

James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

Notes and Commentary



2 Peter 1:17-18:17 "For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."

By Jim Wilsford

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1. James 1: Persevering Under Trial

The book of James, by content and tone, seems to follow immediately after the teachings of Christ and closely reflects those teaching in many instances. James, the brother of Jesus, seems to be the author. Therefore, these notes will seek to unify around the teachings where James is either reiterating or elaborating principles taught by Christ in the gospels, most notably in the Gospel of Matthew, which was also written with the Jewish Christians in mind.

1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

James identifies himself as the servant of God and of the Lord. This James is James, the brother of Jesus.

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

Greetings.

The authoritative tone of the letter indicates James, the brother of Jesus, wrote it. This is the same James identified in Matt 13:55-56, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James , Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56 Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" When Peter was reporting his imprisonment in Acts 12:17, he referred to James in a manner that implies one with a leadership position, "17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. 'Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.'"

In Acts 15:13-18, when the controversy surrounding the circumcision of Gentiles came up, James spoke with authority, and the church received him as one with authority to speak:

"Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this." In this same discussion, James defined the group to whom he was later to write this letter:

as it is written:

16 "After this I will return
and rebuild David's fallen tent.

Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,

17 that the remnant of men may seek the Lord,
and all the Gentiles who bear my name,
says the Lord, who does these things'

18 that have been known for ages.

The *twelve tribes scattered among nations* refers to the Jewish Christians composing a part of the remnant, which with the Gentiles, constitutes the church of Christ.

When Paul returned to Jerusalem, he treated James with deference in Acts 21:18-19, "The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James , and all the elders were present. 19 Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry."

Paul referred to James with deference, referring to him, along with Peter and John, as a pillar

of the church in Gal 2:9-10:

9 James , Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the , and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Trials and Temptations

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

These Christian brothers, who suffered many trials, were, perhaps, like the Jewish Christians in Acts 8:1-4:

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

The direct recipients of this letter are Christians from the *twelve tribes scattered among nations*. The Lord had forewarned them of their persecution and trials from the beginning in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:10-12:

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

To persevere and overcome is the object of James' encouragement. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of one kind of lost seed as one who falls away because of trouble and persecution Matt 13:21: "21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away."

One Who Asks for Wisdom

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

The wisdom spoken of here is the wisdom to know right and to do right. In Matt 11:16-19, Jesus taught this kind of wisdom:

16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

17 "'We played the flute for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' But wisdom is proved right by her actions."

Luke 1:17 speaks of John the Baptist's wisdom as the wisdom of the righteous: "17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Such wisdom was characteristic of the Lord from his early youth. Luke 2:51-52 teaches, "52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

The power of this wisdom will overcome adversaries according to Luke 21:15, "For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict." God gives us the treasures of wisdom and knowledge according to Col 2:2-4:

"2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The wisdom and philosophies of the world can never help us. Paul wrote in Col 2:8, "8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." In 1 Cor 1:20-21, Paul contrasted the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the Father:

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

No Differences between Those of High and Low Position

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10 But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

Christians are not to be high and mighty; but neither should those Christians of low esteem and poor estate self-righteously condemn those of high position. Neither riches nor status allows one to be elevated above others in the church. Christians are equal and great in the church. According to Mary, the mother of Jesus in Luke 1:52-54, God planned it to be this way:

52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,

Jesus taught that, Christians should seek his treasures in heaven in Matt 6:19-21:

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in

heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Christians are all equal and the same before God their Father. Matt 20:16 teaches: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Persevering and Standing the Test

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

This passage reflects the example of Jesus when he overcame the trials and test of the devil in the wilderness. The end of preserving for Christ and his Christians is the crown of life. The sequence that leads one unto spiritual death starts with faithful Christian confronted with trial or temptation. God does not tempt us; but our own evil desires tempt us.

13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

John summarizes these evil desires in 1 John 2:15-17:

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

These evil desires and their role in the sin of man find themselves in the examples of Adam and Eve (Gen 3) and in the example of the temptations of the Lord (Matt 4). The sequence of the fall is clear. The road to spiritual death is clearly marked.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

The Lord declared every good and perfect gift in the Beatitudes in Matt 5:3-12

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Lord described our birth through the word of truth to Nicodemus in John 3:5-8

5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Just as the road to spiritual death is clearly marked, so also, the road to spiritual life is clearly marked in the **word of truth**.

