means rock (John 1:40-42). He was one of the first disciples Jesus called, and one of the three closest to Him, with James and John. He denied Jesus three times on the night of His arrest, and after the resurrection Jesus restored him and told him to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). In this letter he calls himself "the fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ" (5:1). The early church accepted Peter as the author. Some modern scholars doubt that he wrote it. They say the Greek is too polished for a Galilean fisherman (Acts 4:13), and some think the suffering in the letter fits a later time. But Peter tells us he wrote "through Silvanus" (5:12), which may mean Silvanus helped him write it down. Peter had also been preaching for about thirty years by then, much of it among Greek-speaking people. I take the letter at its word. It names Peter, speaks as an eyewitness of Christ's sufferings, and sends greetings from Mark, whom the early church remembered as Peter's helper.

Silvanus and Mark: Silvanus is the same man Acts calls Silas. He was a leader in the Jerusalem church who traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:22, 40) and is named with Paul at the start of both letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Mark is John Mark, whose mother's house in Jerusalem was a place where the church prayed (Acts 12:12). Peter calls him "my son" (5:13), most likely because Peter was his father in the faith. Early church writers said that Mark's Gospel records Peter's preaching.

Who it was written to: Peter writes "to the elect exiles of the dispersion" in five regions: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1:1). These were Roman provinces in the north and center of what is now Turkey. The word dispersion was used for Jewish people living outside the land of Israel, and some Bible teachers believe Peter wrote mainly to Jewish believers. But Peter says his readers once lived in "ignorance" (1:14), were redeemed from the futile ways "handed down from your fathers" (1:18), and used to do "the will of the Gentiles" (4:3). That sounds like people who had come out of pagan worship. Most Bible teachers believe the churches were mostly Gentile believers, with Jewish believers among them, and that Peter uses Israel's words to describe their place as strangers in this world.

The setting: These believers were not yet facing a government campaign to wipe them out, as far as the letter shows. Peter still tells them to honor the king (2:17). Their suffering came from slander, scorn, unfair treatment by masters and husbands, and the pressure of being different (2:12, 18-20; 3:1, 16; 4:4, 14). Peter warns them that a "burning" trial was coming (4:12), and he wants them ready for it.

When and where it was written: Peter sends greetings from "she who is in Babylon, chosen together with you" (5:13). Most Bible teachers believe "she" means the church, and that Babylon is Peter's name for Rome. In the Old Testament, Babylon was the great city that destroyed Jerusalem and carried God's people away into exile, and Revelation uses the name Babylon for a great world city that opposes God (Revelation 17-18). Mark was with Paul in Rome (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24), and early church writers say Peter ministered in Rome and died

there under the emperor Nero. Other teachers take Babylon at face value as the old city in Mesopotamia, where a Jewish community still lived in Peter's day. Scripture does not say plainly which is meant. If Peter wrote from Rome, most scholars date the letter about A.D. 64, or a year or two before. That would be shortly before the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64, after which Nero blamed the Christians and the persecution grew much worse.

Purpose: Peter tells us his purpose near the end. He wrote "exhorting and testifying this to be the true grace of God, in which you stand" (5:12). He wanted suffering believers to know that the grace they had received was real, that their trials did not mean God had left them, and that they should stand firm in that grace, live holy lives, do good to those who mistreat them, and keep their eyes on the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1: A Living Hope and a Holy People

Scripture

1:1-12 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to ***the*** elect exiles of ***the*** dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to ***the*** foreknowledge of God ***the*** Father, in sanctification of ***the*** Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of ***the*** blood of Jesus Christ: may grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed ***be*** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begot us again to a living hope through ***the*** resurrection of Jesus Christ from ***the*** dead, to an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, reserved in ***the*** heavens for you, who are being guarded by ***the*** power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in ***the*** last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if it is necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the testing of your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found for praise and honor and glory at ***the*** revelation of Jesus Christ; whom, not having seen ***Him***, you love; in whom, now not seeing ***Him*** but believing, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and glorified, receiving the outcome of your faith, ***the*** salvation of souls. Concerning this salvation, ***the*** prophets who prophesied of the grace toward you sought out and searched out diligently, searching into what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating, as He testified beforehand the sufferings for Christ and the glories after these. To them it was revealed that not to themselves but to us they were ministering these things, which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by ***the*** Holy Spirit sent from heaven, ***things*** into which angels desire to look intently.

1:13-25 Therefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope fully on the grace that is being brought to you at ***the*** revelation of Jesus Christ, as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves to the desires ***that were*** formerly in your ignorance, but as the One who called you ***is*** holy, you yourselves also be holy in all ***your*** conduct, because it has been written, "Be holy, because I am holy." And if you call on ***as*** Father the One who judges impartially according to the work of each one, conduct yourselves in fear ***during*** the time of your sojourning, knowing that you were redeemed not with perishable things, silver or gold, from your futile conduct handed down from ***your*** fathers, but with ***the*** precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, ***who was*** foreknown indeed before ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world, but was made manifest in the last of the times for your sake, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from ***the*** dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls in the obedience of the truth through ***the*** Spirit for sincere brotherly love, love one another fervently out of a pure heart, having been begotten again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through ***the*** word of God, living and abiding forever. Because "All flesh ***is*** like grass, and all ***the*** glory of man like ***the*** flower of grass. The grass withered, and its flower fell off, but the declaration of ***the*** Lord abides forever." And this is the declaration which was preached as the gospel to you.

Preview

Peter opens his letter to suffering believers with praise. Before he says one word about their trials, he reminds them of what God has done. The Father chose them, the Spirit set them apart, and the blood of Jesus made them clean. God has given them new birth into a living hope, an inheritance that can never spoil, and His own power to guard them until the end. Their trials are real, but they are short, and they are testing a faith that is more precious than gold. The prophets of old searched to understand this salvation, and even angels long to look into it.

Then Peter turns from what God has done to how we should live. Because our hope is sure, we are to set our minds on it, stay sober, and be holy as God is holy. We were bought with the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without blemish, so we should live our short stay on earth in reverent fear. And because we have been born again through the living word of God, we are to love one another fervently, from a pure heart.

Study

1:1 *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to **the** elect exiles of **the** dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*

Peter does not waste words. He names himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ." An apostle is one who is sent, a messenger carrying the authority of the one who sent him. This is the same Peter who once said he did not know Jesus (Luke 22:57). Grace had made the man who denied Him into His messenger.

He writes to "the elect exiles of the dispersion." Elect means chosen. Exiles are people living away from home, temporary residents in a land that is not theirs. The dispersion, or diaspora in Greek, was the word for Jewish people scattered outside the land of Israel. Peter uses it for believers scattered through five Roman provinces in what is now Turkey. Their real home is in heaven. On earth, they are just passing through. That is true of us too. If you sometimes feel out of place in this world, that is not a sign something is wrong. It is a reminder of where you belong.

1:2 *according to **the** foreknowledge of God **the** Father, in sanctification of **the** Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of **the** blood of Jesus Christ: may grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

Peter shows us all three persons of God at work in our salvation. We were chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." We are set apart "in sanctification of the Spirit." Sanctification means being set apart for God and made holy. And the goal is "obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." In the Old Testament, Moses sprinkled blood on the people when they promised to obey God's covenant (Exodus 24:7-8). Now the blood of Jesus marks us as God's own.

What does foreknowledge mean here? Bible teachers have long disagreed. Some believe it means God knew ahead of time who would believe, and chose them in Christ on that basis (Romans 8:29). Others believe it means more than knowing facts ahead of time. They point out that in Scripture "to know" often means to set one's love on someone, and they believe God chose

His people because of His own will and grace. The same word is used of Christ Himself in verse 20, where He was "foreknown" before the world began. I have chosen not to settle this question here, as in my studies of Romans and Ephesians. Both sides agree that salvation is God's work from start to finish, and that every person is called to repent and believe. What Peter wants these suffering people to know is that they were not an accident. God the Father knew them, the Spirit set them apart, and the Son shed His blood for them. That is a firm place to stand when the world pushes against you.

"May grace and peace be multiplied to you." Not just given, but multiplied. God's grace never runs short.

Old Testament links: Exodus 24:8 (alluded to)

1:3 *Blessed **be** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begot us again to a living hope through **the** resurrection of Jesus Christ from **the** dead,*

Peter begins with worship. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed here means praised. Why does he praise God? Because "according to His great mercy" God "begot us again." This is the new birth Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus (John 3:3-7). We did not earn it. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve, and His mercy is great.

We were born again "to a living hope." Hope in the Bible is not a wish, like hoping it doesn't rain tomorrow. It is a sure promise that has not arrived yet. And this hope is living. Why? Because it rests on "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." A dead man cannot keep his promises. A living Savior can. Peter knew that better than anyone. He had seen the empty tomb (Luke 24:12) and eaten with the risen Lord (John 21:12-15). When Jesus died, Peter's hope died too. When Jesus rose, his hope came back to life, and so does ours.

1:4 *to an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, reserved in **the** heavens for you,*

What are we born again to? "An inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading." Peter uses three words that each begin with "not" in the Greek. Our inheritance cannot perish, like a body or a city can. It cannot be defiled, like land can be polluted by sin. It cannot fade, like a flower that wilts in the sun.

For people who were losing things for their faith, maybe their jobs, their friends, or their good name, this was a great comfort. Everything we own in this world can be lost, stolen, or worn out (Matthew 6:19-20). What God has for us is "reserved in the heavens for you." It has your name on it, and it is kept in the safest place there is.

1:5 *who are being guarded by **the** power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in **the** last time.*

The inheritance is kept for us, and we are kept for the inheritance. We "are being guarded by the power of God." The word guarded was used for soldiers standing watch over a city. God Himself stands guard over His people.

How does He guard us? "Through faith." God's power is the guard, and faith is how we rest under that guard. He keeps us believing. And He keeps us "for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." We are saved now from the penalty of sin. But there is a part of our salvation still to come, when Jesus returns and we receive new bodies, free from sin forever (Romans 8:23; 1 John 3:2). That salvation is "ready." Nothing more needs to be done. God is only waiting for the right time to reveal it.

1:6 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if it is necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,*

"In this you greatly rejoice." In this living hope, this safe inheritance, this guarded salvation, believers can rejoice even in pain.

Peter does not pretend their pain isn't real. They "have been grieved by various trials." The word various means many-colored. Trials come in all shapes and sizes. But notice two things Peter says about them. First, they are "for a little while." Compared to eternity, even a long trial is short (2 Corinthians 4:17). Second, they come only "if it is necessary." God does not waste our pain. If He allows a trial, it has a purpose. That does not make suffering easy. But it does mean suffering is never meaningless for the believer.

1:7 *so that the testing of your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found for praise and honor and glory at **the** revelation of Jesus Christ;*

Here is the purpose. Trials come "so that the testing of your faith" may be proved real. Peter compares faith to gold. In Peter's day, gold was heated in a furnace until the impurities rose to the top and could be skimmed off. What was left was pure.

But faith is "much more precious than gold that perishes." Gold is the most lasting treasure on earth, and even it will one day be gone. Tested faith lasts forever. It will "be found for praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" When Jesus is revealed, faith that held on through the fire will bring praise. Your trials are not proving that God has left you. They are proving that your faith is real.

1:8-9 *whom, not having seen **Him**, you love; in whom, now not seeing **Him** but believing, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and glorified, receiving the outcome of your faith, **the** salvation of souls.*

"Whom, not having seen Him, you love." Peter had seen Jesus with his own eyes. His readers had not. Yet they loved Him just the same. Jesus told Thomas that those who believe without seeing are blessed (John 20:29). That is every believer today.

Because they believe, they "greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and glorified." There is a joy that words cannot describe, a joy that already has a taste of heaven in it. It does not depend on circumstances, because it does not come from circumstances. It comes from Jesus.

They are "receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of souls." The word outcome means the goal or end. Faith reaches its goal in salvation. In one sense we receive it now. In full, we receive it when He comes.

1:10 *Concerning this salvation,* ***the*** *prophets who prophesied of the grace toward you sought out and searched out diligently,*

"Concerning this salvation," the prophets "sought out and searched out diligently." The Old Testament prophets wrote about a salvation they did not fully understand. They spoke of "the grace toward you," grace that would come to people living long after them, including Gentiles all over the world.

Think about that. Isaiah wrote of the Servant who would be pierced for our sins (Isaiah 53:5). David wrote of hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16). Those men searched their own writings, trying to understand what God was saying through them. We have what they longed to see (Matthew 13:17). We should never take for granted what the prophets searched for.

1:11 *searching into what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating, as He testified beforehand the sufferings for Christ and the glories after these.*

What were they searching for? "What or what manner of time." They wanted to know who the Messiah would be and when He would come. Peter says "the Spirit of Christ in them" was speaking through them. That tells us two things. First, the prophets did not make up their message. The Spirit gave it to them, which Peter says again in 2 Peter 1:21. Second, Christ existed before He was born in Bethlehem. His Spirit was at work in the prophets centuries before.

The Spirit "testified beforehand the sufferings for Christ and the glories after these." The prophets saw both the cross and the crown. What they did not always see clearly was the time between the two. Many Jewish readers expected a Messiah who would reign, and they missed that He must suffer first (Luke 24:25-27). Peter himself once tried to talk Jesus out of the cross (Matthew 16:21-23). He learned that suffering comes before glory, and he wants his suffering readers to learn it too.

1:12 *To them it was revealed that not to themselves but to us they were ministering these things, which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by* ***the*** *Holy Spirit sent from heaven,* ***things*** *into which angels desire to look intently.*

God showed the prophets that "not to themselves but to us they were ministering these things." They were serving people they would never meet. The gospel those prophets saw from far off has now been "announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven." The same Spirit who spoke through the prophets also spoke through the apostles and evangelists.

And then this: these are "things into which angels desire to look intently." The word pictures someone bending down to look closely, the same word used of Peter stooping to look into the empty tomb (Luke 24:12). Angels have served God since before the world was made, but they have

never been redeemed. They watch God's grace at work in sinners with wonder. If angels bend down to look at the gospel, how much more should we treasure it?

1:13 *Therefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope fully on the grace that is being brought to you at **the** revelation of Jesus Christ,*

"Therefore." Because of all God has done, here is how to live. "Having girded up the loins of your mind." In Peter's day men wore long robes. Before running or working, a man would pull up his robe and tuck it into his belt so he would not trip. Peter says to do that with your mind. Get rid of anything that will trip up your thinking.

"Being sober." This means clear-headed, in control, not drunk on the things of this world. And "hope fully on the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Set your hope all the way on what is coming. Not half on Jesus and half on this world. The grace we have received now is only the beginning. More is on the way.

1:14 *as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves to the desires **that were** formerly in your ignorance,*

"As children of obedience." That is Peter's way of saying obedient children. A child takes after his father. God's children should look like Him.

"Not conforming yourselves to the desires that were formerly in your ignorance." To conform means to be pressed into a mold. Paul uses the same word in Romans 12:2. Before we knew Christ, we followed our desires because we did not know any better. We lived "in ignorance" of God. Now we know Him, and the old mold no longer fits. This verse is one reason most Bible teachers believe many of Peter's readers were Gentiles, people who had grown up without the knowledge of the true God.

1:15-16 *but as the One who called you **is** holy, you yourselves also be holy in all **your** conduct, because it has been written, "Be holy, because I am holy."*

"But as the One who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all your conduct." To be holy means to be set apart, different, belonging to God. God is not like anything in His creation. He is pure, without sin. And He calls His children to be like Him, not just on Sunday, but "in all your conduct," at home, at work, and in what no one sees.

Peter backs this up with Scripture. "Be holy, because I am holy." God said this to Israel several times in Leviticus (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2). Peter applies it to believers today. Holiness is not a set of rules to earn God's love. It is what happens when we belong to a holy God and His Spirit lives in us.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 11:44-45 (quoted); Leviticus 19:2 (quoted); Leviticus 20:26 (quoted)

1:17 *And if you call on **as** Father the One who judges impartially according to the work of each one, conduct yourselves in fear **during** the time of your sojourning,*

"If you call on as Father the One who judges impartially." We have a close relationship with God. We call Him Father (Romans 8:15). But that closeness does not mean He winks at sin. He "judges impartially according to the work of each one." He has no favorites. For believers, this is not a judgment of whether we are saved. It is God looking at how we have lived as His children (2 Corinthians 5:10).

So, "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your sojourning." This fear is reverence, a deep respect for who God is, not terror. And our time here is a "sojourning," a temporary stay. Peter keeps coming back to this idea. We are not home yet. We should live like people who know they will one day stand before their Father.

1:18-19 *knowing that you were redeemed not with perishable things, silver or gold, from your futile conduct handed down from **your** fathers, but with **the** precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,*

Why should we live in reverent fear? Because of what our salvation cost. "You were redeemed not with perishable things, silver or gold." To redeem means to buy back by paying a price. In Peter's day, slaves could be set free when someone paid a ransom for them. Silver and gold could buy a slave his freedom, but they could never buy a sinner's freedom from sin.

We were redeemed "from your futile conduct handed down from your fathers." Futile means empty, going nowhere. Many of Peter's readers had been raised in idol worship passed down for generations. Jesus set them free from all of it.

The price was "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." This points back to the Passover lamb in Exodus 12, which had to be perfect. Its blood on the doorposts protected God's people from judgment. John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). He was the perfect, sinless sacrifice. Nothing on earth is worth more than that blood, and it was shed for you.

Old Testament links: Exodus 12:5 (alluded to); Isaiah 52:3 (alluded to)

1:20-21 ***who was*** *foreknown indeed before **the** foundation of **the** world, but was made manifest in the last of the times for your sake, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from **the** dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Christ was "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world." The cross was not God's backup plan. Before God made the world, He had already planned to send His Son to die for sinners (Revelation 13:8). But He "was made manifest in the last of the times for your sake." The last times began when Jesus came the first time. We are living in them now.

"For your sake." God's eternal plan had you in mind. Through Christ, believers "believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory." The resurrection and the ascension are God the Father's stamp of approval on everything Jesus did. So "your faith and hope are in God." Not in

ourselves, not in our circumstances, not in the government or the economy. When our faith and hope are in God, the trials of life cannot take them away.

1:22 *Having purified your souls in the obedience of the truth through **the** Spirit for sincere brotherly love, love one another fervently out of a pure heart,*

"Having purified your souls in the obedience of the truth." When these believers obeyed the gospel by believing it, God cleansed them. And the purpose of that cleansing was "sincere brotherly love." The word sincere means without a mask, not fake. In the Greek theater, actors wore masks. Peter wants real love, not acting.

So, "love one another fervently out of a pure heart." Fervently means stretched out, with full effort, like a runner straining for the finish line. Love in the church is not something that happens by accident. It takes effort, especially when people are hard to love. Suffering churches need this kind of love most of all. When the world is against us, we need each other.

1:23 *having been begotten again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through **the** word of God, living and abiding forever.*

Why can we love like this? Because we have "been begotten again." We have new life. And that new life came "not of perishable seed but of imperishable." Every human life starts from a seed that will one day die. Our new life in Christ comes from a seed that never dies.

That seed is "the word of God, living and abiding forever." God uses His Word to bring people to new birth (James 1:18). When the gospel is preached and someone believes, the Spirit uses that Word to give life. Because the seed is living and lasting, so is the life it produces. Believers share the same Father and the same seed. That is why we are family, and why we should love each other like family.