Listening and Doing

19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Christians cannot follow the path to spiritual life if they are angry or hateful. Anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. We cannot achieve this righteous life if we are encumbered with moral filth and evil. The word, planted in us, can save us.

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.

To listen to the word and to do it blesses us in what we do.

26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

The Lord taught that to be religious we must control our tongues in Matt 12:34-37:

For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks . 35 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

The Lord also taught that we must be benevolent in our lives toward others in Matt 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45 "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Finally, the Lord also taught that we must be free from the pollution of this world in Matt 6:33, "33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

2. James 2: Keeping the Royal Law

James chapter one gave specific acts of obedience that a Christian must faithfully keep in service to the Lord. One of these commands in James 1:9-11 teaches that there is no distinction between Christians as to whether they are of high or low position:

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10 But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

James 2 begins with this same teaching, but extends it with a specific example of how it takes place in the meetings of the church.

Favoritism and Respect of Persons

James 2:1-4: 1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

The command given by James is direct: "as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism." The example—one of high and rich status and one of low and poor status—is common to us today. What is the sin? The answer is that we discriminate among ourselves and become judges with evil thoughts. All discrimination comes from evil thoughts. The application of the principle applies to wealth, ethnicity, sexual discrimination, etc.—all of which are present in our society today. Paul left little room for doubt about the requirement to be no respecter of persons. Paul taught in Gal 3:27-28:

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.

28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one (man) in Christ Jesus.

James 1:5-7: 5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

When God chose us—whether rich or poor—through the gospel, he sanctified us to the highest calling—the calling through the Gospel. All those so chosen are so rich that they will inherit the kingdom that he promised, according to 2 Thess 2:13-14:

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The rich exploit us, not the poor. The rich drag us into court. The rich slander the noble name of Christ.

There is no distinction of persons allowed among God's children. All Christians should attain the status of one who is **poor** in spirit. Jesus taught in Matt 5:3, "3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Keeping the Royal Law

James 2:8-13: 8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Clearly, the royal law is one found in the Scriptures, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus taught emphatically that this command summed up the Old Testament law in Matt 22:37-40:

37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Paul explained how love of fellowman fulfills the law in Rom 13:8-10:

8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself. "10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

The correct application of the law teaches an important lesson to us today. If we show favoritism, we may keep all the rest of the law, and still be lost. Christians cannot ignore a command and think that God will save them.

God will judge us with mercy, if we show mercy. "Mercy triumphs over judgment!" is a principle eternal. Just as our brothers and sisters stand before us imperfectly, so will we stand before the Lord imperfectly. Christians must resolve to show mercy to our fellow Christians.

Faith without Works

James 2:14-19: 14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.

Faith without works cannot save. Of course, works without faith cannot save either. Faith without action is dead. The demons believe that there is one God, but without following the

commands of God, they are lost. The same is true of all men.

James 2:20-25: 20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Abraham and Rahab the harlot were justified by what they did and not by faith alone. The concluding point is that "faith without deeds is dead."

3. James 3: Controlling the Tongue and Seeking Wisdom from Above

James 3, as in the manner of the entire letter, covers three subjects: stricter judgment for teachers, the tongue, a restless evil, and wisdom that comes from heaven. These topics, as those of the preceding chapters, are unequivocal in their requirements for Christians.

Strict Judgment for Teachers

3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

The idea that just any member can and should teach is erroneous. Teachers should be those who study the word of God and who make sure they teach only His will. False teachers receive the severest condemnation in the New Testament. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:1-2:

. . .there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

Perhaps, one may just inadvertently teach false doctrine. The damage is just as bad as that of the false teacher, not matter how well intentioned.

On the other hand, if we are indolent and fail to study so that we may know and teach the truth, we are just as guilty of sin as the false teacher. The Hebrew writer warned us in Heb 5:12, “12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.”

Those who teach must study hard to know, understand, and handle correctly the word of God. Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15: “15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” One not making the commitment to know the word of truth should not be a teacher.

Those who teach must also make sure that what they say is true to the revealed word of God. Peter taught in 1 Peter 4:10-11, “11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.” The most serious judgments fall to those who pervert God's word. The Bible ends with Rev 22:18-19 warning:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Finally, Paul condemned those who pervert the Gospel of God in Gal 1:9, “9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”

Elders in the church must make sure that teachers are qualified in the Scriptures and in methods of teaching.