1:24-25 *Because "All flesh **is** like grass, and all **the** glory of man like **the** flower of grass. The grass withered, and its flower fell off, but the declaration of **the** Lord abides forever." And this is the declaration which was preached as the gospel to you.*

Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6-8 in these words: "All flesh is like grass." In Israel, grass grew green after the rains and then dried up fast under the hot sun. Human life is like that. Even "all the glory of man," his wealth, fame, beauty, and power, is like a wildflower that blooms and falls.

"But the declaration of the Lord abides forever." Everything else in this world will pass away, but God's Word will not (Matthew 24:35). Then Peter adds: "And this is the declaration which was preached as the gospel to you." The same Word that Isaiah said lasts forever is the gospel these believers heard and believed. The persecutors who mocked them would wither like grass. The Word that saved them would stand forever. If you are building your life on anything other than God's Word, you are building on grass.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 40:6-8 (quoted)

Summary

Peter greets believers scattered through Asia Minor as God's chosen exiles, chosen according to the Father's foreknowledge, set apart by the Spirit, and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus. He praises God for giving them new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, an inheritance kept in heaven, and God's own power guarding them for the salvation still to be revealed. Their trials are short and purposeful, testing a faith more precious than gold. The prophets searched to understand this salvation, and angels long to look into it. Because of this, believers are to set their hope fully on the grace coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ and be holy as God is holy, living in reverent fear because they were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, the spotless Lamb. Born again through the living and lasting word of God, they are to love one another fervently from a pure heart.

Study Questions

1. What does Peter call his readers in 1:1, and what do those words tell us about how believers relate to this world?

2. How are the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ each involved in our salvation? (1:2)

3. Why does Peter call our hope a "living" hope? (1:3)

4. Name the three things Peter says about our inheritance. (1:4)

5. Why do trials come into a believer's life, according to Peter? (1:6-7)

6. What did the prophets search to understand, and what do angels long to look into? (1:10-12)

7. What does it mean to be holy in all your conduct? (1:15-16)

8. What was the price of our redemption, and why does it matter for how we live? (1:18-19)

9. What trial in your life right now could God be using to test and purify your faith?

10. Is there someone in your church who is hard to love? What would it look like to love that person fervently this week? (1:22)

1 Peter 2: Living Stones and Living as Strangers

Scripture

2:1-10 Therefore, having put aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders, like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord ***is*** kind. Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen ***and*** precious in the sight of God, you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture: "Look, I lay in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen, precious, and the one who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." To you therefore who believe ***is*** the preciousness; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected, this has become ***the*** head of ***the*** corner," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; who stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which they also were appointed. But you ***are*** a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for ***His*** possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once ***were*** not a people, but now ***are the*** people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy.

2:11-25 Beloved, I urge ***you*** as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly desires, which wage war against the soul, keeping your conduct among the Gentiles good, so that in that in which they slander you as evildoers, they may, observing ***your*** good works, glorify God in ***the*** day of visitation. Be subject therefore to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to ***the*** king as being supreme, or to governors as being sent through him for vengeance on evildoers and praise of those who do good. Because so is the will of God, ***that*** by doing good ***you*** put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not having the freedom as a covering for malice, but as slaves of God. Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. Household servants, ***be*** subject in all fear to the masters, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the crooked. For this ***is*** favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures griefs, suffering unjustly. For what credit ***is it*** if, when you sin and are beaten, you endure? But if, when you do good and suffer, you endure, this ***is*** favor before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that you may follow His steps; who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, being reviled, did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten, but He kept handing ***Himself*** over to the One who judges justly; who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that, having died to sins, we might live to righteousness; by whose wound you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Preview

Peter has told his readers that they were born again through the living word of God. Now he tells them to grow. Like newborn babies crying for milk, they are to long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word. Then he changes the picture. Jesus is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God, and those who come to Him become living stones too, built into a spiritual house where they serve as a holy priesthood. Peter takes some of the greatest titles God ever gave Israel and shows

that believers in Christ now share in those blessings: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.

In the second half of the chapter, Peter shows what that looks like in a hostile world. Believers are strangers and exiles here, so they should keep their conduct good among unbelievers. They should submit to the government for the Lord's sake, honor everyone, and fear God. Household servants should submit even to harsh masters, because Christ Himself suffered unjustly and left us an example. He committed no sin, did not threaten when He suffered, and bore our sins in His body on the tree. We were like sheep going astray, but now we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

Study

2:1 *Therefore, having put aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders,*

"Therefore." Because we have been born again and called to love one another fervently (1:22-23), some things have to go. Peter names them: "all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders."

Malice is the wish to hurt someone. Deceit is trickery, saying one thing and meaning another. Hypocrisy is wearing a mask, pretending to be what we are not. Envy is resenting what others have. Slander is tearing someone down with our words. Every one of these sins destroys love in a church. Peter says to put them aside, like taking off dirty clothes. You cannot grow while holding on to these. They choke out the new life God has given.

2:2 *like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow,*

"Like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk." Anyone who has been around a hungry newborn knows that baby does not want anything else. He wants milk, and he wants it now. Peter says that is how we should crave God's Word.

"Pure" means without anything added. Some milk in Peter's day was watered down. God's Word is never watered down. It is exactly what we need. And the goal is "so that by it you may grow." Many Greek copies, including the oldest ones we have, add words that mean to salvation, meaning growth toward the full salvation still to come. A believer who is not taking in the Word is like a baby who is not eating. He will not grow. How hungry are you for God's Word?

2:3 *if indeed you have tasted that the Lord **is** kind.*

"If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is kind." Peter is echoing Psalm 34:8, which invites us to taste and see that the Lord is good. The word "if" here does not mean Peter doubts them. It means "since." These believers had already tasted God's kindness when they came to Christ.

Once you have tasted something good, you want more of it. A believer who has truly tasted the kindness of the Lord will want to keep coming back to His Word. That is the point. The craving grows from the first taste.

Old Testament links: Psalm 34:8 (alluded to)

2:4 *Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen **and** precious in the sight of God,*

"Coming to Him, a living stone." Peter changes the picture from a baby to a building. Jesus is the stone. He is "living" because He rose from the dead.

He was "rejected indeed by men." The leaders of Israel examined Him and threw Him out, and the world still rejects Him today. But He is "chosen and precious in the sight of God." What men throw away, God treasures. Peter had stood before those same leaders and told them this very thing (Acts 4:10-11).

"Coming to Him" is in the present tense. We come to Him once for salvation, but we keep coming to Him day by day. If you have ever felt rejected by people, remember that Jesus was too, and God's opinion is the one that counts.

Old Testament links: Psalm 118:22 (alluded to)

2:5 *you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

"You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up, a spiritual house." When we come to the Living Stone, we become living stones too. God takes each of us and fits us into a house He is building. In the Old Testament, God's house was the temple in Jerusalem, made of cut stones. Now God's house is His people (Ephesians 2:19-22).

We are also "a holy priesthood." In Israel, only the priests could go near God's altar and offer sacrifices. Now every believer has direct access to God through Jesus. We do not offer animals. We "offer up spiritual sacrifices," such as praise, doing good, sharing what we have, and giving our whole selves to Him (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15-16). And these are "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Our offerings are not perfect, but they are accepted because of Him.

2:6 *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture: "Look, I lay in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen, precious, and the one who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."*

Peter backs this up with Scripture. He quotes Isaiah 28:16 in these words: "Look, I lay in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen, precious." Zion is another name for Jerusalem. A cornerstone was the first stone laid in a building. Every other stone was lined up by it. If the cornerstone was off, the whole building would be crooked.

Jesus is that cornerstone. Everything in our lives must be lined up with Him. And the promise is sure: "the one who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." The Greek uses a double negative, the strongest way to say never. If you trust in Jesus, you will never be let down in the end. People may mock you now, but on the last day, no one who trusted Him will be ashamed.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 28:16 (quoted)

2:7 *To you therefore who believe **is** the preciousness; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected, this has become **the** head of **the** corner,"*

"To you therefore who believe is the preciousness." The same Stone who is precious to God is precious to everyone who believes. When you know what Jesus has done for you, He becomes your greatest treasure.

"But to those who are disobedient," Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 in these words: "The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner." The builders were the religious leaders who should have recognized Him. They rejected Him and had Him crucified. But God raised Him and made Him the head of the corner. Jesus Himself quoted this psalm about His own rejection (Matthew 21:42). Every person makes a choice about this Stone. He is either your precious cornerstone or the stone you reject.

Old Testament links: Psalm 118:22 (quoted)

2:8 *and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; who stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which they also were appointed.*

Peter quotes Isaiah 8:14 in his own wording. To those who reject Him, Jesus is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." Picture a large rock in the middle of a path. If you build on it, it holds you up. If you ignore it, you trip over it. There is no neutral ground with Jesus.

They "stumble at the word, being disobedient." Their stumbling is tied to their refusal to obey the gospel. Then Peter adds, "to which they also were appointed." Bible teachers read this in different ways. Some believe God appointed these people to stumble. Others believe what God appointed was the stumbling itself as the sure result for anyone who disobeys, so that God has set the rule that those who reject the Stone will fall over it. Either way, Peter places the blame on their disobedience. No one stumbles over Jesus who did not first refuse Him.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 8:14 (quoted)

2:9 *But you **are** a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for **His** possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession." Every one of these titles comes from the Old Testament. In Exodus 19:5-6, God told Israel at Mount Sinai that they would be His own possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. In Isaiah 43:20-21, He called Israel His chosen people, formed to declare His praise.

Peter now uses these words for believers in Christ, Jew and Gentile alike. Through faith in Jesus, Gentile believers share in blessings that were first given to Israel. Paul describes it like branches grafted into an olive tree (Romans 11:17). We are a royal priesthood, serving the King and coming near to God.

But this does not mean the church has replaced Israel. Paul is clear that God has not rejected His people Israel (Romans 11:1-2), that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26), and that God's gifts and calling are without regret (Romans 11:29). God's promises to the nation of Israel, including the land and the kingdom, still stand, and He will keep every one of them. The church shares in Israel's spiritual blessings through Christ. It does not take over Israel's promises. Some Bible teachers, especially those who hold to covenant theology (a way of reading the Bible that sees one people of God under one covenant of grace in every age), read these titles to mean that the church is now the new Israel. Peter does use Israel's words for the church, but Romans 11 shows that God still has a future for the nation of Israel itself.

Why did God make us His own? "So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." The word excellencies means His great deeds and qualities. We are saved to tell others what He has done. He brought us from the darkness of sin into His light. Who in your life needs to hear about that?

Old Testament links: Exodus 19:5-6 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 7:6 (alluded to); Isaiah 43:20-21 (alluded to)

2:10 *who once **were** not a people, but now **are the** people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy.*

Peter echoes Hosea 1:9-10 and 2:23. God told the prophet Hosea to give two of his children names that meant no mercy and not My people, as a sign of Israel's unfaithfulness. But God promised that one day He would again call Israel His people and show them mercy.

Paul applies Hosea's words to Gentiles in Romans 9:24-26, and Peter seems to do the same here. These believers "once were not a people, but now are the people of God." Before Christ, they had no claim on God at all. They "had not received mercy, but now have received mercy." That is the gospel in a sentence. We did not deserve it. God gave it anyway. And the same God who keeps that promise to us will keep His promise to restore Israel too.

Bible teachers read Peter's use of Hosea in two ways. Some believe the church has now received the promise God made to Israel in Hosea. I believe Peter uses Hosea's words because God has shown these believers the same mercy, while the promise itself still belongs to the nation of Israel, as I said at verse 9. God will keep it when Israel turns to Christ at His return and He reigns over the earth for a thousand years.

Old Testament links: Hosea 1:9-10 (alluded to); Hosea 2:23 (alluded to)

2:11 *Beloved, I urge **you** as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly desires, which wage war against the soul,*

Now Peter turns to how we live. "Beloved." He speaks with a pastor's heart. "I urge you as sojourners and exiles." A sojourner is a resident alien, someone who lives in a place without being a citizen. An exile is a foreigner passing through. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Because this world is not our home, we should "abstain from fleshly desires, which wage war against the soul." Fleshly desires are the cravings of our old sinful nature. Peter says they are at war against us. They are not harmless fun. They are soldiers trying to destroy the soul. A traveler passing through a foreign land does not adopt its worst habits. Neither should we.

2:12 *keeping your conduct among the Gentiles good, so that in that in which they slander you as evildoers, they may, observing **your** good works, glorify God in **the** day of visitation.*

"Keeping your conduct among the Gentiles good." Here "Gentiles" means unbelievers, the people around them who did not know God. The believers were being slandered "as evildoers." In the Roman world, Christians were accused of all kinds of things: being disloyal because they would not worship the emperor, hating people because they would not join the pagan feasts, even strange crimes.

Peter's answer is not to argue louder. It is to live better. When unbelievers watch "your good works," they may "glorify God in the day of visitation." The day of visitation is the day God comes, either in mercy when they turn to Him, or on the day of judgment, when even His enemies will admit He was right. Either way, our good lives speak louder than their lies. Jesus taught the same thing (Matthew 5:16).

2:13 *Be subject therefore to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to **the** king as being supreme,*

"Be subject therefore to every human institution for the Lord's sake." Human institutions means the authorities God allows to rule. Notice why we submit: "for the Lord's sake." We are not submitting because rulers are always right. We submit because the Lord asks us to, and because it honors Him.

This includes "the king as being supreme." In Peter's day, the king was the Roman emperor. When Peter wrote, the emperor was most likely Nero, a cruel man who would later have many Christians killed. Peter still says to submit. Paul taught the same thing in Romans 13:1-7.

Does this mean we obey a government even when it commands us to sin? No. Peter himself told the leaders in Jerusalem, "It is necessary to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). When the law of man and the law of God clash, God comes first. But in everything else, believers should be the best citizens in the land.

2:14 *or to governors as being sent through him for vengeance on evildoers and praise of those who do good.*

"Or to governors as being sent through him." The governors were the local rulers in each province, sent by the emperor. Pontius Pilate was one of them in Judea.

What is government for? "For vengeance on evildoers and praise of those who do good." God set up government to restrain evil and reward good (Romans 13:3-4). Even a bad government usually does some of this. It punishes thieves and murderers, and it keeps some order. Without it, life would fall into chaos. When we submit to rightful authority, we are honoring the order God set in place. That is true whether the people in charge belong to our political party or not.

2:15 *Because so is the will of God,* ***that*** *by doing good* ***you*** *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;*

"Because so is the will of God." People often ask what God's will is. Here is part of it, written plainly: "by doing good you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

The pagan neighbors spoke out of ignorance. They did not understand who Christians were. Arguing with them would not change much. But good deeds can shut a slanderer's mouth. It is hard to keep calling someone an evildoer when they are the best neighbor on the street, the hardest worker at the job, and the first to help when trouble comes. Our lives can answer what our words cannot.

2:16 *as free, and not having the freedom as a covering for malice, but as slaves of God.*

"As free." Believers are free in Christ (John 8:36; Galatians 5:1). We are not slaves of sin or of men. But Peter adds a warning: "not having the freedom as a covering for malice." Some people use "freedom" as an excuse to do whatever they want. That is not Christian freedom. It is just sin with a nice label.

Instead, we live "as slaves of God." That is the secret. We are free from everything else because we belong to Him. Real freedom is not doing whatever we want. It is being free to do what we should. We submit to the government not as frightened subjects, but as free people serving God.

2:17 *Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.*

Peter sums up in four short commands. "Honor everyone." Every person is made in the image of God and deserves respect, even those who mistreat us. "Love the brotherhood." Fellow believers get more than respect. They get love, because they are family.

"Fear God." Only God gets fear, a deep reverence. "Honor the king." The king gets honor, but not fear. Notice that the king is put on the same level as "everyone." Peter gives Caesar respect, but he never gives him worship. That was the line the early Christians would not cross. They would honor the emperor, but they would not call him lord or burn incense to him. Only God is God.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 24:21 (alluded to)

2:18 *Household servants, **be** subject in all fear to the masters, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the crooked.*

"Household servants, be subject in all fear to the masters." The Greek word is oiketai, household slaves. In Peter's day, a large part of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves, and many were in the church. Roman slavery was not the same as the race-based slavery in American history. People became slaves through war, debt, or birth, and some worked as teachers, doctors, and managers. But it was still a system where one person owned another, and it was often cruel.

We should be honest that verses like this were later misused in America to defend slavery. Many other Christians, reading the same Bible, saw that every person is made in God's image and fought to end it. Peter's words here were never a blessing on slavery. They were instructions for believers caught in a system they did not create.

Peter tells them to submit "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the crooked." That is the hard part. Anyone can work well for a kind boss. Peter asks them to keep doing right even when they were treated unfairly. Today, these verses apply to anyone who works for someone else. A Christian should be a good worker even under a bad boss. That does not mean staying quiet about abuse or breaking the law. It means our character does not depend on how others treat us.

2:19 *For this **is** favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures griefs, suffering unjustly.*

"For this is favor." The Greek word is charis, the word usually translated grace. Here it means something God finds pleasing and worthy of praise.

What pleases God? "If because of conscience toward God someone endures griefs, suffering unjustly." The key is the reason. The servant endures not because he is weak or has no choice, but because he is thinking about God. He knows God sees. He knows God will make it right. Suffering for doing wrong is just the result of our choices. Suffering for doing right, and doing it with God in view, catches God's attention.

2:20 *For what credit **is it** if, when you sin and are beaten, you endure? But if, when you do good and suffer, you endure, this **is** favor before God.*

Peter makes his point plain. "What credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten, you endure?" If you break the rules and get punished, there is nothing special about putting up with it. You earned it.

"But if, when you do good and suffer, you endure, this is favor before God." This is something the world does not understand. When a believer does the right thing, gets punished for it, and still keeps a good attitude, God takes notice. This is not about looking for suffering. It is about how we respond when unfair suffering finds us. Have you ever been punished for doing right? How did you respond?

2:21 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that you may follow His steps;*

"For to this you were called." This is part of what it means to be a Christian. "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example." The word example was used for the letters a teacher wrote at the top of a child's slate, for the child to trace underneath. Jesus wrote the pattern, and we trace it.

"So that you may follow His steps." The picture is of walking in someone's footprints. Peter had followed those footprints for about three years in Galilee and Judea. Now he tells servants, workers, and suffering believers everywhere: walk where Jesus walked. If He suffered unjustly and trusted God, we can too.

2:22 *who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth;*

Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9 in his own wording. Jesus "committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth." Peter was not repeating what someone told him. He lived with Jesus day and night for about three years. If anyone would have seen a flaw, it was Peter. He saw none.

That matters for two reasons. First, it means Jesus' suffering was completely unjust. He did nothing to deserve it. Second, only a sinless man could die for the sins of others. If Jesus had any sin of His own, He would have died for that. Because He had none, He could take our place (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:9 (quoted)

2:23 *who, being reviled, did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten, but He kept handing* ***Himself*** *over to the One who judges justly;*

Here is how Jesus suffered. "Being reviled, did not revile in return." At His trial, men spat on Him, struck Him, and mocked Him (Mark 14:65). He did not throw insults back. "Suffering, He did not threaten." On the cross, He prayed for those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34).

How could He do that? "He kept handing Himself over to the One who judges justly." Jesus trusted His Father to make everything right. He did not need to get even, because He knew God would judge fairly. That is the secret to suffering well. When we are wronged, we do not have to take revenge. We can hand ourselves, and the situation, over to God (Romans 12:19).