The Tongue, a Restless Evil

2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole

animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

James is so clear and emphatic on the subject of the tongue and its evils. The summary statement of this passage is clear: "It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

The Lord described the destructive nature of our tongues. They relate directly to murdering and killing in the nature of their evil. In Matt 5:21-22, he said:

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Wisdom that Comes from Heaven

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

James introduced us to wisdom in James 1:5-8: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." In this passage, he describes the true wisdom as one belonging to the good life and to deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom. On the other hand, there is the wisdom of envy and selfish ambition. This latter wisdom is earthly, sensual, and of the devil. Where you find this wisdom, you will also find disorder and every evil practice.

The true wisdom, the one that comes from heaven is first pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. These are tests that Christians may apply to their every act and thought.

4. James 4: Our Inner Struggle and Ultimate Victory

James 4 continues with subjects that define the very nature of the inner struggle and ultimate victory required of Christians. A true Christian must simultaneously war against unlawful desires within and create no friendships toward the world without. The Christian must submit to God and resist the devil. Finally, the Christian must not judge one another and do what is good. All the principles of James are dichotomous choices that set strict parameters in defining Christian living.

The War against Unlawful Desires

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Christianity—a religion of love and especially, one of love of the brethren—should not be beset with fights and quarreling. Yet fights, quarrelings, and divisions often beset the church. Such was the case of the church at Corinth where Paul chastised that church in 1 Cor 3:3, “3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” The works of the flesh described by Paul focus attention on seven divisive sins in Gal 5:19-21:

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; **hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy**; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

God will not give us what we ask as long as we aim our gifts with the wrong motives toward fighting with the brethren. The pleasures of fighting and quarreling turn to excitement and vanity as we build ourselves up at the expense of the brethren.

Friendship with the World

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."

“Adulterous people” describes Christians unfaithful to Christ. Unrighteous acts disqualify people as part of the bride of Christ as in Rev 19:6-8:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

The dichotomy of the previous verses continues. Friendship with the world is hatred toward God, and a friend of the world is an enemy of God. The root cause of this predicament is envy. James created the foundation for this conclusion in James 3:14-16:

14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

The core principles guiding a Christian's interaction with the world comes from 1 John 2::15-17:

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Submission to God

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Once again, James sets a strict dichotomy, submit to God; resist the devil. When we do resist the devil, he will flee from us. This specific command echoes the response of Jesus to the devil in Matt 4:3-4:

3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

In addition, Matthew recorded Matt 4:6-7:

6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. . . .

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Finally, in Matt 4:9-11:

9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

The remedy for these sins of envy is the same for all digression from God: obey and repent.

Wash your hands, purify your hearts, grieve, mourn, and wail are commands. Changing your laughter to mourning and your joy to doom are characteristic of repentance. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 7:9-10:

9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

If we humble ourselves before the Lord, he will lift us up.

Judging One Another

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?

Both Peter and Paul join James in condemning slander. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:1, “2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.” Paul concurred in Col 3:8, “8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” Slander occurs from an attitude of superiority where one would dare lift himself to pass judgment upon a fellow Christian. Only God can judge. Jesus had taught almost these exact words. Jesus said in Matt 7:1-2, “1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Doing What Is Good in an Uncertain Life

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

We should live our lives knowing that we face eternity each moment. This life is vaporous. We must place ourselves over to the certain will of God. To say that I am going to do this or that or to say that I have this or that is boasting and such boasting is sin.

17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

In the face of all these admonitions, there is an eternal principal at work: he who knows to do good and does not do it, sins.

5. James 5: Final Admonitions Echo the Teachings of Jesus

As with the previous chapters of James, James proceeds in chapter 5 to speak of those obligations that Christians have in leading a godly, moral, and personal life. Each of these admonitions echoes the teachings of Jesus in the gospels. James first admonishes against rich people who take advantage of the less fortunate, who may, in fact, work for them. His second admonition is that we wait patiently for the Lord to come again. Next, he admonishes us to be patient in the face of suffering. He adds that we are not to swear. He tells of the power of prayer in our lives. Finally, he discusses the need to restore sinners.

The Abusive Rich to Receive Misery

5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

James begins this rebuke of the rich with a direct allusion to the teaching of Jesus in Matt 6:19-21:

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Lord brings down those who are abusive of wealth in Rev 18:14-17:

14 "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' 15 The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn 16 and cry out:

"Woe! Woe, O great city,

dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,

and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!

17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!"

4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

James does not leave us to speculate about the abuses of wealth. He specifies the wrongs: failing to pay workers, living in self-indulgence, condemning, and murdering. Wealth and self come first in this man's life. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus showed how the servant could be the evil one and not only the master. Jesus concluded in Matt 18:32-34,

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Patience until the Lord Comes

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

This passage reiterates two lessons taught by Jesus: the Lord's coming is near; and with that coming, the judge is standing at the door. Jesus taught that he and the ending will come like a thief in the night. In Matt 24:36, he said, "36 No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." In Matt 24:42, he repeated, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." With his coming, comes also the judgment as Paul taught in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

Truly, "the judge is standing at the door."

Patience in the Face of Suffering

10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

That we are to have patience in the face of suffering follows what Paul said in 2 Thess 1:6-7 above. God will give us relief. Peter spoke of that relief with certainty in 1 Peter 1:4-6:

4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

All of this teaching on suffering and endurance was forecast by the Lord in Matt 5:11-12: "11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Swearing Condemned

12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear – not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

This teaching on swearing comes directly from the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matt 5:34-37:

34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

This swearing is not the affirmation of the truth as given in a courtroom where even the question expresses the absolute control of God in the phrase, "So help me God." This swearing is that which asserts our control, not God's control over the events and circumstances of life. As Christians face life, they may only say "yes" and "no." God controls everything by the power of his might.

The Power of Prayer in the Lives of Christians

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

At the first glimpse of trouble, the Christian should pray. At the first ray of happiness, the Christian should sing. If one is sick, call the elders of the church to pray and anoint him with oil. Clearly, we are to use whatever medicinal remedies we have and take advantage of any medical care available. These prayers offered in faith will make the difference. Ps 103:2-5 expresses what should be the firm belief of Christians:

2 Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits –
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The prayer of the righteous man is powerful and effective.

The Need to Restore Sinners

19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

All Christians should try to bring back those who have wandered from the truth. The wonderful result is that that person is saved from death, for sin leads to death. The wages of sin is death in Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Therefore, to turn one from sin covers those sins, and the sinner is once again pure before the Lord. John tells us that if we see a brother committing a sin not unto death, we should pray for him. In 1 John 5:16-17:

16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to

death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

We should all pay attention to the spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters, and we should offer our prayers for them without being asked.

6. 1 Peter 1 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

1 Peter 1:1 begins with an introduction by identifying the writer as Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ

1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

Peter, declared here to be an apostle, writes with the validity and reliability promised to all the apostles by the Lord himself in John 14:26-27:

26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Paul describes how this inspiration includes the apostles' written word in Eph 3:3-5:

. . . the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Peter wrote words inspired by the spirit of God. In 1 Peter 5, we will discover that Peter was also an elder in the church; thus, he also had day to day experience in the affairs of a congregation—perhaps in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6-7) or perhaps in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13).

To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

The phrase “God’s elect and strangers to the world” clearly identifies the audiences as Christians affected by events that scattered them abroad. Luke recorded one such event in



Acts 8:1: “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” Many such events could have displaced Christians in keeping with the term “scattered.”

It is interesting to note that Paul’s missionary journeys were more to the south in Asia Minor, but included these provinces. John, as recorded in the Revelation, had influence in eastern Asia Minor, as he wrote to the seven churches of Asia. The

connection between Peter and these saints might have been his own non-recorded visit there; or it might have been through his acquaintance, Silas, who may have worked with these churches. 1 Peter 5:12 tells us, “12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God.”

Peter elaborates on what it means to be God's elect in 1 Peter 2:9-10:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The Goal of Your Faith—the Salvation of Your Souls

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter connects our living hope, our inheritance, and our salvation in this thematic statement of the letter. Our living hope is in the new birth that he gave us. Jesus described this birth to Nicodemus in John 3:5-7, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" God made this hope possible by raising Christ from the dead. Paul wrote of this hope and the new birth in Titus 3:4-7:

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

The hope of a heavenly home is the inheritance that cannot fade away. Until God reveals this inheritance, He shields us by his power. This salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last day contrasts directly with the salvation sought and searched for by the prophets (1 Peter 1:10 ff).

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Intervening between now and this great salvation are all kinds of trials causing Christians to suffer. Peter uses the analogy of gold refined by fire to illustrate the value of this suffering. Our suffering must be genuine, and it must result in praise, glory, and honor when Christ comes. In suffering, we may joyfully know, beyond expression, his glory and our salvation. Without seeing him, we love him, and we believe in him. In keeping with Peter's theme, he concludes that we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look

into these things.