2:24 *who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that, having died to sins, we might live to righteousness; by whose wound you were healed.*

Now Peter moves from Christ as our example to Christ as our Savior. "Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree." The tree is the cross. Jesus carried our sins, all the guilt and punishment they deserved, in His own body. He took what we deserved so we could receive what He deserved.

The purpose is "so that, having died to sins, we might live to righteousness." The cross does not only forgive us. It changes us. We are cut off from sin's rule and made alive to do right.

"By whose wound you were healed." Peter quotes Isaiah 53:5 in his own wording. In context, Peter is talking about sin, so the healing here is first of all the healing of our souls from sin. Some Bible teachers also see physical healing in the atonement, which every believer will receive in full when we get our new bodies (Romans 8:23). Peter's readers included slaves who had been beaten. He reminds them that Jesus was beaten too, and His wounds brought healing.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:5 (quoted); Isaiah 53:4 (alluded to); Isaiah 53:11 (alluded to)

2:25 *For you were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

"For you were like sheep going astray." Peter still has Isaiah 53 in mind (Isaiah 53:6). Sheep wander. They do not mean to get lost. They just follow the next patch of grass until they are far from the shepherd and in danger.

"But you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:11). Overseer means one who watches over and cares for. Peter knew this Shepherd well. Jesus had told him three times to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). For servants with harsh masters, and for anyone who suffers unfairly, this is the comfort: you have a Shepherd who sees, who cares, and who will never mistreat you.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:6 (alluded to)

Summary

Peter calls believers to put away malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, and to crave God's Word like newborn babies crave milk. Jesus is the living stone, rejected by men but precious to God, and believers become living stones built into a spiritual house and serving as a holy priesthood. Those who reject Him stumble over Him. Through Christ, believers share in the titles God first gave Israel, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, while God's promises to Israel still stand. As strangers in this world, believers are to keep their conduct good, submit to the government for the Lord's sake, honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the king. Servants are to submit even to harsh masters, following the example of Christ, who suffered unjustly without sin, without threats, trusting His Father. He bore our sins in His body on the tree, and by His wound we were healed. We have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

Study Questions

1. What sins does Peter tell us to put aside, and why do they hurt a church? (2:1)

2. How should a believer feel about God's Word, according to 2:2?

3. What does it mean that Jesus is the "living stone" and that believers are living stones? (2:4-5)

4. What are some of the "spiritual sacrifices" a believer can offer to God? (2:5)

5. Where do the titles in 2:9 first appear, and what does that tell us about God's plan for Israel and the church?

6. How does Peter say believers should answer people who slander them? (2:12, 15)

7. Why do believers submit to the government, and where is the limit? (2:13-17)

8. What four things did Jesus do, or not do, when He suffered unjustly? (2:22-23)

9. Think of a time you were treated unfairly. How could following Jesus' example in 2:23 have changed your response?

10. Who in your life might be watching how you live? What would you want them to learn about God from you? (2:12)

1 Peter 3: Homes, Hearts, and Suffering for Doing Good

Scripture

3:1-12 Likewise, wives, ***be*** subject to ***your*** own husbands, so that even if any are disobedient to the word, through the conduct of the wives they may be won without a word, having observed your pure conduct in fear. Whose adorning, let it not be the outward ***adorning*** of braiding of hair and of putting around of gold ***ornaments*** or of putting on of garments, but ***let it be*** the hidden man of the heart, in the imperishable ***quality*** of the gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth before God. For in this way formerly also the holy women who hoped in God were adorning themselves, being subject to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children you have become, doing good and not fearing any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwelling with ***them*** according to knowledge, as with a weaker vessel, the female ***one***, rendering honor ***to them*** as also co-heirs of ***the*** grace of life, so that your prayers may not be cut off. Now finally, all ***of you be*** like-minded, sympathetic, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not repaying evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing. For the one desiring to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips not to speak deceit; let him turn away from evil and let him do good; let him seek peace and let him pursue it. Because the eyes of the Lord ***are*** on ***the*** righteous, and His ears toward their supplication; but ***the*** face of the Lord ***is*** against those doing evil.

3:13-22 And who ***is*** he who will harm you, if you become imitators of that which ***is*** good? But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, ***you are*** blessed. And do not fear their fear, nor be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and ***be*** ready always for a defense to everyone who asks you an account concerning the hope in you, with gentleness and fear, having a good conscience, so that in that in which they speak against you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For ***it is*** better, if the will of God wills ***it***, to suffer doing good than doing evil. Because Christ also suffered once for sins, ***the*** righteous for ***the*** unrighteous, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death indeed in ***the*** flesh, but having been made alive in the spirit, in which also, having gone, He preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly disobeyed, when once the patience of God was waiting in ***the*** days of Noah, while ***the*** ark was being prepared, into which few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; to which also an antitype, baptism, now saves us (not a putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God), through ***the*** resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at ***the*** right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers having been subjected to Him.

Preview

Peter carries the theme of submission from the government and the workplace into the home. He speaks first to wives, many of whom had husbands who did not believe. He tells them that their pure and respectful lives may win their husbands to Christ without a word, and that God treasures the hidden beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit more than gold and fine clothes. Then he tells husbands to live with their wives with understanding, to honor them as co-heirs of the grace

of life, and he warns that a husband who fails here will find his prayers hindered. Peter then speaks to the whole church: be like-minded, sympathetic, tender-hearted, and courteous, and bless those who insult you, as Psalm 34 teaches.

In the second half, Peter turns to suffering for doing good. Even if believers suffer for righteousness, they are blessed. They should not fear what their enemies fear, but set the Lord God apart as holy in their hearts and always be ready to give an answer for their hope, with gentleness and respect. Peter points again to Christ, who suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. This leads into one of the hardest passages in the New Testament, about Christ preaching to the spirits in prison, the days of Noah, and baptism. The chapter ends with Jesus risen, ascended, and seated at God's right hand, with angels and powers subject to Him.

Study

3:1 *Likewise, wives, **be** subject to **your** own husbands, so that even if any are disobedient to the word, through the conduct of the wives they may be won without a word,*

"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands." The word likewise ties this back to what Peter has been saying. Citizens submit to rulers (2:13), servants to masters (2:18), and wives to their own husbands. Each one does it "for the Lord's sake" (2:13), following the example of Christ (2:21).

These are hard words for many people today, so let's read them carefully. Submission does not mean a wife is worth less. Jesus is equal with the Father, yet He submitted to the Father's will (John 6:38; 1 Corinthians 11:3). Submission is about role, not worth. It is to "your own husbands," not to all men. And Peter speaks to wives directly. He does not tell husbands to force it. It is a choice a wife makes as part of her own walk with God.

Peter has a special case in mind: husbands who "are disobedient to the word," meaning husbands who are not believers. In the Roman world, a wife was expected to follow her husband's religion. A Christian wife with a pagan husband was in a hard place. Peter's hope is that "through the conduct of the wives they may be won without a word." She does not need to preach at him. Her life can do the talking.

3:2 *having observed your pure conduct in fear.*

"Having observed your pure conduct in fear." The husband watches. He may not listen to sermons, but he notices how his wife lives. "Pure conduct" means a clean, faithful life. "In fear" here means reverence toward God. A wife's respect for her husband grows out of her reverence for the Lord.

We need to say something plainly here, as I did in my study of Ephesians. A wife's submission never means she must accept abuse. Peter is not telling any wife to stay under violence, threats, or control. A husband who abuses his wife is breaking God's command in verse 7, and the church should stand with her. Submission also does not mean following a husband into sin. Our first

loyalty is always to God (Acts 5:29). If you are being hurt, or you are afraid in your own home, please tell a pastor or another believer you trust, and get to a safe place. If you are in danger, call for emergency help.

Bible teachers today differ on how verses like these should be lived out. Some believe they teach a lasting pattern of the husband's loving leadership in the home. Others believe Peter is telling believers how to live in the household customs of their day without giving needless offense. I have taught the passage as I understand its plain meaning, and I encourage you to study it prayerfully for yourself.

3:3 *Whose adorning, let it not be the outward **adorning** of braiding of hair and of putting around of gold **ornaments** or of putting on of garments,*

"Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning." Peter is not saying it is a sin for a woman to braid her hair, wear jewelry, or put on nice clothes. If that were his point, he would also be forbidding women to wear clothes at all, since "putting on of garments" is on the same list. His point is about where a woman finds her beauty and worth.

In the Roman world, wealthy women spent hours on elaborate hairstyles woven with gold and pearls. The culture said a woman's value was in how she looked. Peter says a believing woman's real beauty is not something she puts on from the outside. The same is true for men. Our culture spends a fortune on appearance. God looks somewhere else.

3:4 *but **let it be** the hidden man of the heart, in the imperishable **quality** of the gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth before God.*

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart." This is the inner person, who we really are when no one is looking. That kind of beauty is "in the imperishable quality of the gentle and quiet spirit." Outward beauty fades with age. This kind never does.

Gentle does not mean weak. Jesus called Himself gentle (Matthew 11:29), and He was no weakling. It means strength under control. Quiet does not mean a woman can never speak. It means a calm, settled spirit that is not anxious or quarrelsome. And this is "of great worth before God." The world may not notice it, but God does. He values it more than all the gold in the world. What do you spend more time on, how you look on the outside or who you are on the inside?

3:5-6 *For in this way formerly also the holy women who hoped in God were adorning themselves, being subject to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children you have become, doing good and not fearing any terror.*

Peter gives an example. "The holy women who hoped in God" in the Old Testament adorned themselves this way. Their beauty came from their trust in God. That trust is what made it possible for them to be "subject to their own husbands." They were not trusting in their husbands to be perfect. They were trusting in God.

"As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." In Genesis 18:12, Sarah spoke of Abraham as her lord, a common word of respect, like calling a man sir. She was not perfect. She laughed at God's promise. But she respected her husband and followed him when he left home at God's call.

Believing wives become Sarah's "children" by "doing good and not fearing any terror." Faith lets a woman do right without being ruled by fear, even when her husband is not a believer and her future seems uncertain. God is the one she trusts.

Old Testament links: Genesis 18:12 (alluded to)

3:7 *Husbands, likewise, dwelling with **them** according to knowledge, as with a weaker vessel, the female **one**, rendering honor **to them** as also co-heirs of **the** grace of life, so that your prayers may not be cut off.*

Now Peter speaks to husbands, and he does not let them off easy. "Dwelling with them according to knowledge." A husband is to live with his wife with understanding. He should know her, study her, and care about what she thinks and feels. That takes time and effort.

He is to treat her "as with a weaker vessel." This does not mean she is weaker in mind, spirit, or value. It most likely means that in general a woman has less physical strength than a man, and in Peter's world she had much less power in society. A husband is never to use his strength against her. He is to protect her, the way you would handle a fine piece of china with care.

"Rendering honor to them as also co-heirs of the grace of life." In God's eyes, husband and wife stand on equal ground. They are both heirs of eternal life. And Peter adds a warning: "so that your prayers may not be cut off." A man who mistreats his wife cannot expect God to hear his prayers. How a man treats his wife affects his walk with God.

3:8 *Now finally, all **of you be** like-minded, sympathetic, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous,*

"Now finally, all of you." Peter turns to the whole church. He gives five qualities. "Like-minded" means having the same goal, not that we all think alike on every small thing. "Sympathetic" means feeling with others, rejoicing when they rejoice and weeping when they weep (Romans 12:15). "Loving as brothers" means treating fellow believers as family.

"Tender-hearted" means having a heart that is easily moved by the needs of others. "Courteous" means kind and friendly toward others. Many Greek copies have a word here that means humble-minded, putting others ahead of ourselves. A church full of people like this would be a beautiful place. It starts with each of us choosing to live this way.

3:9 *not repaying evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing.*

"Not repaying evil for evil or insult for insult." When someone hurts us, the natural thing is to hurt them back. When someone insults us, we want to insult them back. Jesus did neither (2:23). Neither should we.

"But on the contrary blessing." Instead of revenge, we bless. To bless means to speak well of someone and to ask God to do good to them. Jesus said to bless those who curse us (Luke 6:28). This is not natural. It is supernatural. Why do it? "Knowing that to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing." God has called us to bless, and He will bless us in return. We do not earn salvation this way. But God rewards His children who live like His Son.

3:10-11 *For the one desiring to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips not to speak deceit; let him turn away from evil and let him do good; let him seek peace and let him pursue it.*

Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16 in his own wording. David wrote this psalm after he escaped from danger by pretending to be insane before a Philistine king. He knew trouble firsthand. "The one desiring to love life and to see good days." Who doesn't want that? Here is the path.

"Let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips not to speak deceit." It starts with our words. James says the tongue is a small part of the body, but it can set a whole forest on fire (James 3:5-6). Then, "let him turn away from evil and let him do good." It is not enough to stop doing wrong. We have to start doing right. And "let him seek peace and let him pursue it." Peace does not just happen. We have to chase it, like a hunter chasing game.

Old Testament links: Psalm 34:12-14 (quoted)

3:12 *Because the eyes of the Lord **are** on **the** righteous, and His ears toward their supplication; but **the** face of the Lord **is** against those doing evil.*

"Because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears toward their supplication." God sees His people. He hears their prayers. When we suffer for doing right, it can feel like no one notices. God notices. Supplication means a humble, earnest request.

"But the face of the Lord is against those doing evil." God is not neutral about evil. Those who persecute His people will answer to Him. That is why we do not need to take revenge. Peter quotes only the first half of Psalm 34:16. The rest of that verse speaks of God cutting off the memory of evildoers from the earth. Peter leaves room for them to repent, but the warning stands.

Old Testament links: Psalm 34:15-16 (quoted)

3:13 *And who **is** he who will harm you, if you become imitators of that which **is** good?*

"And who is he who will harm you, if you become imitators of that which is good?" Many Greek copies read zealous for what is good in place of imitators. Generally, people who do good are not the ones who get into trouble. Most of the time, living well keeps us out of a lot of harm.

But Peter means something deeper too. Even if someone does harm us outwardly, no one can do us real, lasting harm. They can take our things, our reputation, or even our lives, but they cannot touch our inheritance or our souls (1:4-5; Matthew 10:28). In the end, the one who belongs to God is safe.

3:14 *But even if you should suffer because of righteousness,* ***you are*** *blessed. And do not fear their fear, nor be troubled;*

"But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, you are blessed." Peter admits that sometimes doing good does bring suffering. When it does, we are still blessed. Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 5:10.

"And do not fear their fear, nor be troubled." Peter is drawing from Isaiah 8:12-13. This may mean do not fear what they fear, or do not be afraid of their threats. Either way, the answer is the same. Believers do not need to be ruled by fear of people. When we fear God, we do not need to fear anyone else.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 8:12 (quoted)

3:15 *but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and* ***be*** *ready always for a defense to everyone who asks you an account concerning the hope in you, with gentleness and fear,*

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Many Greek copies read sanctify Christ as Lord. To sanctify here means to set apart as holy, to give Him first place. Either way, when the Lord has first place in your heart, fear of people loses its grip.

Then, "be ready always for a defense to everyone who asks you an account concerning the hope in you." The word defense is apologia in Greek. It was used for a lawyer's answer in court. Every believer should be ready to explain why we believe. That does not mean we all need to be scholars. It means we should know what we believe and why, and be able to share it simply.

And it must be done "with gentleness and fear." Not with anger or pride, and not to win an argument. We want to win people, not debates. Have you ever been asked why you believe in Jesus? Could you answer clearly and kindly?

Peter is still using Isaiah 8, where God told Isaiah, "The LORD of armies, Him you shall regard as holy, and He shall be your fear, and He your dread" (Isaiah 8:13). Peter's word "sanctify" is Isaiah's "regard as holy."

Old Testament links: Isaiah 8:13 (quoted)

3:16 *having a good conscience, so that in that in which they speak against you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.*

"Having a good conscience." Our lives must back up our words. If we defend the hope we have but live like hypocrites, our answer means nothing. A good conscience comes from living right before God and others.

Why does it matter? "So that in that in which they speak against you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame." Notice the words "in Christ." Our good conduct flows from our union with Him. When people slander a believer who is living a clean life, their lies will eventually be exposed. They will be ashamed, if not now, then when they stand before God. Our job is not to defend our reputation. Our job is to live in a way that proves their words false.

3:17 *For **it is** better, if the will of God wills **it**, to suffer doing good than doing evil.*

"For it is better, if the will of God wills it, to suffer doing good than doing evil." Sometimes God allows His people to suffer. Peter says "if the will of God wills it." Suffering is not outside of God's control. If it comes, it comes for a purpose.

But Peter makes an important point. If we have to suffer, it is far better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. Suffering for doing wrong is just the result of our sin. Suffering for doing right is following in the footsteps of Jesus. And as the next verse shows, that is exactly what He did.

3:18 *Because Christ also suffered once for sins, **the** righteous for **the** unrighteous, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death indeed in **the** flesh, but having been made alive in the spirit,*

"Because Christ also suffered once for sins." Peter gives the greatest example of suffering for doing good. Jesus suffered "once." His death never needs to be repeated (Hebrews 9:26-28; 10:10). It was enough to pay for every sin.

"The righteous for the unrighteous." This is the heart of the gospel. Jesus was righteous. We were not. He took our place. That is what Bible teachers call substitution. And the reason He died was "so that He might bring us to God." Sin separated us from God. Jesus died to bring us back.

"Having been put to death indeed in the flesh, but having been made alive in the spirit." Jesus' body died on the cross. But He was made alive. Bible teachers read "in the spirit" in two main ways. Some read it as the Holy Spirit, who raised Him from the dead (Romans 8:11). Others read it as Jesus' own human spirit, which lived on after His body died, or as the realm of the spirit as opposed to the flesh. Either way, death could not hold Him.

3:19 *in which also, having gone, He preached to the spirits in prison,*

"In which also, having gone, He preached to the spirits in prison." This is one of the hardest verses in the New Testament. Even good Bible teachers admit they are not certain what it means. Here are the three main views.

First, some believe Christ preached in the spirit through Noah to the people of Noah's day while the ark was being built. Peter later calls Noah "a herald of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). Those people rejected the message, died in the flood, and are now "in prison," held for judgment.

Second, some believe that after His death, or after His resurrection, Christ went and announced His victory to fallen angels who are held in prison. They connect this with 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, which speak of angels kept in chains for judgment, and with Genesis 6:1-4. In this view, "preached" means proclaimed, like a herald announcing a king's triumph, and not offering salvation.

Third, some believe that between His death and resurrection, Christ went to the place of the dead and preached to the souls of people who had died in Noah's day. Some who hold this view believe

He announced His victory and their judgment. A few believe He offered them salvation, but Scripture elsewhere teaches that judgment follows death (Hebrews 9:27), and most Bible teachers do not accept a second chance after death.

I have chosen not to settle this question here. What is clear is that Christ is Lord over every spirit, living or dead, human or angel, and that His suffering led to victory.

3:20 *who formerly disobeyed, when once the patience of God was waiting in* ***the*** *days of Noah, while* ***the*** *ark was being prepared, into which few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water;*

These spirits "formerly disobeyed, when once the patience of God was waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared." Building the ark took many years. All that time, God was patient, giving people a chance to turn from their sin. But they did not. Jesus said people in Noah's day were eating, drinking, and marrying right up to the day the flood came (Matthew 24:37-39).