This salvation, which has come to us, was only spoken of by prophets, who were instructed that it would be revealed by the suffering Christ to us through the apostles (see notes on 1:1). Now we have the gospel preached by these apostles and prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit who was sent from heaven. Not only the prophets but also the angels longed to look into what has come to us. How fortunate we, as Christians, are.

The Preparation for Your Salvation

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

However, we must be ready to receive that salvation by preparing our minds for action. These actions include self-control, a hope set fully on the grace to come at the revelation of Jesus Christ, obedience as children, and a non-conforming to evil desires. Like Christ, we are to be holy in all that we do.

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

We are just strangers in this world, and as strangers, we must live in reverent fear. We were not redeemed with material things—silver and gold—but with the precious blood of the Christ, a lamb without blemish. Hebrews adds to the meaning of this perfect sacrifice Heb 9:12: "12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. Further, without such a sacrifice there can be no forgiveness according to Heb 9:22, "22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." It is through this precious blood that everything is possible for us. Heb 10:19-22 teaches:

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

The new and living way provided by this purification is the church. Paul taught in Eph 5:25-27:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

God chose this plan for purification, before the foundation of the world. It did not come from any human, past or present, no scholars, no reformers, no councils, no synods, no theologians. He has revealed it in these last times for us: no latter day revelation, not developmental

church doctrine, no voices speaking directly to us. What we have and all that, we have is from God, planned before the foundation of the world. Our faith and hope must be in God.

Purification by Obeying the Truth

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For,

God and Christ have completed the eternal plan for redemption—God before the foundation of the world, and Christ, the lamb, upon the cross. But there is no purification except we obey the truth for we have been born again, by the washing with water through the word (Eph 6:26).

This chapter ends with a profound and eternal truth:

"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
25 but the word of the Lord stands forever."

And this is the word that was preached to you.

Now it is up to us to obey that word, as the Holy Spirit revealed it, and the apostles and prophets preached it.

7. 1 Peter 2: Come unto the Lord as His Chosen People

The conclusion of 1 Peter 1 establishes that those who obey the truth are purified and born again. 1 Peter 1:22-23:

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

The word, *therefore*, in 1 Peter 2:1, relates what follows to purified, born-again Christians. These Christians, obedient to the truth, must now desire the more to grow up in their salvation. A series of admonitions follow.

Grow Up in Your Salvation

1 Peter 2

2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Christians must rid themselves of every kind of evil intent. This is not to exclude the requirement to live moral lives, but it focuses on the necessity for Christians, like Christ, to live without guile. This theme follows throughout the chapter to climax 1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander are sins that fester in the inward man. In order to grow to salvation, we must replace such sins with the pure, spiritual milk.

Come to Him the Living Stone

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,"

8 and,

"A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

Just as men reject some of the literal corner stones, so have they rejected Christ. Christ is the chief corner stone selected by God. Corner stones, in the days of the Lord, were tested by dropping one stone on the other. The builders rejected the one that shattered. According to Matt 21:44, the Lord as a cornerstone will survive all assaults, "44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." Peter directly related this metaphor to Jesus, and Jesus to our salvation, in Acts 4:10-12:

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is

"the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the capstone.'

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Jesus as the tried and true capstone causes men to fall. They stumble when they disobey his message.

Christians are like living stones "built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." The Revelation of John uses the same extended metaphor of living stones, a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood to describe Christians and their heavenly home. The priesthood idea repeats in verse 9. Priests are not denominational offices appointed by men. They are all Christians made to be priests by the God in Heaven. In Rev 1:6, John recorded, "6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever!" In Rev 5:9-10, the eternal voices in Heaven sing:

"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."

Those who are priests are those who here have purified themselves by obeying the truth. When we so obey the truth, we are buried with Christ in the likeness of his death. Paul taught in Rom 6:5-7

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

This is the first resurrection for Christians, and it makes them priests, and the second death has no power over them according to Rev 20:6: "6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years."

As spiritual stones, we are the spiritual house of God. Paul wrote in 1 Tim 3:14-15, "Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." The house of God, the church, the New Jerusalem, and the holy city are all synonymous for the eternal and spiritual home in earth now and heaven when the Lord comes. The Hebrew writer combines these metaphors in a single beautiful statement in Heb 12:22-24:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and

to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

These spiritual stones (Christians) are those that construct the very foundation of the holy city of God in Rev 21:19-21:

19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Who are those, purified by their obedience of the truth (Christians)? They are a chosen people of God, a royal priesthood, holy nation, a people belonging to God. What do they do? They declare the praises of him who called them. What will they receive? They receive mercy from God.