Only "few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. Out of the whole world, only eight. That would have encouraged Peter's readers, who were a small minority in a hostile world. Being few does not mean being wrong. The same water that judged the world lifted the ark to safety. God's patience is great, but it does have an end. Today is the day to come to Him (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Old Testament links: Genesis 7:23 (alluded to); Genesis 7:13 (alluded to)

3:21 *to which also an antitype, baptism, now saves us (not a putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God), through* ***the*** *resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

"To which also an antitype, baptism, now saves us." "To which" points back to the water of Noah's day in verse 20. An antitype is the thing an earlier picture pointed to. The flood was a picture. Baptism is what it pointed to. Just as Noah passed through the water in the ark and came out into a new world, the believer pictures passing through death and coming out to new life.

Does Peter mean that the water of baptism saves us? Bible teachers have read this in different ways. Some, especially in churches with a sacramental view, believe God uses baptism as a means of grace that brings new birth. Most Bible-teaching Protestant churches believe baptism is the outward sign and public pledge of a salvation that comes through faith.

Peter explains himself right away: "not a putting away of the filth of the flesh." The water itself does not do anything to the soul. It only washes the body. Instead, baptism is "the pledge of a good conscience toward God." The word pledge can mean an answer or an appeal. In baptism, a believer answers God's call publicly, with a conscience already made clean by Christ. And what really saves is named at the end: "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The power is in the risen Christ, not in the water.

The rest of Scripture is clear. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit when they believed, before they were baptized (Acts 10:43-48). The thief on the cross was promised paradise without

being baptized (Luke 23:42-43). Repentance and faith come first, and baptism is the believer's obedient public step that follows. Baptism matters. Jesus commanded it (Matthew 28:19). But it is the fruit of salvation, not the root.

3:22 *who is at **the** right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers having been subjected to Him.*

Christ "is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven." Peter ends this hard passage where it was always heading: with Jesus in the place of highest honor. The One who suffered once for sins is now reigning.

And "angels and authorities and powers having been subjected to Him." Every spiritual power, good or evil, is under His feet (Ephesians 1:20-22). Whatever the spirits in prison were, they are under His rule. Whatever powers stand behind the people who persecute believers, they are under His rule too. That is the point Peter wants suffering believers to see. Jesus suffered unjustly, and He ended up on the throne. If we suffer with Him, we will also share His glory (Romans 8:17). The path goes through the cross to the crown.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (alluded to)

Summary

Peter tells wives to be subject to their own husbands, so that unbelieving husbands may be won by their pure and respectful conduct. A wife's true beauty is the hidden person of the heart, a gentle and quiet spirit that God treasures, as seen in Sarah and the holy women of old. Submission never means accepting abuse. Husbands are to live with their wives with understanding, honor them as co-heirs of the grace of life, and know that mistreating them hinders their prayers. All believers are to be like-minded, sympathetic, loving, tender-hearted, and courteous, blessing those who insult them, as Psalm 34 teaches. Those who suffer for righteousness are blessed. They should set the Lord God apart as holy in their hearts and always be ready to explain their hope with gentleness and respect. Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Peter speaks of Christ preaching to the spirits in prison, of Noah's family saved through water, and of baptism as the pledge of a good conscience toward God, saving through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who now reigns at God's right hand over every power.

Study Questions

1. What does Peter hope will happen when a believing wife lives with an unbelieving husband? (3:1-2)

2. Where does Peter say a woman's true beauty is found? (3:3-4)

3. What three things does Peter tell husbands in 3:7, and what happens if they ignore them?

4. How should believers respond when someone insults them? (3:9)

5. What does Psalm 34 tell us about the tongue, about doing good, and about peace? (3:10-11)

6. What does it mean to "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," and how does it help with fear? (3:14-15)

7. Why does Peter say it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil? (3:17-18)

8. According to 3:21, what does baptism do and not do, and what really saves us?

9. If someone asked you today why you have hope, what would you say? (3:15)

10. Is there someone close to you who does not yet believe? How could your conduct, more than your words, show them Christ?

1 Peter 4: Suffering as a Christian

Scripture

4:1-11 Therefore, Christ having suffered for us in ***the*** flesh, you also arm yourselves with the same mind, because the one who has suffered in ***the*** flesh has ceased from sin, so as no longer to live the remaining time in ***the*** flesh for ***the*** desires of men, but for ***the*** will of God. For the past time of life ***is*** sufficient for us to have carried out the will of the Gentiles, having walked in sensualities, lusts, drunkenness, orgies, carousings, and abominable idolatries; in which they think it strange, your not running with ***them*** into the same overflow of debauchery, blaspheming ***you***; who will give an account to Him who is ready to judge ***the*** living and ***the*** dead. For to this ***end*** the gospel was preached also to ***the*** dead, so that they might be judged indeed according to men in ***the*** flesh, but live according to God in ***the*** spirit. But the end of all things has drawn near; therefore be of sound mind and be sober for the prayers. And above all things, having fervent love among yourselves, because love will cover a multitude of sins; ***be*** hospitable to one another without grumbling; each one, as he has received a gift, serving it among yourselves, as good stewards of ***the*** manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, ***let him speak*** as oracles of God; if anyone serves, ***let him serve*** as from ***the*** strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the power to the ages of the ages. Amen.

4:12-19 Beloved, do not think it strange at the burning among you, which is taking place for a trial for you, as though a strange thing were happening to you; but insofar as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice, exulting. If you are insulted in ***the*** name of Christ, ***you are*** blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler in other people's matters; but if ***anyone suffers*** as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this respect. For ***it is*** the time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if ***it begins*** first from us, what ***will be*** the end of those disobeying the gospel of God? And if the righteous ***one*** is saved with difficulty, the ungodly and sinner, where will he appear? Therefore also those suffering according to the will of God, let them commit their own souls in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Preview

Peter has just shown us Christ, who suffered once for sins and now reigns at God's right hand. Now he tells believers to arm themselves with the same mind. The old life of sensuality, drunkenness, and idol worship is over, and the time already spent on it is more than enough. Old friends will think it strange that believers no longer run with them, and they will speak evil of them, but they will answer to the One who judges the living and the dead. Because the end of all things is near, believers are to be clear-minded for prayer, love one another fervently, open their homes without grumbling, and use every gift God has given them to serve one another, so that God is glorified in everything.

In the second half, Peter speaks directly about the fiery trial. Believers should not be surprised by it, as if something strange were happening. They should rejoice that they share in Christ's

sufferings, because they will rejoice even more when His glory is revealed. If they are insulted for the name of Christ, they are blessed, because the Spirit of glory rests on them. But no believer should suffer as a criminal or a meddler. If anyone suffers as a Christian, he should not be ashamed, but glorify God. Judgment begins with the house of God, so those who suffer according to God's will should entrust their souls to their faithful Creator and keep on doing good.

Study

4:1 *Therefore, Christ having suffered for us in **the** flesh, you also arm yourselves with the same mind, because the one who has suffered in **the** flesh has ceased from sin,*

"Therefore, Christ having suffered for us in the flesh." Peter picks up where chapter 3 left off. Jesus suffered in His body. "You also arm yourselves with the same mind." Arm is a soldier's word. Peter tells us to take up the attitude of Christ like a soldier takes up his weapons. Jesus was willing to suffer to do God's will. We should be too.

"Because the one who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." This is a hard phrase. It most likely means that a person who has chosen to suffer for doing right, instead of giving in to sin, has made a clean break with sin's control. When you are willing to suffer rather than sin, sin loses its grip. Some read it as speaking of our union with Christ, who suffered and died, so that we too have died to sin (Romans 6:6-7). Either way, the point is the same. A believer who is ready to suffer for Christ is done living for sin.

4:2 *so as no longer to live the remaining time in **the** flesh for **the** desires of men, but for **the** will of God.*

"So as no longer to live the remaining time in the flesh for the desires of men, but for the will of God." Every believer has a "remaining time." None of us knows how long it is. Peter asks: what will you do with it?

There are only two ways to live. We can live for "the desires of men," doing what our own cravings and the people around us want. Or we can live "for the will of God." Before Christ, we had no choice but to live the first way. Now we do. The time you have left is a gift. Don't spend it on things that will not last.

4:3 *For the past time of life **is** sufficient for us to have carried out the will of the Gentiles, having walked in sensualities, lusts, drunkenness, orgies, carousings, and abominable idolatries;*

"For the past time of life is sufficient for us to have carried out the will of the Gentiles." Here Gentiles means unbelievers. Peter says, in effect, you have already wasted enough time on that life. Enough is enough.

He lists what that life looked like: "sensualities, lusts, drunkenness, orgies, carousings, and abominable idolatries." Much of the social life in the Roman world centered on pagan festivals. People ate meals in the temples of idols, drank heavily, and gave in to sexual sin, all as part of worship. Peter's readers had lived that way. Now they did not. That list could describe many parties today. The names of the gods have changed, but the sins have not.

4:4 *in which they think it strange, your not running with **them** into the same overflow of debauchery, blaspheming **you**;*

"In which they think it strange, your not running with them into the same overflow of debauchery." Their old friends were surprised. Why don't you come to the parties anymore? What's wrong with you? The picture of running together is like a crowd rushing headlong toward a flood of sin.

And because believers would not join in, their friends were "blaspheming you," speaking evil of them. When you stop doing what everyone else does, some will mock you. Some will be offended, because your life makes them feel guilty. Have you felt that pressure? Peter's readers did too. But they were not the strange ones. The strange thing is a life that runs toward its own destruction.

4:5 *who will give an account to Him who is ready to judge **the** living and **the** dead.*

"Who will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." Those who mock believers will one day answer for it. God is "ready." The judgment is not far-off or uncertain.

Jesus is the One who will judge (John 5:22; Acts 10:42). Peter preached this to Cornelius, saying God appointed Jesus to be Judge of the living and the dead. No one escapes. The living and the dead both stand before Him. That is a sobering truth for those who reject Him. For believers, it is a comfort. We do not need to take revenge on those who mock us. God will make everything right.

4:6 *For to this **end** the gospel was preached also to **the** dead, so that they might be judged indeed according to men in **the** flesh, but live according to God in **the** spirit.*

"For to this end the gospel was preached also to the dead." This is another hard verse, and Bible teachers read it in different ways.

Many believe it means the gospel was preached to people who are now dead, while they were still alive. Peter's readers may have been asking why some believers had died if Christ gives life. Peter answers that those believers heard the gospel while they lived. They were "judged indeed according to men in the flesh," meaning they died, as all people do, and perhaps were even condemned by men. But they "live according to God in the spirit." Death did not end them. They are alive with God.

Others connect this verse to 3:19 and believe Christ preached to the dead after His death. Others take "the dead" as the spiritually dead, people dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1). Many Bible teachers hold the first view because it fits the flow of Peter's argument, but good teachers hold each of these, and Scripture does not settle it for us. The main point is the same in all of them: the gospel brings life that death cannot destroy. Scripture does not teach a second chance after death (Hebrews 9:27).

4:7 *But the end of all things has drawn near; therefore be of sound mind and be sober for the prayers.*

"But the end of all things has drawn near." Some people say Peter was wrong, since nearly two thousand years have passed. But in the Bible, "near" means the next great event on God's calendar could come at any time. Since Jesus rose and ascended, nothing else has to happen before He comes for His church. That is why believers in every generation should live ready (Titus 2:13).

So what should we do? "Be of sound mind and be sober for the prayers." Sound mind means clear thinking, not panicked or wild. Sober means alert. The nearness of the end should not make us quit our jobs and wait on a mountaintop. It should make us pray more clearly. Peter learned this the hard way. In Gethsemane he fell asleep when Jesus told him to watch and pray (Mark 14:37-38).

4:8 *And above all things, having fervent love among yourselves, because love will cover a multitude of sins;*

"And above all things, having fervent love among yourselves." Above all. Of everything a church needs as the end draws near, love comes first. Fervent love is stretched out, full effort love (1:22).

"Because love will cover a multitude of sins." Peter is drawing from Proverbs 10:12, which says love covers all transgressions. This does not mean love pays for sins. Only Christ's blood does that. It means love forgives. It does not keep a record of wrongs, broadcast them, or hold them over people (1 Corinthians 13:5). In a church full of imperfect people, there will be offenses. Love lets the small ones go. That does not mean ignoring serious sin or abuse. It means not making every hurt into a war.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 10:12 (alluded to)

4:9 ***be*** *hospitable to one another without grumbling;*

"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." In Peter's day, there were few inns, and those that existed were often dirty and dangerous. Traveling believers and preachers depended on other Christians to open their homes. Churches also met in homes.

The word hospitable means a lover of strangers. Hospitality can be costly. It takes time, food, and space. That is why Peter adds "without grumbling." It is possible to serve someone and complain the whole time. God wants us to open our homes and our hearts gladly. Hospitality today may look like having someone over for dinner, giving a ride, or making a newcomer at church feel welcome.

4:10 *each one, as he has received a gift, serving it among yourselves, as good stewards of* ***the*** *manifold grace of God.*

"Each one, as he has received a gift." Every believer has received at least one spiritual gift. No one is left out. A gift in this sense is an ability God gives by His grace to serve others (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7).

We are to be "serving it among yourselves." Our gifts are not for our own glory. They are for the good of others. We are "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." A steward was a servant who managed his master's household and property. He did not own what he managed. He would answer for how he used it. Manifold means many-colored, the same word Peter used for "various" trials in 1:6. God's trials come in many colors, and so does His grace. What gift has God given you, and how are you using it?

4:11 *If anyone speaks,* ***let him speak*** *as oracles of God; if anyone serves,* ***let him serve*** *as from* ***the*** *strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the power to the ages of the ages. Amen.*

Peter names two broad kinds of gifts. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as oracles of God." Those who teach, preach, or encourage should speak God's truth, not their own opinions. They should handle it with care, knowing they speak for Him.

"If anyone serves, let him serve as from the strength which God supplies." Those who serve with their hands, such as helping, giving, or caring for the sick, should do it in God's strength, not their own.

And the goal of all of it: "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Not us, not our church, not our ministry. God. Then Peter breaks out in praise: "to whom is the glory and the power to the ages of the ages. Amen." When we see what God is doing, worship is the only right response.

4:12 *Beloved, do not think it strange at the burning among you, which is taking place for a trial for you, as though a strange thing were happening to you;*

"Beloved, do not think it strange at the burning among you." Peter turns to a hard subject with a tender word. The burning is the fiery trial. The same word was used for the furnace that refines metal. Peter's readers were under fire, and he warns more may come.

It is "taking place for a trial for you." It is a test, meant to prove and refine (1:7). And Peter says not to act "as though a strange thing were happening to you." Many believers are surprised when suffering comes. They think if they follow Jesus, life should go well. But Jesus said in this world we would have trouble (John 16:33). Suffering is not strange for a Christian. It is normal. Expect it, and you will not be thrown off when it comes.

4:13 *but insofar as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice, exulting.*

"But insofar as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice." This does not mean our suffering pays for sin. Only Christ's suffering did that. It means that when we suffer for following Him, we are walking where He walked. We share in the same kind of treatment He received from the world (John 15:18-20).

Why rejoice? "So that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice, exulting." Suffering now leads to joy later, and a greater joy than we can imagine. When Jesus is revealed in His glory, those

who suffered with Him will rejoice beyond words. The apostles learned this early. After they were beaten, they left rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41). Peter was one of them.

4:14 *If you are insulted in **the** name of Christ, **you are** blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*

"If you are insulted in the name of Christ, you are blessed." Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 5:11-12. Being insulted for belonging to Jesus is not a curse. It is a blessing.

Why? "Because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." In the Old Testament, the glory of God rested on the tabernacle and the temple as a cloud. Now His Spirit rests on His people, especially when they suffer for Him. Many believers who have suffered for Christ have said that they never felt His presence more than in the hardest moments.

"On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified." These words are in many Greek copies, though not all. When the world mocks believers, it is really mocking Christ. But when believers stand firm, Christ is honored.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 11:2 (alluded to)

4:15 *For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler in other people's matters;*

"For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer." Peter is realistic. Not all suffering is for Christ. If a believer breaks the law and is punished, that is not persecution. That is justice.

Then he adds something surprising: "or as a meddler in other people's matters." Peter puts busybodies on the same list as murderers and thieves. A meddler sticks his nose into business that is not his. Some believers bring trouble on themselves by being pushy, nosy, or obnoxious, and then call it persecution. If people dislike you, make sure it is because of Jesus, and not because of you.

4:16 *but if **anyone suffers** as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this respect.*

"But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." The name Christian is used only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; and here). It was most likely first given by outsiders, maybe as an insult. It means a follower of Christ. Peter tells them to wear it with honor.

"But let him glorify God in this respect." Many Greek copies read in this name in place of in this respect. Either way, the believer should not hide or be embarrassed. Peter had once been ashamed to be known as a follower of Jesus. In the courtyard he denied Him three times (Mark 14:66-72). Now he tells others not to be ashamed. Grace changed him. It can change us too.

4:17 *For **it is** the time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if **it begins** first from us, what **will be** the end of those disobeying the gospel of God?*

"For it is the time for the judgment to begin from the house of God." The house of God is His people, the church (2:5). This judgment is not condemnation. Believers will never face God's wrath for their sins (Romans 8:1). It is God's work of testing and purifying His people, like a father disciplining his children (Hebrews 12:6-11). The trials believers face are part of that.

Peter may have Ezekiel 9:6 in mind, where judgment begins at God's sanctuary. Then he asks a sobering question: "What will be the end of those disobeying the gospel of God?" If God's own children go through the refining fire, what will happen to those who reject Him? Their end will be far worse.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 9:6 (alluded to)

4:18 *And if the righteous **one** is saved with difficulty, the ungodly and sinner, where will he appear?*

Peter quotes Proverbs 11:31 from the Greek Old Testament. "If the righteous one is saved with difficulty, the ungodly and sinner, where will he appear?"

"Saved with difficulty" does not mean God barely manages to save us, or that our salvation is in doubt. It means the road to final salvation passes through many trials (Acts 14:22). It is hard. But God brings every one of His people through. If the righteous face such hard trials, the ungodly have no hope apart from Christ. Where will they stand when the Judge comes? This verse should move us to pray for those we love who do not know Jesus.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 11:31 (quoted)

4:19 *Therefore also those suffering according to the will of God, let them commit their own souls in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*

Peter sums up. "Therefore also those suffering according to the will of God." Suffering for doing right is not outside of God's plan. If it comes, it comes by His will.

"Let them commit their own souls in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." To commit means to hand over for safekeeping, like depositing money in a bank. Jesus used a form of this word on the cross when He committed His spirit into His Father's hands (Luke 23:46). We are to entrust our souls to God, and keep on "doing good." Suffering is no excuse to stop.

Why can we trust Him? He is "a faithful Creator." The One who made us knows what we can bear, and He never fails His people. This is the only place in the New Testament where God is called Creator in just this way. The God who made the universe can keep your soul safe.

Summary

Because Christ suffered in the flesh, believers are to arm themselves with the same mind, done with sin and living the rest of their lives for the will of God. They have spent enough time in the

old life of sensuality and idolatry, and their old friends who mock them will give an account to the Judge of the living and the dead. The gospel was preached also to the dead, so that they live according to God in the spirit. Because the end of all things is near, believers should be clear-minded for prayer, love one another fervently, show hospitality without grumbling, and use every gift as good stewards of God's grace so that God is glorified in everything. When the fiery trial comes, believers should not be surprised but rejoice to share in Christ's sufferings, knowing they will rejoice even more when His glory is revealed. They should never suffer as criminals or meddlers, but if they suffer as Christians, they should not be ashamed. Judgment begins with the house of God, so those who suffer by God's will should entrust their souls to a faithful Creator and keep doing good.