Abstain from Sinful Desires

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Once having established spiritual and priestly nature of Christians, Peter turns to the practical matters of maintaining the Christian life in this present world. The teachings here were not only taught by Christ but by the writers of the New Testament. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke to the spiritual necessarily to not lust after a woman or not to hate or be angry, as two examples among many. He, in effect, always spoke of the need to control desires and, therefore control sin. Paul described this war against our souls in Gal 5:16-21:

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Submit to Every Authority

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Jesus established the eternal principle that governs our relationship to civil authorities when he said in Luke 20:25, "He said to them, 'Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'" Paul taught this same teaching in Rom 13:1-5:

13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

Submit Yourself to Your masters

18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

In many parables, Christ taught the proper relationship of servants and masters. Today, we may think employers and employees. Paul also taught the necessity for masters and slaves to live in the example of Christ in these relationships. In Eph 6:5-9, Paul wrote:

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Follow the Example of Christ

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The end of the matter is that we should follow the example of Christ. He died that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

8. 1 Peter 3: Personal Relationships in Christ

1 Peter 3 flows directly from 1 Peter 2:22-25 where Peter closed that chapter showing the humility and patience of Jesus in the face of persecution and punishment:

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

What follows in 1 Peter 3 is the exhortation for Christians to apply this example set by the Lord to the relationships of their lives. These instructions are for wives, husbands, and all Christians.

Wives, Pure and Reverent in Their Lives

3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Modern day husbands and wives should pay close attention to this passage. In a day of women's liberation and equal rights for women, the word *submissive* causes some to question the necessity and wisdom of applying such scriptures to the modern world. However, in the context of how all Christians are to act toward one another, it becomes perfectly understandable. Paul introduces a similar instruction to wives by saying first in Eph 5:21, "21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." All Christians are to submit to one another. Paul spoke in Phil 2:3-4, "3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." All the statements of submissiveness are conditioned by the words of the Lord in what we call the Golden Rule, found in Matt 7:12, "12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

When husband and wives are Christians in deed, issues of obedience and submission are non-existent. However, this passage turns on a finer point—that of the believing Christian woman married to an unbelieving husband. In this latter case, the unbelieving husband may be converted without words, "They may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." In addition, two examples illustrate this model behavior. First, the woman who expects to win her husband should not lean on the outward adorning with jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, her adornment should be the unfading beauty of gentle and quiet spirit. This is how women make themselves beautiful. Second, the spiritually adorned wife expresses this inward beauty by unassuming and humble acts toward the husband—just as Sarah did toward Abraham. Paul concurred with this teaching in Eph 5:22-24:

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Sometimes it is impossible for an unbelieving husband to live with a Christian wife. In that case, the Christian wife is not bound to that man. According to Paul in 1 Cor 7:15, the same is true for men and women, "15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances."

Husbands, Considerate and Respectful

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

In the same way, Peter constrains the husband to exhibit the righteous and humble life of a Christian before his wife, treating them with respect. Paul explains this principle in Eph 5:25-33:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." . . . 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

In our modern time when women are top executives and world-class athletes, some may have difficulty with the expression *weaker partner*. Indeed, women in many ways are stronger and more resilient than men are. Yet, the real equality of husbands and wives exists as they both are heirs of the gracious gift of life. In this relationship there are no males and females, bound or free, but we are all one in Christ Jesus, according to Gal 3:28, "28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

All Christians, Sympathetic and Compassionate to One Another

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For,

Verse 8, extends the principles of the previous verses to all Christian relationships. The principles of rewarding Christian relationships teach us how to accommodate the life here upon the earth.

Live in harmony

Be sympathetic

Love as brothers

Be compassionate and humble

Do not repay evil with evil

Do not repay insult with insult but with blessing

Beyond what is right for Christians, the way of the bully will not work in the marriage, the family, the church, the job, or the neighborhood. Out of such lives come violence, anger, and

destruction.

Those Who Love Life and See Good Days

"Whoever would love life

and see good days

must keep his tongue from evil

and his lips from deceitful speech.