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to "arm yourselves with the same mind" as Christ? (4:1)

2. How did the old friends of these believers react to their changed lives? (4:3-4)

3. What does Peter tell believers to do because "the end of all things has drawn near"? (4:7-9)

4. What does it mean that love "will cover a multitude of sins"? (4:8)

5. What two broad kinds of gifts does Peter describe, and what is the goal of both? (4:10-11)

6. Why should believers not be surprised by suffering? (4:12)

7. What kinds of suffering does Peter say a believer should never bring on himself? (4:15)

8. How does the believer's suffering compare to what awaits those who reject the gospel? (4:17-18)

9. Have you ever lost friends or been mocked because you follow Jesus? How did you respond?

10. What gift has God given you, and how could you use it to serve someone this week? (4:10)

1 Peter 5: Shepherd the Flock and Stand Firm

Scripture

5:1-14 ***The*** elders among you I exhort, ***I*** the fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, the one also a partaker of the glory about to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly, nor for shameful gain but eagerly; nor as exercising lordship over the portions ***allotted to you***, but becoming examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd has been manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, younger ***ones***, be subject to ***the*** elders. And all ***of you***, being subject to one another, clothe yourselves with humility, because God opposes ***the*** proud, but gives grace to ***the*** humble. Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in ***due*** time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you. Be sober, be watchful, because your adversary, ***the*** devil, walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished in your brotherhood in the world. And the God of all grace, the One who called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, you having suffered a little, may He Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. To Him ***be*** the glory and the power to the ages of the ages. Amen. Through Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I regard ***him***, I have written to you through few ***words***, exhorting and testifying this to be ***the*** true grace of God, in which you stand. She who ***is*** in Babylon, chosen together ***with you***, greets you, and Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace ***be*** to you all who ***are*** in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Preview

Peter closes his letter by speaking to the leaders of the churches. He writes as a fellow elder and an eyewitness of Christ's sufferings, and he tells the elders to shepherd God's flock willingly, eagerly, and by example, not for money and not by lording it over people. When the Chief Shepherd appears, they will receive a crown of glory that never fades. Then he tells the younger ones to submit to the elders, and all of them to clothe themselves with humility, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Peter then gives some of the most loved words in his letter. Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you. Stay sober and alert, because the devil prowls like a roaring lion, and resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that believers all over the world face the same sufferings. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace will Himself restore and strengthen you. Peter ends with greetings from Silvanus, from the church in Babylon, and from Mark, and with a word of peace.

Study

5:1 ***The*** *elders among you I exhort,* ***I*** *the fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, the one also a partaker of the glory about to be revealed:*

"The elders among you I exhort." An elder, presbyteros in Greek, was a mature believer chosen to lead and care for a local church. The New Testament also calls them overseers, episkopos in Greek (5:2), and shepherds or pastors (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7). These are different names for the same office.

Notice how Peter describes himself. He does not call himself the chief apostle or the head of the church. He calls himself "the fellow elder." Peter stood beside these men, not above them. Nothing in this letter suggests that Peter ruled over the other churches or passed down a throne to others. He is a humble shepherd speaking to fellow shepherds.

He is also a "witness of the sufferings of Christ." He saw the arrest, the trial, and the cross. And he is "a partaker of the glory about to be revealed." Peter had seen a preview of that glory on the mountain of transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16-18). He knew suffering would be followed by glory.

5:2 *shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly, nor for shameful gain but eagerly;*

"Shepherd the flock of God among you." Peter is passing on what Jesus told him by the Sea of Galilee: tend My sheep (John 21:16). A shepherd feeds, guides, protects, and cares for the flock. Notice whose flock it is: "the flock of God." The church does not belong to the pastor. It belongs to God, who bought it with the blood of His Son (Acts 20:28).

Peter gives the right and wrong ways to lead. "Not under compulsion but willingly." An elder should serve because he wants to, not because someone talked him into it or no one else would do it. "Nor for shameful gain but eagerly." Elders may be paid (1 Timothy 5:17-18), but money must never be the reason they serve. A shepherd who is in it for the money will run when the wolf comes (John 10:12-13).

5:3 *nor as exercising lordship over the portions* ***allotted to you****, but becoming examples to the flock.*

"Nor as exercising lordship over the portions allotted to you." The portions allotted are the people God has given each elder to care for. Jesus told His disciples that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over people, but it must not be that way among them (Mark 10:42-45). A good elder does not bully, control, or demand his own way.

Instead, elders are to be "becoming examples to the flock." A leader leads best by living what he teaches. People may forget a sermon, but they remember how their pastor treated his wife, how he handled money, and how he responded when he was wronged. What kind of example are you setting for the people who look up to you? This applies to parents, bosses, and Sunday school teachers too.

5:4 *And when the Chief Shepherd has been manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

"And when the Chief Shepherd has been manifested." Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. Every elder is an under-shepherd, serving under Him. And one day He will be "manifested," meaning He will appear.

Then faithful elders "will receive the unfading crown of glory." In Peter's day, the winners of athletic games received a crown made of leaves, which wilted in a few days. The crown Jesus gives never fades. This reward will be given at the judgment seat of Christ, where believers are rewarded for how they served (2 Corinthians 5:10). As I believe Scripture teaches, Christ comes for His church before the Tribulation, and believers' rewards follow His coming. Faithful pastors may not get much praise on earth. Many serve small churches for little pay. But the Chief Shepherd sees, and He will reward them.

5:5 *Likewise, younger **ones**, be subject to **the** elders. And all **of you**, being subject to one another, clothe yourselves with humility, because God opposes **the** proud, but gives grace to **the** humble.*

"Likewise, younger ones, be subject to the elders." Younger may mean younger in age, or it may mean those who are not elders. Either way, they should respect and follow their leaders. This does not mean blind obedience. Elders who teach error or live in sin must be corrected (1 Timothy 5:19-20). But a healthy church follows its godly leaders gladly.

"And all of you, being subject to one another, clothe yourselves with humility." The word clothe pictures a servant tying on an apron before work. Peter may have been thinking of the night Jesus tied a towel around His waist and washed the disciples' feet, including Peter's (John 13:4-5). Humility means taking the lowest place gladly, as He did.

Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 in these words: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Pride puts us in a fight with God. Humility opens the door to His grace.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 3:34 (quoted)

5:6 *Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in **due** time,*

"Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God." The mighty hand of God is a phrase from the Old Testament for His power to rescue His people, as when He brought Israel out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:8). It is also the hand that disciplines.

To humble ourselves under His hand means to accept what He allows in our lives, trust His timing, and stop fighting Him. Why? "So that He may exalt you in due time." God lifts up the humble. But it is "in due time," His time, not ours. Joseph waited years in slavery and prison before God raised him up (Genesis 41:39-41). Waiting is hard. But God's timing is always right.

5:7 *having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.*

"Having cast all your anxiety on Him." This verse is tied to verse 6. Humbling ourselves includes giving our worries to God. Pride tells us we can handle it ourselves. Humility admits we can't. The

word cast means to throw something onto something else, the way the disciples threw their cloaks onto the colt before Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Luke 19:35 uses the same word).

"All" your anxiety. Not some of it, not the big things only. Everything that weighs you down. And here is why: "because He cares about you." God is not too busy for your problems. He is not bothered by your worries. He cares about you personally. Jesus said not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Father knowing (Matthew 10:29-31). What are you carrying right now that you need to throw onto Him?

Old Testament links: Psalm 55:22 (alluded to)

5:8 *Be sober, be watchful, because your adversary, **the** devil, walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

"Be sober, be watchful." Sober means clear-minded. Watchful means awake and alert. Again, Peter knew what it was to fall asleep when he should have been watching (Mark 14:37-38).

Why stay alert? "Because your adversary, the devil, walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The devil is real. He is not a cartoon figure with a pitchfork. The word adversary means an opponent in court, an accuser. Devil means slanderer. He is a created being, a fallen angel, and he hates God's people. He is called a roaring lion because he tries to frighten and overwhelm. A lion looks for the weak, the young, and the one who has wandered from the herd. Believers who are isolated, prayerless, or careless are easy targets. Stay close to the flock and the Shepherd.

5:9 *Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished in your brotherhood in the world.*

"Resist him, firm in the faith." We do not have to run from the devil in fear. We stand our ground. James says the same: resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). How do we resist? "Firm in the faith." We stand on what God has said, just as Jesus answered every temptation with Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11).

And we are not alone. "Knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished in your brotherhood in the world." When we suffer, the devil wants us to think no one else understands. But believers all over the world face the same kinds of trials. Today, many believers in other countries face prison, beatings, and death for their faith. Remembering them helps us keep our own trials in view, and it should move us to pray for them.

5:10 *And the God of all grace, the One who called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, you having suffered a little, may He Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.*

"And the God of all grace." What a name. He is the God of saving grace, sustaining grace, and every other kind. He is "the One who called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus." Our future is glory, and it lasts forever.

"You having suffered a little." Compared to eternal glory, our suffering is short and small (Romans 8:18). Then God "may He Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." To perfect means to repair or restore, like mending a torn fishing net. Peter knew about mending nets. To establish means to make firm. To strengthen means to give power. To settle means to set on a firm foundation. Notice who does it: "He Himself." God does not hand this job to someone else. He personally restores His suffering children.

5:11 *To Him **be** the glory and the power to the ages of the ages. Amen.*

"To Him be the glory and the power to the ages of the ages. Amen." When Peter thinks of what God will do for His people, he cannot help but worship.

The devil prowls like a lion, but he does not have the final power. God does. The persecutors seem strong, but their power is short-lived. God's power lasts "to the ages of the ages," forever. The word Amen means truly, or so be it. Peter is putting his stamp on it. This is true. God reigns, and He will have the last word.

5:12 *Through Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I regard **him**, I have written to you through few **words**, exhorting and testifying this to be **the** true grace of God, in which you stand.*

"Through Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I regard him." Silvanus is Silas, Paul's partner on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). Writing "through" someone could mean that Silvanus wrote down the letter as Peter's helper, or that he carried it to the churches, or both. Either way, Peter trusted him. He calls him "the faithful brother."

"I have written to you through few words." Peter calls it a short letter. He could have said much more. And he states his purpose: "exhorting and testifying this to be the true grace of God, in which you stand." Everything he wrote, about hope, holiness, suffering, and submission, is the true grace of God. Their trials did not mean they had missed God's grace. They were standing right in the middle of it. So Peter tells them to stand firm.

5:13 *She who **is** in Babylon, chosen together **with you**, greets you, and Mark my son.*

"She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, greets you." Most Bible teachers believe "she" is the church, and that Babylon is Peter's name for Rome. In the Old Testament, Babylon was the great city that took God's people into exile, and Revelation uses the name for a world city that stands against God (Revelation 17-18). Peter has called his readers exiles (1:1). The church in Rome was living in exile too, in the capital of the world. Others take Babylon at face value as the old city in Mesopotamia. Scripture does not say plainly which it is.

"And Mark my son." This is John Mark, who once left Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey (Acts 13:13; 15:37-39). Later Paul called him useful for ministry (2 Timothy 4:11). Peter calls him "my son," most likely because Peter was his father in the faith. Mark is a reminder that a person who fails can be restored. Peter knew that better than anyone.

5:14 *Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace **be** to you all who **are** in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

"Greet one another with a kiss of love." In Peter's day, a kiss on the cheek was a common greeting among family and friends. In the church it showed that believers were one family. Paul gives a similar command several times (Romans 16:16). In our culture, a warm handshake or hug may serve the same purpose. The point is real, visible love among believers.

"Peace be to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen." Peter began with grace and peace (1:2), and he ends with peace. These believers were facing slander, mistreatment, and a coming fiery trial. But in Christ they had peace that no persecutor could take away (John 14:27). That is Peter's last word to suffering believers, and it is God's word to us today.

Summary

Peter, writing as a fellow elder and eyewitness of Christ's sufferings, tells the elders to shepherd God's flock willingly, eagerly, and by example, not for money and not by lording it over people. When the Chief Shepherd appears, they will receive an unfading crown of glory. Younger believers are to be subject to the elders, and all believers are to clothe themselves with humility, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Believers are to humble themselves under God's mighty hand, cast all their anxiety on Him because He cares for them, and stay sober and alert, resisting the devil, firm in the faith, knowing that believers everywhere suffer the same things. After a little suffering, the God of all grace will Himself restore, establish, strengthen, and settle them. Peter wrote through Silvanus to testify that this is the true grace of God, and he sends greetings from the church in Babylon and from Mark, closing with peace for all who are in Christ.

The anxiety I am carrying right now is work, especially not understanding it fully yet. 1 Peter 5:7 tells me to cast all my anxiety on Him because He cares for me. I am learning to do that one day at a time.

Study Questions

1. How does Peter describe himself in 5:1, and what does that tell us about how he saw his role?

2. What are the right and wrong ways for elders to lead God's flock? (5:2-3)

3. What will faithful elders receive, and when? (5:4)

4. What does it mean to "clothe yourselves with humility," and why does it matter? (5:5)

5. What does Peter tell us to do with our anxiety, and why? (5:7)

6. How does Peter describe the devil, and how are we to resist him? (5:8-9)

7. What four things does the God of all grace promise to do for suffering believers? (5:10)

8. What do we learn about Mark in 5:13, and how does his story encourage those who have failed?

9. What anxiety are you carrying right now that you need to cast on the Lord?

10. Who are the leaders in your church, and how can you encourage and pray for them this week?

Overview of 2 Peter

2 Peter is the twenty-second book of the New Testament. It sits between 1 Peter and 1 John. It is one of the General Letters, and it is Peter's last word to the church. He tells us plainly that he knows "the putting off of my tent is soon" (1:14), meaning he would soon die. Like a father who knows his time is short, he spends his last letter reminding his children of what matters most.

In the first letter the danger came from outside, from neighbors and rulers who mistreated believers. In this letter the danger comes from inside. False teachers had come into the churches, or soon would, promising freedom while living in sin and mocking the promise of Christ's return. Peter answers them in three steps. In chapter 1 he calls believers to grow in their faith and reminds them that the gospel rests on eyewitness testimony and on the sure word of Scripture. In chapter 2 he exposes the false teachers and shows from history that God knows how to rescue the godly and judge the ungodly. In chapter 3 he answers the scoffers: the Lord is not slow, He is patient, and the day of the Lord will come. Peter's last words sum up the letter:

2 Peter 3:18 (SLB)

"but grow in grace and in ***the*** knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him ***be*** the glory both now and to ***the*** day of eternity. Amen."

The words know and knowledge run through this short letter. The answer to false teaching is not a new secret knowledge. It is the "full knowledge" of Jesus Christ (1:2-3, 8; 2:20), growing day by day in the truth we have already received.

2 Peter has 3 chapters and 61 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: Grow in the Truth (chapter 1)

- Chapter 1: Grow in Grace and the Sure Word

Part Two: Beware of False Teachers (chapter 2)

- Chapter 2: False Teachers and Their End

Part Three: Look for the Day of the Lord (chapter 3)

- Chapter 3: The Day of the Lord Will Come

Background of 2 Peter

Author: The letter opens with "Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), the name he was born with and the name Jesus gave him. The writer says he was with Jesus "on the holy mountain" and heard the Father's voice (1:16-18), which points to the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8). He says Jesus had shown him that his death was near (1:14; John 21:18-19). He calls this "a second letter" (3:1) and speaks of Paul as "our beloved brother" (3:15). Of all the New Testament books, 2 Peter is the one most doubted, both in the early church and today. Some early church writers were slow to accept it, though in time the whole church received it as Scripture. Many modern scholars believe someone wrote it in Peter's name after his death. They point to Greek that is quite different from 1 Peter, to its close likeness to Jude, and to its mention of Paul's letters as a group (3:15-16). But a man can write differently with a different helper, or with no helper at all. The first letter tells us Silvanus helped with it (1 Peter 5:12), and this one names no helper. The letter claims Peter as its author again and again, and it warns hard against deceivers. It is hard to believe a deceiver wrote it. I take the letter at its word.

Who it was written to: Peter writes "to those who have obtained a faith equally precious with ours" (1:1). That is a wide greeting, but in 3:1 he says this is his second letter to them. Most Bible teachers believe he means 1 Peter, which would make the readers the same believers in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1). Some believe the first letter he means is one we do not have.

When and where it was written: Peter wrote near the end of his life (1:13-15). Early church writers say Peter was put to death in Rome under Nero, and Nero died in A.D. 68. So most of those who hold that Peter wrote it date the letter about A.D. 67 to 68, shortly before his death, written most likely from Rome, a few years after 1 Peter. Some place it a little earlier, about A.D. 65, because they date Peter's death closer to the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64. The letter itself does not say where it was written.

2 Peter and Jude: Much of 2 Peter 2 is very close to Jude 4-18. Both letters warn about false teachers who deny the Lord, both use the angels who sinned and Sodom and Gomorrah as examples of judgment, both mention Balaam, and both call the false teachers waterless and dark. Bible teachers have three main views. Some believe Peter used Jude's letter. Others believe Jude used Peter's, and they note that Jude tells his readers to remember what the apostles had said ahead of time about scoffers (Jude 17-18), which sounds like 2 Peter 3:3. Others believe both writers drew on common teaching that was well known in the church. Scripture does not tell us, and it does not change the meaning. The Holy Spirit saw fit to give the church this warning twice.

Purpose: Peter tells us why he wrote. He wanted to "stir you up by a reminder" (1:13) so that after his death they could remember these things (1:15). He wanted them to remember the words of the prophets and the commandment of the apostles (3:1-2), to guard themselves against the error of the lawless (3:17), and to "grow in grace" (3:18). He also wanted them to live holy lives while they wait for "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (3:13).

2 Peter 1: Grow in Grace and the Sure Word

Scripture

1:1-11 Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith equally precious with ours in ***the*** righteousness of our God and ***our*** Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in ***the*** full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us through glory and virtue, through which He has given to us the precious and very great promises, so that through these you may become partakers of ***the*** divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world in lust. And for this very ***reason*** also, having brought in all diligence, supply in your faith virtue, and in virtue knowledge, and in knowledge self-control, and in self-control endurance, and in endurance godliness, and in godliness brotherly affection, and in brotherly affection love. For these things, being in you and abounding, make ***you*** neither idle nor unfruitful toward the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being short-sighted, having taken forgetfulness of the purification of his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be diligent rather to make your calling and election sure; for doing these things, you will by no means ever stumble. For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you.

1:12-21 Therefore I will not neglect to remind you always concerning these things, though ***you*** know ***them*** and have been established in the present truth. And I consider ***it*** right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by a reminder, knowing that the putting off of my tent is soon, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent ***that*** at every time after my departure you may have ***the means*** to make remembrance of these things. For not having followed cleverly devised myths did we make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having become eyewitnesses of His majesty. For having received from God ***the*** Father honor and glory, such a voice having been borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I was well pleased," and this voice we heard borne from heaven, being with Him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word ***as*** more sure, to which you do well taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and ***the*** morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation; for prophecy was never borne by ***the*** will of man, but being borne by ***the*** Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke.

Preview

Peter opens his last letter by reminding believers what they already have. God's divine power has given them everything they need for life and godliness, along with precious and very great promises, so that they can share in His nature and escape the corruption of the world. Because of that, Peter calls them to work hard at growing. To their faith they should add virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Believers who grow this way will be fruitful, will not stumble, and will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.

In the second half, Peter explains why he is writing. He knows his death is near, and he wants to remind them of these things while he can, so they will remember them after he is gone. Then he gives the reason they can trust the message. The apostles did not follow clever myths. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus' majesty on the holy mountain and heard the Father's voice from heaven. And we have something even more sure, the prophetic word of Scripture, which did not come from the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Study

1:1 *Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith equally precious with ours in **the** righteousness of our God and **our** Savior Jesus Christ:*

"Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ." Peter puts together the name he was born with, Simon, and the name Jesus gave him, Peter, the rock (John 1:42). Many Greek copies read Simeon here, the Hebrew form of Simon, which James also used for Peter in Acts 15:14. Peter calls himself "a slave" first, then "an apostle." Before he speaks with authority, he bows as a servant.

He writes "to those who have obtained a faith equally precious with ours." The faith of every believer is just as precious as the faith of the apostles. We did not walk with Jesus as Peter did, but we have the same Savior and the same salvation. That faith comes "in the righteousness of our God and our Savior Jesus Christ." In the Greek, one article covers both titles, God and Savior, and the grammar most naturally calls Jesus both God and Savior. Peter, a Jewish man who prayed to the one true God all his life, calls Jesus God. That is one of the plainest statements of Jesus' deity in the Bible (see also Titus 2:13; John 20:28).

1:2 *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in **the** full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,*

"May grace and peace be multiplied to you." Peter used the same greeting in his first letter (1 Peter 1:2). Grace is God's favor we did not earn. Peace is the result. And Peter prays they would be "multiplied," growing more and more.

How? "In the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." The Greek word is epignosis, which means a full, personal knowledge, not just knowing facts about someone. It is the knowledge of a friend, not a stranger reading a biography. This word appears again and again in this letter (1:3, 8; 2:20). The false teachers Peter will warn about claimed to have special knowledge. Peter says the knowledge that matters is knowing Jesus personally, and grace and peace grow as we know Him better.

1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us through glory and virtue,*

"His divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness." God has not left us short. Everything we need to live a godly life, we already have. We do not need a new experience, a secret teaching, or a special ceremony. In Christ, we have all we need.

How did we get it? "Through the full knowledge of Him who called us through glory and virtue." God called us by showing us His glory and His goodness. Peter saw that glory with his own eyes (1:16-18). The more we know Jesus, the more we draw on what He has already given. Many believers live as spiritual beggars when they are rich in Christ. Do you ever feel like you don't have what it takes to live for God? Peter says you already do.

1:4 *through which He has given to us the precious and very great promises, so that through these you may become partakers of **the** divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world in lust.*

"Through which He has given to us the precious and very great promises." God's promises are the channel through which His power reaches us. He promises forgiveness, His presence, His strength, and a future with Him forever.

Why? "So that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature." This does not mean we become God, or little gods. We remain creatures, and God remains God. It means that through new birth, we share in God's own moral character. His life is in us by His Spirit, and He makes us more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18).

"Having escaped the corruption in the world in lust." The world is rotting from the inside because of sinful desire. Believers have escaped that rot. We are not trapped in it anymore. False teachers will soon promise freedom while leading people back into that same corruption (2:19).

1:5 *And for this very **reason** also, having brought in all diligence, supply in your faith virtue, and in virtue knowledge,*

"And for this very reason." Because God has given us everything, we have work to do. God's gift does not make us lazy. It makes us eager. "Having brought in all diligence." Diligence means earnest effort.

"Supply in your faith virtue." The word supply was used for a wealthy man who paid for a play or a choir in Greek cities, going above and beyond. We are to add to our faith generously. Faith is the foundation. Salvation comes by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). But real faith grows. The first thing to add is "virtue," moral excellence, a good and upright life. Then "knowledge," growing understanding of God and His ways, and the wisdom to live them out. This is not a list we finish one item at a time. It is a picture of a whole life growing together.

1:6 *and in knowledge self-control, and in self-control endurance, and in endurance godliness,*

"And in knowledge self-control." Self-control means mastering your desires instead of letting them master you. The false teachers lacked it (2:10, 14). Knowledge without self-control becomes pride.

"And in self-control endurance." Endurance means steady patience under trial, the strength to keep going when life is hard. Peter's readers had already seen hard times (1 Peter 4:12). More would come. "And in endurance godliness." Godliness means living with God in view, a life of reverence toward Him in everything. These qualities feed each other. Self-control helps us endure. Endurance makes room for godliness to grow.

1:7 *and in godliness brotherly affection, and in brotherly affection love.*

"And in godliness brotherly affection." The Greek word is philadelphia, the love between brothers and sisters. A godly person who does not love fellow believers has missed something important (1 John 4:20).

"And in brotherly affection love." The last word is agape, love. This is the self-giving love God showed when He sent His Son (John 3:16). It reaches beyond the family of believers to everyone, even enemies. The list begins with faith and ends with love. That is the shape of the Christian life. Paul said the same thing: love is the greatest (1 Corinthians 13:13). Which of these qualities do you most need God to grow in you right now?

1:8 *For these things, being in you and abounding, make* ***you*** *neither idle nor unfruitful toward the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

"For these things, being in you and abounding." Peter does not just want these qualities to be present. He wants them to be growing, overflowing. A little fruit is good. Abundant fruit is better (John 15:5, 8).

When these things abound, they "make you neither idle nor unfruitful toward the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Idle means useless, like a tool sitting in a shed. Unfruitful means producing nothing, like a tree with no apples. A believer who keeps growing in these qualities will be useful to God and will bear fruit. The more we know Christ, the more these qualities grow. The more they grow, the better we know Him.

1:9 *For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being short-sighted, having taken forgetfulness of the purification of his former sins.*

"For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being short-sighted." Peter describes a believer who is not growing. He cannot see far. He sees what is right in front of him, the pleasures and worries of today, but he cannot see eternity.

Why? He has "taken forgetfulness of the purification of his former sins." He has forgotten that he was forgiven. When we forget how much God forgave us, we stop growing. We get careless and comfortable. Remembering the cross keeps us humble, grateful, and eager to grow. Jesus said the one who is forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:47). Do you remember what God saved you from?

1:10 *Therefore, brothers, be diligent rather to make your calling and election sure; for doing these things, you will by no means ever stumble.*

"Therefore, brothers, be diligent rather to make your calling and election sure." This does not mean we make ourselves saved by our efforts. God's calling and election are His work, not ours (1 Peter 1:1-2). It means we confirm it, show it to be real. A growing life is the evidence that God's call has taken hold of us.

Some believers wonder whether they are truly saved. Peter's answer is not to look for a feeling. Look at your life. Is your faith growing in these qualities? If so, that is the fingerprint of God's

work in you. "For doing these things, you will by no means ever stumble." This does not mean a believer will never sin (1 John 1:8). It means you will not fall away into ruin. A growing believer keeps walking.

1:11 *For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you.*

"For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you." Peter uses the same word, supply, that he used in verse 5. When we supply these qualities in our faith, God richly supplies our welcome into His kingdom.

Every believer will enter the kingdom. But not every believer will enter in the same way. Paul speaks of some who will be saved as through fire, with their works burned up (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Peter wants his readers to have a rich welcome, like a victorious athlete coming home to cheering crowds. How we live now does not earn our salvation. But it does shape the rewards we receive when we stand before Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

1:12 *Therefore I will not neglect to remind you always concerning these things, though **you** know **them** and have been established in the present truth.*

"Therefore I will not neglect to remind you always concerning these things." Peter is not teaching them something new. He is reminding them. "Though you know them and have been established in the present truth."

Why remind people of what they already know? Because we forget. We drift. Every believer needs to hear the basics again and again. A good pastor does not chase new ideas to entertain people. He keeps pointing them back to the truth they have already received. If you have heard the gospel a hundred times, it is worth hearing again. The false teachers came with new teachings. Peter came with old truths.

1:13 *And I consider **it** right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by a reminder,*

"And I consider it right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by a reminder." Peter calls his body a "tent." A tent is a temporary home, easily taken down when a traveler moves on. Paul used the same picture (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). Our bodies are not our final homes. One day we will receive bodies that last forever.

While Peter is still alive, he wants to "stir you up." The word means to wake someone up from sleep. Peter is like a man shaking a friend awake. Believers can grow spiritually sleepy. We need reminders to keep us alert. That is one reason we gather as a church, read the Bible, and encourage one another.

1:14 *knowing that the putting off of my tent is soon, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.*

"Knowing that the putting off of my tent is soon." Peter knows he will die soon. "As also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me." By the Sea of Galilee, after the resurrection, Jesus told Peter

that when he was old, someone else would dress him and carry him where he did not want to go. John explains that Jesus said this to show by what kind of death Peter would glorify God (John 21:18-19).

Peter had known for over thirty years how his life would end. Early church writers say Peter was crucified in Rome under Nero. Yet he did not live in fear. He spent his last days writing to strengthen others. When you know your time is short, what you say matters most. These are Peter's last words to the church.

1:15 *And I will also be diligent **that** at every time after my departure you may have **the means** to make remembrance of these things.*

"And I will also be diligent that at every time after my departure you may have the means to make remembrance of these things." The word departure is exodus in Greek, the same word used for Jesus' coming death in Luke 9:31, when Moses and Elijah spoke with Him on the mountain of transfiguration. Peter was there and heard it. Now he uses it for his own death. For a believer, death is not the end. It is an exodus, a going out from bondage to the promised land.

Peter wants them to remember after he is gone. This letter is one way he made sure of that. Early church writers also say that Mark's Gospel preserves Peter's preaching, so some think Peter had that Gospel in mind here as well. Either way, God made sure Peter's witness would last. We still read it today.

1:16 *For not having followed cleverly devised myths did we make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having become eyewitnesses of His majesty.*

"For not having followed cleverly devised myths did we make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The false teachers were saying that the apostles' teaching about Christ's coming was just a made-up story. Peter says no. The Greek world was full of myths about gods coming down to earth. The gospel is not one of them.

"But having become eyewitnesses of His majesty." Peter was there. He saw it with his own eyes. The Christian faith does not rest on legends that grew up over centuries. It rests on what real people saw and heard (1 John 1:1-3). The "power and coming" most likely refers to Christ's return in glory. On the mountain, Peter saw a preview of that glory.

1:17 *For having received from God **the** Father honor and glory, such a voice having been borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I was well pleased,"*

"For having received from God the Father honor and glory." Peter is describing the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. There His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.

"Such a voice having been borne to Him by the Majestic Glory." The Majestic Glory is a reverent way of speaking of God Himself. A bright cloud covered them, and the Father spoke: "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I was well pleased." Peter had wanted to build three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, as if they were equals (Matthew 17:4). The Father's voice set him straight. Jesus stands alone as God's beloved Son.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 42:1 (alluded to)

1:18 *and this voice we heard borne from heaven, being with Him on the holy mountain.*

"And this voice we heard borne from heaven, being with Him on the holy mountain." Peter emphasizes again that he heard it. "We heard." This was not a dream or a vision in his own mind. Three men heard the same voice at the same time.

The mountain is called "holy" because God revealed Himself there, not because the ground itself was special. The Bible does not name the mountain. Some think it was Mount Hermon, near Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus had been just before (Matthew 16:13). Others think it was Mount Tabor in Galilee. Scripture does not say. What matters is what happened there. Peter saw Jesus in His glory and heard the Father's approval. That memory stayed with him all his life.

1:19 *And we have the prophetic word **as** more sure, to which you do well taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and **the** morning star rises in your hearts;*

"And we have the prophetic word as more sure." The prophetic word means the Old Testament prophecies, and by extension all of Scripture. Bible teachers read this in two main ways. Some believe Peter means the transfiguration made the prophecies even more sure, because it showed a preview of their fulfillment. Others believe Peter means that the written Word is even more sure than his own experience on the mountain. Either way, Scripture is a firm foundation, and it agrees with what the apostles saw.

"To which you do well taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place." This world is a dark place. Scripture is a lamp (Psalm 119:105). It does not light up everything at once, but it shows us where to step. We are to pay attention to it "until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." The morning star is the bright star that appears just before dawn. Jesus calls Himself "the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16). When He comes, the night will be over, and we will no longer need a lamp.

Old Testament links: Psalm 119:105 (alluded to)

1:20 *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation;*

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation." This verse is often misunderstood. Some read it to mean that individual believers cannot read and understand the Bible for themselves. That is not Peter's point. Others read it to mean that no one should twist Scripture to fit his own ideas, which is true, and Peter will warn about that in 3:16.

But the next verse shows what Peter mainly means. He is talking about where prophecy came from. The word translated "interpretation" can mean an explanation or unloosing. No prophet sat down and came up with his own explanation of things and called it God's Word. Prophecy did not start with the prophet's own ideas. It came from God.

1:21 *for prophecy was never borne by **the** will of man, but being borne by **the** Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke.*

"For prophecy was never borne by the will of man." The prophets did not decide one day to write Scripture. It did not begin with them.

"But being borne by the Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke." The word borne is the same word used in Acts 27:15, 17 for a ship carried along by the wind. The Holy Spirit moved the prophets along like wind filling a ship's sails. They were real men who used their own words, personalities, and styles. Isaiah does not sound like Jeremiah. But the Spirit carried them along so that what they wrote was exactly what God wanted written.

This is what we mean when we say Scripture is inspired. Paul says all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). Peter tells us how God did it. That is why we can trust the Bible completely. It is not man's opinion about God. It is God's Word through men. When false teachers come with clever stories, we have a lamp that never fails.

Old Testament links: 2 Samuel 23:2 (alluded to)

Summary

Peter greets believers who share a faith as precious as the apostles', given through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, and through His great promises we share in His nature and escape the world's corruption. So believers are to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Those who grow this way are fruitful, confirm their calling and election, and will receive a rich welcome into Christ's eternal kingdom. Knowing his death is near, as Jesus told him, Peter writes to remind them of these truths. The apostles did not follow clever myths but were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty on the holy mountain, where they heard the Father's voice. We also have the prophetic word made more sure, a lamp in a dark place until the morning star rises. No prophecy came from the prophet's own will. Holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Study Questions

1. What does Peter call Jesus in 1:1, and why is that important?

2. According to 1:3, what has God's divine power given us?

3. What does it mean to be "partakers of the divine nature," and what does it not mean? (1:4)

4. List the qualities Peter tells us to add to our faith. (1:5-7)

5. What happens to a believer who lacks these qualities? (1:9)

6. What does it mean to "make your calling and election sure"? (1:10)

7. What did Peter see and hear on the holy mountain? (1:16-18)

8. How did the prophets write Scripture, according to 1:20-21?

9. Which quality in 1:5-7 is God working on in your life right now?

10. How much time do you spend in God's Word each week? What could you do to give it more attention as a lamp for your path? (1:19)

2 Peter 2: False Teachers and Their End

Scripture

2:1-11 But there were also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in heresies of destruction, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their ***ways of*** destruction, because of whom the way of the truth will be blasphemed. And in covetousness they will exploit you with fabricated words; for whom the judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare angels who sinned, but having cast ***them*** into Tartarus, delivered ***them*** to chains of gloom, having been reserved for judgment; and did not spare ***the*** ancient world, but preserved Noah, ***the*** eighth ***person***, a herald of righteousness, having brought a flood on ***the*** world of ***the*** ungodly; and having reduced ***the*** cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, He condemned ***them*** with an overthrow, having set ***them as*** an example to those about to live ungodly; and rescued righteous Lot, being distressed by the conduct of the lawless in sensuality (for by seeing and hearing, that righteous ***man***, dwelling among them, day after day tormented ***his*** righteous soul with ***their*** lawless works), ***the*** Lord knows ***how*** to rescue ***the*** godly out of trials, and to keep ***the*** unrighteous for ***the*** day of judgment, being punished, and especially those who walk after ***the*** flesh in ***the*** lust of defilement and despise lordship. Bold, self-willed, they do not tremble, blaspheming glorious ones, whereas angels, being greater in strength and power, do not bring a blasphemous judgment against them before ***the*** Lord.

2:12-22 But these, like irrational animals, natural ***creatures*** born for capture and corruption, blaspheming in ***things*** of which they are ignorant, will utterly perish in their corruption, being about to receive ***the*** wage of unrighteousness, considering the self-indulgence in ***the*** daytime ***as*** a pleasure, blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions while feasting with you, having eyes full of an adulteress and unceasing from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in covetousness, children of a curse; having forsaken the straight way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the ***son*** of Beor, who loved ***the*** wage of unrighteousness, but he had a rebuke for ***his*** own lawbreaking: a mute donkey, having spoken with a man's voice, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, clouds driven by a storm, for whom the gloom of the darkness has been reserved forever. For speaking arrogant ***words*** of futility, they entice by ***the*** lusts of the flesh, by sensualities, those who truly escaped from those who live in error, promising them freedom, themselves being slaves of corruption; for by what anyone has been overcome, by this also he has been enslaved. For if, having escaped the defilements of the world through ***the*** full knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and having been entangled again in these, they are overcome, the last ***state*** has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have fully known the way of righteousness, than having fully known ***it***, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But the ***thing*** of the true proverb has happened to them: "A dog having returned to its own vomit," and, "A sow having washed, to wallowing in ***the*** mire."

Preview

Peter has just said that true prophecy came from God through holy men carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now he warns that just as there were false prophets in Israel, there will be false teachers in the church. They will slip in destructive heresies, deny the Master who bought them, and lead many into sensual living. They will use fake words to exploit believers for money. But their judgment is not asleep. Peter proves it from history. God did not spare the angels who sinned, the ancient world in Noah's day, or the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet He rescued Noah and Lot. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly and keep the unrighteous for the day of judgment.

In the second half, Peter describes the false teachers in strong words. They are like brute animals, blots at the church's love feasts, with eyes full of adultery and hearts trained in greed. They have followed the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of wickedness. They are springs without water and clouds driven by a storm. They promise freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption. Peter ends with a sober warning: if people escape the world's filth through knowing Christ and then go back to it, they are worse off than before, like a dog returning to its vomit.

Study

2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in heresies of destruction, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction.*

"But there were also false prophets among the people." The people means Israel. The Old Testament is full of false prophets who told people what they wanted to hear (Jeremiah 23:16-17; Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Peter says, "as also among you there will be false teachers." The church is not safe from this danger. False teachers will come from inside.

They "will secretly bring in heresies of destruction." A heresy is a teaching that departs from the core truth of the faith and divides people from it. These teachers do not announce themselves. They slip their ideas in quietly, mixed with some truth.

Worst of all, they are "denying the Master who bought them." Bible teachers read this phrase in different ways. Some believe it shows that Christ's death paid for all people, even those who finally reject Him. Others believe Peter is speaking of these teachers as they claimed to be, people who said Christ had bought them, or of Christ as the Master who owns all people by right. Either way, they deny the Lord with their teaching and their lives, and they bring "swift destruction" on themselves.

2:2 *And many will follow their **ways of** destruction, because of whom the way of the truth will be blasphemed.*

"And many will follow their ways of destruction." This is a sad truth. False teachers do not attract a few. They attract many. Jesus warned that many false prophets would rise and lead many astray (Matthew 24:11). Error often spreads faster than truth, especially when it allows people to live as they please.

And the result: "the way of the truth will be blasphemed." When people who claim to be Christians live immoral lives, unbelievers mock the faith. They see the hypocrisy and say, so that's what Christianity is. The way of the truth is the Christian faith, called "the Way" in Acts (Acts 9:2; 19:9). False teachers hurt the church from the inside and give its name a bad reputation on the outside.

2:3 *And in covetousness they will exploit you with fabricated words; for whom the judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*

"And in covetousness they will exploit you with fabricated words." Covetousness means greed, a hunger for more. Behind the false teaching is a desire for money. Fabricated words means made-up words, like something molded out of plastic. They tell stories and make promises that are not real.