11 He must turn from evil and do good;

he must seek peace and pursue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous

and his ears are attentive to their prayer,

but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

As taught in Psalm 34:12-16 and repeated here, if you want to love life and see good days, choose the way of Christ and do good unto all men. It is very interesting that Paul spoke of how, with proper obedience to parents, children can extend their days in Eph 6:1-3, where he quotes from Deut 5:16 when the 10 commandments were given:

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"- which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Those Who Do Good and Are Always Prepared to Give and Answer

13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

This passage describes how we are to keep ourselves concerning those not taught in the gospel. The beginning of our effort should be to do good. The possibility of harm in the hostile world of unbelievers is dramatically reduced if we are doing good. Doing good is an admonition that we are always to follow. Gal 6:9-10 teaches:

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

It we do suffer for what is right, it is a blessing, and we are not to be frightened. A good idea when we are confronting others is to remember Rom 8:31, "31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?" This idea is expressed in the present passage by verse 15," But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." When you are confronting unbelievers or teaching others, if you set Christ as Lord in your heart, fear will dissipate, and anger will wilt. You are doing the work of the Lord. However, you must be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you. Only you can do this, not the Lord. We must follow what Paul taught Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15, "15 Do your best to present yourself to

God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” To teach others requires the noble character of the Bereans in Acts 17:11: “11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Attitude in teaching may be more important than what one knows. Peter tells us that when giving a reason to others, we are to do this with gentleness and respect. If we maintain a Christ-like attitude toward those we are teaching, they will be ashamed when they slander us. In the final analysis, if we will do God’s will (teaching in this case) and suffer, it is far better than doing evil and suffering.

The Saved with the Pledge of a Good Conscience toward God

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Verse 18 reasserts the theme from which these commands flow, Christ died for our sins. Christ, as we, died in the body but was made alive in the Spirit. In verse 19, the antecedent of *whom* is the Spirit. In the Spirit he preached to those in prison. The *when* of the passage is in the days of Noah and while the ark was being prepared. This passage does not teach a second chance for the sinners in the days of Noah. When the Spirit inspired Noah to preach the Word, Christ was preaching in the days of Noah. This is a common teaching in the New Testament: that Christ was active as the word of God during the Old Testament period. 1 Cor 10:1-4 teaches this same principal:

10:1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

This passage explains that water saves us today just as it did save Noah and his family: this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer places this same construction on baptism in Heb 10:22-25:

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The very end of this chapter teaches us that Jesus has accomplished everything that he came to do and that he reigns above all in heaven. As water saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ so he has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him. Christ will not be coming back to earth to complete some

alleged unfinished business. Paul concurred fully with this teaching that Christ is supreme now in Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

9. 1 Peter 4: Christians Apply the Lessons of Christ's Suffering

1 Peter 3 begins with the word *therefore*. We learned in chapter 2 that *therefore* draws a conclusion based on what transpired in previous verses. In this case, the logic of chapter 4 proceeds from the final words of both chapters 2 and 3. 1 Peter 2:23-24 concluded:

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Chapter 3:21-22 concludes with how this suffering saves us, which is by his resurrection, "It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." The stage is set for chapter 4 to apply the lessons of Christ's suffering to our every day lives.

Christians, Armed with the Same Attitude as Christ

4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. 5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Chapter 4 begins with the statement of an eternal principle—one that will always be true. "He who has suffered in his body is done with sin." We are to arm ourselves with this attitude of Christ. "As a result," we learn that we are not to live the rest of our earthly lives for human desires. We are to live for the will of God. Think of the time we, Christians, have lost, living like the pagans. Peter states these sins of paganism clearly. Pagans live in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatries. Christians are to have nothing to do with these.

Our pagan acquaintances will think we are strange. They will think it is strange that we do not plunge right into what Peter calls "the same flood of dissipation." They will abuse us. However, they will give an account to the Lord who will judge the living and the dead. This thought was also stated by Paul in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

The gospel is preached now to those dead spiritually so that they may be converted from the body of sin and live according to the spirit of Christ. The dead today, like the dead in Noah's time of chapter 3, have every chance to turn from sin. Peter will summarize this idea in 2 Peter 3:8-9:

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God loves saint and sinner alike and wants everyone to be saved. John 3:16 teaches, "16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Christians, Clear-minded and Self-controlled

7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. 8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Just as the previous verses condemned the sinful acts of pagans, these verses state the appropriate Christian behavior as the end of all things comes upon us. One can hardly improve on the language of Peter as he states what we must do:

Be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides.