False teachers still do this today. Some promise health and wealth if you send them money. Some invent new revelations that are not in the Bible. Watch out for anyone who seems more interested in your wallet than your soul.

But here is the comfort: "for whom the judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber." God's judgment was declared long ago in Scripture. It may seem slow, but it is wide awake and on its way.

2:4 *For if God did not spare angels who sinned, but having cast **them** into Tartarus, delivered **them** to chains of gloom, having been reserved for judgment;*

Now Peter gives three examples from history to prove that God judges the wicked. The first: "God did not spare angels who sinned." Even the highest created beings were not spared when they rebelled.

He cast them "into Tartarus." In Greek stories, Tartarus was the deepest pit of the underworld, a place of punishment below even Hades. Peter uses the word for a real place where God holds these angels. God "delivered them to chains of gloom, having been reserved for judgment." They are bound, in darkness, waiting for the final judgment.

Who are these angels? Bible teachers have two main views. Some believe they are the "sons of God" of Genesis 6:1-4, angels who left their proper place and sinned with human women before the flood. Jude 6-7 seems to link the angels' sin with the sexual sin of Sodom, and Peter mentions the flood right after this. Others believe they are angels who fell with Satan in his first rebellion, some of whom God has already bound, while others still roam free as demons. Scripture does not settle it for us, and good teachers hold both views.

2:5 *and did not spare **the** ancient world, but preserved Noah, **the** eighth **person**, a herald of righteousness, having brought a flood on **the** world of **the** ungodly;*

The second example: God "did not spare the ancient world." The whole world before the flood was destroyed because of its wickedness (Genesis 6:5-7). Not one ungodly person escaped.

"But preserved Noah, the eighth person, a herald of righteousness." Noah was one of eight people saved, with his wife, his three sons, and their wives (1 Peter 3:20). He was "a herald of righteousness." While he built the ark, he warned the people around him. They did not listen. Now Peter adds something new to his examples. God not only judges the ungodly. He also rescues the godly. Even when the whole world goes the wrong way, God sees and saves the one who walks with Him.

Old Testament links: Genesis 7:23 (alluded to); Genesis 7:13 (alluded to)

2:6 *and having reduced **the** cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, He condemned **them** with an overthrow, having set **them as** an example to those about to live ungodly;*

The third example: God reduced "the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes." These cities near the Dead Sea were destroyed by fire from heaven because of their great wickedness (Genesis 19:24-25). Jude 7 says they gave themselves to sexual immorality, and Ezekiel 16:49-50 adds pride, plenty, and a refusal to help the poor and needy.

God "condemned them with an overthrow." They were completely destroyed. Their ruin was "an example to those about to live ungodly." God wants every generation to look at Sodom and learn. He does not ignore sin forever. The same God who judged them will judge every person who refuses to turn from sin. Jesus Himself pointed to Sodom as a warning of the judgment to come (Luke 17:28-30).

Old Testament links: Genesis 19:24 (alluded to); Genesis 19:28 (alluded to)

2:7-8 *and rescued righteous Lot, being distressed by the conduct of the lawless in sensuality (for by seeing and hearing, that righteous **man**, dwelling among them, day after day tormented **his** righteous soul with **their** lawless works),*

God also "rescued righteous Lot." When we read Genesis 19, Lot does not look very righteous. He chose to live near Sodom for its good land (Genesis 13:10-13). He moved into the city. He offered his own daughters to a mob. He hesitated when the angels told him to flee. Yet Peter calls him righteous three times.

How? Lot believed God, and God counted him righteous, as He does every believer. And Lot was "distressed by the conduct of the lawless in sensuality." Verse 8 says that "day after day" he "tormented his righteous soul" by what he saw and heard. He did not approve of their sin. It hurt him.

That is a warning and a comfort. A warning, because Lot paid a heavy price for living so close to sin. He lost his wife, his home, and much of his family. A comfort, because God rescues His own, even when they have made poor choices. Does the sin around you still bother you, or have you grown used to it?

Old Testament links: Genesis 19:29 (alluded to); Genesis 13:12-13 (alluded to)

2:9 ***the*** *Lord knows* ***how*** *to rescue* ***the*** *godly out of trials, and to keep* ***the*** *unrighteous for* ***the*** *day of judgment, being punished,*

Here is the point of all three examples. "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly out of trials." He rescued Noah from the flood. He rescued Lot from Sodom. He will rescue His people today. The word trials here may mean temptations or times of testing. God knows how to bring His people through.

"And to keep the unrighteous for the day of judgment, being punished." God also knows how to hold the wicked for judgment. The angels are kept in chains. The unrighteous are kept for the day of judgment. Nothing slips past Him.

This pattern of God rescuing His people before He pours out judgment runs through Scripture. Noah was shut in the ark before the rain fell. Lot was brought out of Sodom before the fire fell (Genesis 19:22). Some Bible teachers see in this pattern a picture of God's promise to keep His church from the hour of trial that will come on the whole world (Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). Others say Peter's point here is simply that God knows how to care for His people in every age, and they note that Noah was kept safe through the flood inside the ark. Peter himself does not draw that line. I believe Christ will come for His church before the Tribulation, but that teaching rests on the passages that speak of it directly (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:9), not on this picture.

2:10 *and especially those who walk after* ***the*** *flesh in* ***the*** *lust of defilement and despise lordship. Bold, self-willed, they do not tremble, blaspheming glorious ones,*

Peter now describes the false teachers. "Especially those who walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement." They live for their sinful desires, especially sexual sin. Their teaching gives them permission to sin.

They "despise lordship." They reject authority, whether the authority of Christ, of Scripture, or of church leaders. They want no one telling them what to do.

"Bold, self-willed, they do not tremble, blaspheming glorious ones." The glorious ones are most likely angelic beings, possibly even fallen angels. These false teachers mock spiritual powers they do not understand. They talk big about the devil and the spiritual world, as if they were in control, but they have no idea what they are dealing with.

2:11 *whereas angels, being greater in strength and power, do not bring a blasphemous judgment against them before* ***the*** *Lord.*

"Whereas angels, being greater in strength and power, do not bring a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord." Even the holy angels, far more powerful than any man, do not speak this way. They leave judgment to God.

Jude gives an example. Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare bring a slanderous charge against him, but said, "May the Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9). If the mightiest angel would not mock the devil, who are these men to do it? Believers

have real authority in Christ to resist the devil (James 4:7). But we do it humbly, in the Lord's name, not with arrogant words. Pride in spiritual things is a dangerous sign.

2:12 *But these, like irrational animals, natural **creatures** born for capture and corruption, blaspheming in **things** of which they are ignorant, will utterly perish in their corruption,*

"But these, like irrational animals, natural creatures born for capture and corruption." Peter compares the false teachers to wild animals that act only on instinct. They do not think. They just follow their appetites. And like animals caught in a hunter's trap, they will be caught and destroyed.

They are "blaspheming in things of which they are ignorant." They claim special knowledge, but they are ignorant of the very things they mock. And they "will utterly perish in their corruption." The sin they love will be the thing that destroys them. What they sow, they will reap (Galatians 6:7-8).

2:13 *being about to receive **the** wage of unrighteousness, considering the self-indulgence in **the** daytime **as** a pleasure, blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions while feasting with you,*

"Being about to receive the wage of unrighteousness." They will be paid in full for the wrong they have done. Sin always pays its wages (Romans 6:23).

They consider "the self-indulgence in the daytime as a pleasure." Even the pagan world thought it shameful to party in broad daylight. These men do not care who sees them. They are "blots and blemishes," like stains on a clean garment. Christ wants His church to be without spot or blemish (Ephesians 5:27). These men are the spots.

They are "reveling in their deceptions while feasting with you." The early church shared meals together, often with the Lord's Supper. Jude calls them love feasts (Jude 12). False teachers sat at those tables, eating with believers while deceiving them. That makes their sin even worse.

2:14 *having eyes full of an adulteress and unceasing from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in covetousness, children of a curse;*

"Having eyes full of an adulteress." They cannot look at a woman without lust. Jesus said that looking at a woman with lust is adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28). These men live there. They are "unceasing from sin." They never stop.

They are "enticing unstable souls." The word enticing comes from fishing, baiting a hook to catch a fish. They target new believers and those who are not grounded in the Word. That is why Peter keeps urging believers to grow (1:5-8; 3:17-18).

They have "a heart trained in covetousness." The word trained is where we get our word gymnasium. They have exercised their greed until it is strong. Peter sums them up as "children of a curse." They are under God's curse, not His blessing.

2:15 *having forsaken the straight way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the* ***son*** *of Beor, who loved* ***the*** *wage of unrighteousness,*

"Having forsaken the straight way, they went astray." They once knew the right path, or at least claimed to. Now they have wandered off.

They have "followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wage of unrighteousness." Balaam was a prophet in the days of Moses. Balak, king of Moab, offered him money to curse Israel (Numbers 22-24). God would not let him curse them, so Balaam blessed them instead. But Balaam still wanted the money. Later he taught Balak how to lead Israel into idolatry and sexual sin (Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14). Balaam was a man who knew about God but loved money more. That is the way of the false teachers. They use spiritual things to get rich.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 23:4 (alluded to); Numbers 22:7 (alluded to)

2:16 *but he had a rebuke for his own lawbreaking: a mute donkey, having spoken with a man's voice, restrained the madness of the prophet.*

"But he had a rebuke for his own lawbreaking: a mute donkey, having spoken with a man's voice, restrained the madness of the prophet." This is one of the most unusual stories in the Bible (Numbers 22:21-35). Balaam was riding his donkey to meet Balak. An angel stood in the road with a sword. The donkey saw the angel and stopped, and Balaam beat her. Then God opened the donkey's mouth, and she spoke to him.

Peter's point is sharp. A donkey that could not even talk had more spiritual sense than the prophet. The donkey saw what Balaam could not see. False teachers who claim great spiritual insight are blinder than a donkey. We should take this story plainly, as Peter does. God can speak through whatever He chooses.

Old Testament links: Numbers 22:28 (alluded to); Numbers 22:30 (alluded to)

2:17 *These are springs without water, clouds driven by a storm, for whom the gloom of the darkness has been reserved forever.*

"These are springs without water." In a dry land, a traveler would search for a spring. Finding one empty could mean death. False teachers promise refreshment, but they have nothing to give. They are "clouds driven by a storm." A farmer sees clouds and hopes for rain, but the wind drives them away before a drop falls.

Both pictures say the same thing. False teachers promise much and deliver nothing. They leave people thirstier than before. Many Greek copies read mists in place of clouds. Either way, their end is sure: "for whom the gloom of the darkness has been reserved forever." The same gloom that holds the fallen angels (2:4) waits for them.

2:18 *For speaking arrogant **words** of futility, they entice by **the** lusts of the flesh, by sensualities, those who truly escaped from those who live in error,*

"For speaking arrogant words of futility." Their words sound impressive, but they are empty. They are full of big talk with nothing inside.

"They entice by the lusts of the flesh, by sensualities." They bait their hook with sinful pleasure. Their message is attractive because it lets people sin without guilt. And they target "those who truly escaped from those who live in error." Many Greek copies read those who are barely escaping. Either way, the targets are people who have recently turned from the pagan life and are still finding their footing. The false teachers try to lure them back into the very life they had just left. New believers need to be protected and taught well.

2:19 *promising them freedom, themselves being slaves of corruption; for by what anyone has been overcome, by this also he has been enslaved.*

"Promising them freedom, themselves being slaves of corruption." This is the great lie of the false teachers. They say, you are free in Christ, so you can do what you want. But they themselves are slaves to their own lusts. They cannot give what they do not have.

"For by what anyone has been overcome, by this also he has been enslaved." Whatever controls you is your master. A man who cannot stop drinking is a slave to alcohol. A man who cannot stop looking at pornography is a slave to lust. Jesus said everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin, but the Son sets us free (John 8:34-36). True freedom is not freedom to sin. It is freedom from sin.

2:20 *For if, having escaped the defilements of the world through **the** full knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and having been entangled again in these, they are overcome, the last **state** has become worse for them than the first.*

"For if, having escaped the defilements of the world through the full knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and having been entangled again in these, they are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first." These are some of the most serious words in the New Testament.

Who is Peter talking about? Bible teachers disagree. Some believe these are true believers who turn away from Christ and lose their salvation. Others believe they are true believers who fall into sin and lose their fellowship with God and their rewards, but not their salvation, and who may face God's discipline. Others believe they were never truly born again. They heard the gospel, cleaned up their lives for a time, and even joined the church, but their hearts were never changed. Jesus spoke of an unclean spirit that leaves a man and returns with seven others, so that the last state of that man is worse than the first (Matthew 12:43-45).

I leave the question of whether a true believer can lose salvation open here, as in my other studies. What Peter makes plain is that turning back after knowing the truth is a terrible thing.

2:21 *For it would have been better for them not to have fully known the way of righteousness, than having fully known **it**, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.*

"For it would have been better for them not to have fully known the way of righteousness." This is a strong statement. It would have been better never to have heard the gospel than to hear it, understand it, and turn away.

Why? Because knowledge brings responsibility. Jesus said that the servant who knew his master's will and did not do it will receive a heavier punishment (Luke 12:47-48). The people of Sodom never heard what these people heard. Their judgment will be lighter than the judgment of those who knew "the holy commandment delivered to them" and turned from it (Matthew 11:23-24). The holy commandment is the whole teaching of Christ, handed down by the apostles. To know it and walk away is to reject the clearest light God gives.

2:22 *But the **thing** of the true proverb has happened to them: "A dog having returned to its own vomit," and, "A sow having washed, to wallowing in **the** mire."*

Peter ends with two proverbs. The first draws on Proverbs 26:11: "A dog having returned to its own vomit." The second was a common saying of the day: "A sow having washed, to wallowing in the mire." In Peter's world, dogs and pigs were seen as unclean animals.

The dog got rid of what was making it sick, then went back to eat it. The pig was washed clean, then went straight back into the mud. Neither animal changed its nature. Many Bible teachers see this as support for the view that these people were never truly changed on the inside. A washed pig is still a pig. Others see it simply as a vivid picture of the shame of going back. Either way, the lesson for us is clear. Do not go back to the filth God has rescued you from. And if you have drifted, the door of repentance is still open (1 John 1:9).

Old Testament links: Proverbs 26:11 (quoted)

Summary

Peter warns that just as false prophets arose in Israel, false teachers will arise in the church. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, deny the Master who bought them, lead many into sensuality, and exploit believers with made-up words for money. But their judgment is not asleep. God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them into Tartarus. He did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah. He turned Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, but rescued righteous Lot. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly and keep the unrighteous for judgment. The false teachers despise authority, mock spiritual powers they do not understand, and live like brute animals, with eyes full of adultery and hearts trained in greed. They follow the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of wickedness. They are springs without water, promising freedom while they are slaves of corruption. Those who escape the world's defilements through knowing Christ and then return to them are worse off than before, like a dog returning to its vomit and a washed pig returning to the mud.

There are sins God rescued me from that still tempt me to go back. Lust is one of them. 2 Peter 2 is blunt about going back to what we were freed from. Guarding against it means staying close to God and not trusting my own strength.

Study Questions

1. Where does Peter say false teachers will come from, and how will they bring in their teaching? (2:1)

2. What motive drives the false teachers, according to 2:3 and 2:14-15?

3. What three examples of God's judgment does Peter give, and what two people did God rescue? (2:4-8)

4. What does 2:9 teach us about how God treats the godly and the unrighteous?

5. How did Lot respond to the sin around him, and what did living near Sodom cost him? (2:7-8)

6. What does the story of Balaam teach about loving money? (2:15-16)

7. What do the pictures of waterless springs and storm-driven clouds tell us about false teachers? (2:17)

8. What is the difference between the freedom false teachers promise and the freedom Christ gives? (2:19)

9. How can you tell whether a teacher you listen to, in person or online, is teaching the truth?

10. Is there a sin God rescued you from that still tempts you to go back? What can you do to guard against it? (2:20-22)

2 Peter 3: The Day of the Lord Will Come

Scripture

3:1-10 This ***is*** now, beloved, a second letter I am writing to you, in which I stir up your pure mind by a reminder, to remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets, and the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first, that in the last of the days scoffers will come, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For from ***the time*** the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from ***the*** beginning of creation." For this is hidden from them willingly, that ***the*** heavens existed long ago, and ***the*** earth, having been formed out of water and through water by the word of God, through which the world at that time, having been flooded with water, perished. But the present heavens and the earth, by the same word, have been stored up for fire, being kept for ***the*** day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one thing be hidden from you, beloved, that one day with ***the*** Lord ***is*** like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow concerning the promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in ***the*** night, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and ***the*** elements, burning with heat, will be dissolved, and ***the*** earth and the works in it will be burned up.

3:11-18 Then, all these things being dissolved, what sort ***of people*** ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which ***the*** heavens, being set on fire, will be dissolved, and ***the*** elements, burning with heat, melt? But according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking for these things, be diligent to be found by Him without blot and without blemish, in peace; and consider the patience of our Lord ***to be*** salvation, as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all the letters, speaking in them concerning these things, among which are some things hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable distort, as also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing ***this*** beforehand, guard yourselves so that you do not, having been led away with the error of the lawless, fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and in ***the*** knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him ***be*** the glory both now and to ***the*** day of eternity. Amen.

Preview

Peter tells his readers that this is his second letter, written to stir up their minds by reminding them of the words of the prophets and the commandment of the Lord given through the apostles. He warns that in the last days scoffers will come, living for their own lusts and mocking the promise of Christ's coming. Nothing ever changes, they say. Peter answers that they choose to forget that God made the world by His word and destroyed it once by water, and by the same word the present heavens and earth are kept for fire on the day of judgment. God does not count time as we do. With Him one day is like a thousand years. He is not slow about His promise. He is patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

In the second half, Peter asks what kind of people we ought to be, since all these things will be dissolved. We are to live holy and godly lives, looking for the day of God and waiting for the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells. We should count the Lord's patience as salvation, just as Paul wrote in his letters, which some twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. Peter's last words are a warning and a call: guard yourselves so you are not carried away by error, and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Study

3:1 *This **is** now, beloved, a second letter I am writing to you, in which I stir up your pure mind by a reminder,*

"This is now, beloved, a second letter I am writing to you." Most Bible teachers believe the first letter is 1 Peter. If so, these are the same believers in Asia Minor. Peter calls them "beloved" four times in this chapter (3:1, 8, 14, 17). After the hard words of chapter 2, he wants them to know how much he cares for them.

In both letters, his purpose is the same: "I stir up your pure mind by a reminder." Pure mind means a sincere, clear way of thinking, not mixed with error. These believers were not false teachers. They had a sound mind. But even sound minds need to be stirred up and reminded. That is why we keep coming back to God's Word, even when we think we know it.

3:2 *to remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets, and the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,*

"To remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets." The Old Testament prophets spoke often about the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord (Isaiah 13:9-11; Joel 2:1-2; Zechariah 14:1-9). And "the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior." The apostles passed on what Jesus taught.

Notice that Peter puts the apostles' teaching right beside the Old Testament prophets. Both carry God's authority. The prophets looked ahead to Christ. The apostles taught what Christ said and did. Together they make up the foundation the church is built on (Ephesians 2:20). When false teachers come with new ideas, we test them by what the prophets and apostles wrote. That is our Bible today.

3:3 *knowing this first, that in the last of the days scoffers will come, walking according to their own lusts,*

"Knowing this first, that in the last of the days scoffers will come." The last days began with Christ's first coming (Hebrews 1:2) and will run until He comes again. Scoffers are mockers, people who laugh at God's truth. Jude 18 gives a very similar warning, recalling what the apostles said ahead of time.

Notice what drives them: "walking according to their own lusts." Their problem is not really with the evidence. It is with their desires. If Jesus is coming back to judge, they will have to answer for

how they live. It is easier to mock His coming than to change. Many people reject the Bible not because they have studied it and found it false, but because they do not want to give up their sin.

3:4 *and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For from **the time** the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from **the** beginning of creation."*

Here is what the scoffers say: "Where is the promise of His coming?" They mean, Jesus said He would come back. Where is He? It has been years.

"For from the time the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from the beginning of creation." The fathers may mean the Old Testament fathers, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or it may mean the first generation of believers who had died. Either way, the argument is the same. Nothing changes. The sun rises and sets. People are born and die. The world keeps going. God has never stepped in, they say, and He never will.

This is the same argument many people make today. They believe the world runs only by natural laws and that God, if He exists, does not get involved. Peter is about to show them they are wrong.

3:5 *For this is hidden from them willingly, that **the** heavens existed long ago, and **the** earth, having been formed out of water and through water by the word of God,*

"For this is hidden from them willingly." The scoffers do not forget by accident. They choose to ignore the facts. What facts? "That the heavens existed long ago, and the earth, having been formed out of water and through water by the word of God."

God made the world by His word. He spoke, and it was (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6, 9; Hebrews 11:3). In Genesis 1, God separated the waters and made dry land appear out of the water (Genesis 1:6-10). The world did not come about by itself. It came by God's command. And if God made it all by His word, He can step into it whenever He chooses. The scoffers' claim that nothing ever changes ignores the biggest change of all: creation itself.

Old Testament links: Genesis 1:1 (alluded to); Genesis 1:9 (alluded to); Psalm 33:6 (alluded to)

3:6 *through which the world at that time, having been flooded with water, perished.*

"Through which the world at that time, having been flooded with water, perished." Here is the second fact the scoffers ignore. God has already judged the world once. In Noah's day, the same water God used to form the earth became the means of destroying it (Genesis 7:11-12, 21-23).

The scoffers say all things continue as they have from the beginning. But they did not. The flood broke into history and changed the whole world. Jesus said the days before His coming would be like the days of Noah, when people went on with their lives and did not understand until the flood came and took them all away (Matthew 24:37-39). The flood is God's proof that He does judge, and that His judgment can come suddenly on a world that thinks it is safe.

Old Testament links: Genesis 7:19 (alluded to); Genesis 7:11 (alluded to)

3:7 *But the present heavens and the earth, by the same word, have been stored up for fire, being kept for **the** day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

"But the present heavens and the earth, by the same word, have been stored up for fire." The same word that created the world and brought the flood is now holding this world for a different judgment. The first judgment was by water. The next will be by fire. God promised never again to destroy the earth with a flood (Genesis 9:11). He never promised it would not be judged by fire.

The heavens and earth are "being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." God is not slow or forgetful. He is keeping this world for a set day. On that day, the ungodly will be judged. That is why the scoffers' mocking is so dangerous. They are laughing at the very judgment that is waiting for them.

3:8 *But do not let this one thing be hidden from you, beloved, that one day with **the** Lord **is** like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*

"But do not let this one thing be hidden from you, beloved." The scoffers chose to forget. Peter does not want believers to forget this: "that one day with the Lord is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day."

Peter is echoing Psalm 90:4. God does not experience time the way we do. He is eternal. A thousand years to Him are like a day that has passed. To us, two thousand years since Jesus rose seems like a very long time. To God, it is like a couple of days.

This verse is not a secret formula for dating the end of the world. Some have tried to use it to set dates, and they have always been wrong. Jesus said no one knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36). The point is simple. God is not on our clock. What looks like delay to us is not delay to Him.

Old Testament links: Psalm 90:4 (alluded to)

3:9 *The Lord is not slow concerning the promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance.*

"The Lord is not slow concerning the promise, as some consider slowness." The scoffers called it slowness. Peter calls it something else: God "is patient toward us." God is not late. He is waiting on purpose.

Why? "Not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance." Every day that Jesus does not come is another day for people to repent and be saved. Repentance means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction, turning from sin to God.

Bible teachers read "any" and "all" in different ways. Many believe it means God sincerely desires every person to be saved, as 1 Timothy 2:4 and Ezekiel 33:11 also teach. Others believe "us" in this verse means believers, the elect, and that Peter is saying God is waiting until every one of His chosen people has come to faith. Both views agree that God is patient for the sake of salvation, and that no one who comes to Him will be turned away (John 6:37).

If you have not yet turned to Christ, His patience is for you. But patience has an end. Do not mistake God's waiting for God's approval.

3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in **the** night, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and **the** elements, burning with heat, will be dissolved, and **the** earth and the works in it will be burned up.*

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." A thief does not send a warning before he comes. The day of the Lord will come suddenly on a world that is not ready. Jesus used the same picture (Matthew 24:43), and so did Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4).

What is the day of the Lord? In the Old Testament, it is the time when God steps into history to judge His enemies and set up His rule (Isaiah 2:12; Joel 2:31; Zephaniah 1:14-18). In the pre-tribulation view this study follows, as my other studies do, the day of the Lord in its future sense is a long period, not one twenty-four hour day. Christ will first come for His church, catching up believers to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Then the day of the Lord will begin with the seven-year Tribulation, coming like a thief on an unbelieving world. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will return visibly to the earth (Revelation 19:11-16) and reign for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6). The events Peter describes next come at the end of that whole period, after the thousand years, when the present heavens and earth flee away and God makes all things new (Revelation 20:11; 21:1).

"In which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements, burning with heat, will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be burned up." Elements may mean the basic building blocks of the physical world, or the heavenly bodies. Either way, the whole present creation will be undone. Many Greek copies read that the earth and its works will be found, or laid bare, in place of burned up, meaning that everything will be exposed before God. Either way, nothing will be hidden.

Other Bible teachers see this differently. Many who do not hold to a future thousand-year reign on earth believe Christ's return, the final judgment, and the new heavens and earth all happen at once, on one great day. Some also believe Peter is describing a purifying and renewal of the present creation by fire, not its complete destruction (Romans 8:19-22). Good teachers hold these views, and I give them so you can study them for yourself.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 34:4 (alluded to)

3:11 *Then, all these things being dissolved, what sort **of people** ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

"Then, all these things being dissolved." Peter does not give us this teaching to scare us or to satisfy our curiosity. He gives it to change how we live. Everything in this world, our houses, our money, our cars, our stuff, will one day be dissolved. None of it will last.

So he asks the question every believer should ask: "What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" If this world is passing away, why would we live for it? Holy conduct means a life set apart from sin. Godliness means a life lived with God in view. The best way to

prepare for the end of the world is to live for the One who will be there when it ends. What are you investing in that will last?

3:12 *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which **the** heavens, being set on fire, will be dissolved, and **the** elements, burning with heat, melt?*

"Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." Believers are to be looking for it, living in expectation. And Peter says we can be "hastening" it. How can we hurry the day of God?

Bible teachers suggest a few ways. Some point to prayer. Jesus taught us to pray, Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10). Some point to the spread of the gospel. Since God is waiting for people to repent (3:9), every person who comes to Christ brings that day closer (Matthew 24:14). Some point to holy living, which Peter has just named. Others take hastening to mean eagerly desiring. All these fit the context.

"Because of which the heavens, being set on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements, burning with heat, melt." Peter repeats what he said in verse 10. He wants it to sink in. Isaiah spoke of the heavens being rolled up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4). This is God's final word on the old creation.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 34:4 (alluded to)

3:13 *But according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

"But according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." The scoffers asked, "Where is the promise?" (3:4). Here it is. God promised through Isaiah that He would create new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). John saw it in his vision (Revelation 21:1-5).

The best part is this: in that new creation, "righteousness dwells." The word dwells means to settle down and be at home. In this world, righteousness is a stranger, and believers are exiles (1 Peter 1:1). In the new heavens and new earth, righteousness will be at home, and so will we. There will be no more sin, no more death, no more tears, no more false teachers. God Himself will live with His people forever. That is the hope that should shape how we live now.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 65:17 (alluded to); Isaiah 66:22 (alluded to)

3:14 *Therefore, beloved, looking for these things, be diligent to be found by Him without blot and without blemish, in peace;*

"Therefore, beloved, looking for these things, be diligent to be found by Him without blot and without blemish, in peace." Peter uses the same words he used for the false teachers, but in reverse. They were "blots and blemishes" (2:13). Believers are to be found "without blot and without blemish." Christ is described the same way in 1 Peter 1:19, the Lamb without blemish and without spot.

"Be diligent." Our salvation is a gift, but living a holy life takes effort. And we want to be found "in peace," at peace with God and with others, not anxious or ashamed when He comes. John says the

same: everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3). Looking for Jesus should make us look more like Him.

3:15 *and consider the patience of our Lord **to be** salvation, as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,*

"And consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation." The scoffers saw God's patience as proof He was not coming. Peter says to see it as salvation. Every day of delay is a day of grace. Think of your own story. If Jesus had come back the day before you believed, where would you be? His patience saved you.

"As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you." Peter and Paul had their disagreements. Paul once corrected Peter to his face in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14). But here Peter calls him "our beloved brother." There was no lasting grudge. Peter also says Paul wrote "according to the wisdom given to him," given by God. Paul taught about the patience of God and His coming in many places (Romans 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). Peter and Paul preached the same gospel.

3:16 *as also in all the letters, speaking in them concerning these things, among which are some things hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable distort, as also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

"As also in all the letters, speaking in them concerning these things." Peter knew about Paul's letters, and he knew they were being read in the churches. Then he admits something that should encourage every Bible student: "among which are some things hard to understand." Even the apostle Peter found some of Paul's writing hard! If you struggle with parts of Romans, you are in good company.

"Which the ignorant and unstable distort." The false teachers were twisting Paul's words. Paul taught that we are saved by grace, not by works. They twisted that to mean we can sin all we want (Romans 6:1-2). The word distort was used for torturing someone on a rack, stretching them out of shape.

Then Peter says they do this "as also the other Scriptures." Peter puts Paul's letters in the same class as the Old Testament Scriptures. This is one of the clearest places where the New Testament itself recognizes other New Testament writings as Scripture (see also 1 Timothy 5:18, which quotes Luke 10:7 as Scripture). Twisting Scripture is not a small thing. It leads "to their own destruction."

3:17 *You therefore, beloved, knowing **this** beforehand, guard yourselves so that you do not, having been led away with the error of the lawless, fall from your own steadfastness,*

"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand." Peter has warned them ahead of time. Now they know what is coming. Forewarned is forearmed. "Guard yourselves so that you do not, having been led away with the error of the lawless, fall from your own steadfastness."

Steadfastness means standing firm, being stable, not easily moved. The false teachers enticed "unstable souls" (2:14). Peter wants his readers to be the opposite. "Led away" pictures being carried off by a current, like a swimmer pulled out by the tide. Believers can be pulled away from their firm footing by error. This is not necessarily about losing salvation. It is about losing our stability, our joy, and our usefulness to God. Who are you listening to? What are you reading? Guard yourself.

3:18 *but grow in grace and in **the** knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him **be** the glory both now and to **the** day of eternity. Amen.*

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The best protection against error is not just knowing what is false. It is growing in what is true. A healthy, growing tree is hard to uproot.

Grow in grace. Keep receiving God's undeserved favor, and keep showing it to others. Grow in knowledge, the personal knowledge of Jesus Peter has stressed through this whole letter (1:2-3, 8). The Christian life is never finished growing.

"To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." Peter's last recorded words in Scripture are praise to Jesus. The man who once denied Him now gives Him glory forever. He calls it "the day of eternity," a day that will never end. When Christ makes all things new, there will be no more night. That is where history is going. That is where we are going.

Summary

Peter writes his second letter to stir up believers' minds by reminding them of the words of the prophets and the commandment of the Lord through the apostles. He warns that scoffers will come in the last days, living for their lusts and mocking the promise of Christ's coming, saying that nothing ever changes. But they choose to forget that God made the world by His word and judged it once by water, and that by the same word the present heavens and earth are kept for fire on the day of judgment. With the Lord one day is like a thousand years. He is not slow but patient, not wishing any to perish but all to come to repentance. The day of the Lord will come like a thief, beginning with judgment on an unbelieving world and ending with the heavens and earth dissolved by fire. Because of this, believers should live holy and godly lives, looking for the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells, and be found without blot or blemish, in peace. They should count the Lord's patience as salvation, as Paul also wrote in letters that some twist, as they do the other Scriptures. Peter closes by telling believers to guard against error and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever.

Study Questions

1. Why did Peter write this second letter, according to 3:1-2?

2. What do the scoffers say, and what really drives their mocking? (3:3-4)

3. What two facts do the scoffers choose to forget? (3:5-6)

4. What does Peter mean when he says one day with the Lord is like a thousand years? (3:8)

5. Why has the Lord not yet returned, according to 3:9?

6. How does Peter describe the day of the Lord, and how does it fit with the rest of Scripture's teaching on the end times? (3:10-12)

7. What does Peter say about Paul's letters, and what does that tell us about them? (3:15-16)

8. What two things does Peter tell us to do in his last words? (3:17-18)

9. If everything in this world will one day be dissolved, how should that change the way you spend your time and money? (3:11)

10. Who do you know who still needs to come to repentance? How could God's patience toward them move you to pray and speak to them this week? (3:9)

Conclusion

1 and 2 Peter are two short letters from the same man, written a few years apart, but they speak to two different dangers. In the first letter, the danger came from outside. Believers were slandered, mistreated by masters and husbands, and mocked by old friends, and a fiery trial was on the way. Peter did not promise them that the trouble would end. He reminded them who they were: chosen by the Father, set apart by the Spirit, cleansed by the blood of Jesus, born again to a living hope, living stones in God's house, and a royal priesthood. Then he showed them how to suffer well, by doing good, by submitting for the Lord's sake, by blessing those who insulted them, and by following the steps of Christ, who suffered for us and left us an example.

In the second letter, the danger came from inside. False teachers were twisting the truth, living for their lusts, and mocking the promise of Christ's return. Peter answered them by calling believers to grow in their faith, by pointing them to the eyewitness testimony of the apostles and the sure word of Scripture, and by reminding them that God knows how to rescue the godly and judge the ungodly. The Lord is not slow. He is patient. And the day of the Lord will come.

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. When we do that with these letters, we find that Peter's answer to both dangers is the same: keep your eyes on Jesus and on what is coming. Suffering is real, but it lasts "a little while" (1 Peter 1:6). False teaching is real, but the word of the Lord abides forever. I believe the Scriptures teach that Christ will come for His church before the seven-year Tribulation, that the day of the Lord will then come on an unbelieving world, that Christ will return visibly at its end and reign for a thousand years, and that after that God will make new heavens and a new earth. Good Bible teachers see some of these things differently, and I have tried to give their views fairly. But all who belong to Jesus share the same hope: "according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Peter's message is the same for us today as it was for the believers scattered across Asia Minor. Christ "Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that, having died to sins, we might live to righteousness; by whose wound you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). "The Lord is not slow concerning the promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of

my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and serve as part of the body of Christ (1 Peter 2:2-5).

Old and New Testament Links in 1 and 2 Peter

This table lists every Old and New Testament link printed in this study, in verse order. I took the links from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with help from the OpenBible.info cross-references, and I checked each one by reading both passages in the Steadfast Literal Bible. Where I was not sure of a link, I left it out.

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
1 Peter 1:2	Exodus 24:8	alluded to
1 Peter 1:15-16	Leviticus 11:44-45	quoted
1 Peter 1:15-16	Leviticus 19:2	quoted
1 Peter 1:15-16	Leviticus 20:26	quoted
1 Peter 1:18-19	Exodus 12:5	alluded to
1 Peter 1:18-19	Isaiah 52:3	alluded to
1 Peter 1:24-25	Isaiah 40:6-8	quoted
1 Peter 2:3	Psalm 34:8	alluded to
1 Peter 2:4	Psalm 118:22	alluded to
1 Peter 2:6	Isaiah 28:16	quoted
1 Peter 2:7	Psalm 118:22	quoted
1 Peter 2:8	Isaiah 8:14	quoted
1 Peter 2:9	Exodus 19:5-6	alluded to
1 Peter 2:9	Deuteronomy 7:6	alluded to
1 Peter 2:9	Isaiah 43:20-21	alluded to
1 Peter 2:10	Hosea 1:9-10	alluded to
1 Peter 2:10	Hosea 2:23	alluded to
1 Peter 2:17	Proverbs 24:21	alluded to
1 Peter 2:22	Isaiah 53:9	quoted
1 Peter 2:24	Isaiah 53:5	quoted
1 Peter 2:24	Isaiah 53:4	alluded to
1 Peter 2:24	Isaiah 53:11	alluded to
1 Peter 2:25	Isaiah 53:6	alluded to
1 Peter 3:5-6	Genesis 18:12	alluded to
1 Peter 3:10-11	Psalm 34:12-14	quoted
1 Peter 3:12	Psalm 34:15-16	quoted
1 Peter 3:14	Isaiah 8:12	quoted
1 Peter 3:15	Isaiah 8:13	quoted
1 Peter 3:20	Genesis 7:23	alluded to
1 Peter 3:20	Genesis 7:13	alluded to
1 Peter 3:22	Psalm 110:1	alluded to
1 Peter 4:8	Proverbs 10:12	alluded to
1 Peter 4:14	Isaiah 11:2	alluded to
1 Peter 4:17	Ezekiel 9:6	alluded to
1 Peter 4:18	Proverbs 11:31	quoted
1 Peter 5:5	Proverbs 3:34	quoted
1 Peter 5:7	Psalm 55:22	alluded to
2 Peter 1:17	Isaiah 42:1	alluded to
2 Peter 1:19	Psalm 119:105	alluded to
2 Peter 1:21	2 Samuel 23:2	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
2 Peter 2:5	Genesis 7:23	alluded to
2 Peter 2:5	Genesis 7:13	alluded to
2 Peter 2:6	Genesis 19:24	alluded to
2 Peter 2:6	Genesis 19:28	alluded to
2 Peter 2:7-8	Genesis 19:29	alluded to
2 Peter 2:7-8	Genesis 13:12-13	alluded to
2 Peter 2:15	Deuteronomy 23:4	alluded to
2 Peter 2:15	Numbers 22:7	alluded to
2 Peter 2:16	Numbers 22:28	alluded to
2 Peter 2:16	Numbers 22:30	alluded to
2 Peter 2:22	Proverbs 26:11	quoted
2 Peter 3:5	Genesis 1:1	alluded to
2 Peter 3:5	Genesis 1:9	alluded to
2 Peter 3:5	Psalm 33:6	alluded to
2 Peter 3:6	Genesis 7:19	alluded to
2 Peter 3:6	Genesis 7:11	alluded to
2 Peter 3:8	Psalm 90:4	alluded to
2 Peter 3:10	Isaiah 34:4	alluded to
2 Peter 3:12	Isaiah 34:4	alluded to
2 Peter 3:13	Isaiah 65:17	alluded to
2 Peter 3:13	Isaiah 66:22	alluded to

Bibliography

The following sources were consulted for this study. The commentary reflects my own study and convictions, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

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