Before leaving these verses, which are self explanatory, note that when we speak, our opinions and ideas are not worth anything unless they reflect the **very word of God**. We are not to suppose or imagine what God, Christ, the apostles, and the prophets thought or felt or might have said. We are to use the scriptures and speak the very words of God. They are complete according to 2 Tim 3:16-17: "16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Since the scriptures thoroughly equip us, we do not have to try to make them better – an impossible task.

Christians, Suffering and Praising God

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

"Do not be surprised at the painful trial," shows that Christians are to expect persecution.

There is nothing strange about it. The scriptures establish this expectation throughout. John quoted the Lord in Rev 2:10, who taught, "10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." Paul treated persecution as the norm in the lives of Christians in 2 Tim 3:12, "12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." However, these persecutions will never separate the Christian from the love of Christ, according to Rom 8:35, "35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"

If we share in Christ's sufferings, we will be overjoyed when he comes. It is a blessing to be insulted for the name of Christ. The Spirit of Glory and of God rests on us. However, Christians should not suffer as murderers, thieves, any kind of criminal, or meddlers. We should willingly suffer as Christians and we should praise and glorify God who blesses us to wear that name.

The Christian, Judged and Saved

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Judgment begins with the family of God now, since we are to be judged by the gospel. This is not a mysterious standard sprung on us at the last day. Rev 14:6-7 declares the details of this judgment:

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

The rhetorical question, "What will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" received its answer in 2 Thess 2:8-10:

8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Proverbs 11:31 is another rhetorical question. "How hard is it for the righteous to be saved?" one might ask. The righteous are only saved by the blood of Christ, as we saw in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Rom 6:23 clearly separates wages of sin from the gift of God, " 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The last verse of the chapter draws the conclusion for those who suffer: "Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do

good." If we suffer as Christians let us turn our heads and hearts to God, trusting Him as the faithful creator, and let us continue to do good.

10. 1 Peter 5: Elders, Young People, and Final Exhortations

Up to this point, Peter has directed us on how to act in our many Christian relationships; such as, our relationships with the government, with masters and slaves, husbands and wives, other Christians, the word of God, those outside the church, and those who persecute us. In this, the final chapter, Peter addresses the relationship of elders to the church, younger men to the older men, and the enemy, the devil.

The Elders, Shepherds of the Flock

5 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

This passage begins with the phrase, *to the elders among you*, and follows in verse 2 with, *be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care*. These two phrases limit the elder's jurisdiction to the local congregation. The American Standard Version states the latter in 1 Peter 5:2: "Tend the flock of God which is among you." This very wording rules out any broader geographic sphere of influence for the elder, such as modern day presbyteries, synods, council, convention, etc., where elders presumably make rules and extend oversight to multiple congregations. Elders have the oversight of only the congregation under their care.

Each Local Church, Autonomous and Independent

These passages establish the local church as autonomous and independent from every other church. The one church, the body of Christ, has its separate congregations bound together through love, the unity of the spirit, and the bond of peace. Paul wrote in Eph 4:2-6:

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

It is because of this autonomy that Paul appointed elders (plural) in every church in Acts 14:23: "23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." Paul also instructed Titus to appoint elders in every town in Titus 1:5: "5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."

Elder, Shepherd and Overseer

Verses 1 and 2 also establish that the words *elder*, *shepherd*, and *overseer* refer to the same office. In a synonymous way, these words speak to the character and function of the office. *Elder* speaks to the age of the person so qualified; *shepherd* speaks to the tending and feeding of the flock of God responsibility; and *overseer* speaks to the oversight of the church. The New Testament uses these words interchangeably. For example, Paul called the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:17, "17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church." While instructing these elders, he called them overseers and shepherds in Acts 20:28-29: "28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be

shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” In Titus 1:6-7, Paul again used the words, *elder* and *overseer* interchangeably: “6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless. . . .”

Elders oversee and tend the flock of God under their care. They must so serve willingly and not of **constraint** (ASV). Elders also serve, as God wants them to. The elders have no authority except that found in the New Testament. Contrasts show the dimensions of the elders' work:

Not because you must, but because you are willing

Not for money, but eager to serve

Not lording over the church, but examples to the church

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Elders, Rewarded with a Crown of Glory

When Christ—the chief shepherd—comes, faithful elders will receive a crown of glory. Twelve times the Revelation depicts elders serving. None is more awe inspiring than Rev 11:16-18 where the elders sit on their thrones before God:

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,

the One who is and who was,

because you have taken your great power

and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry;

and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead,

and for rewarding your servants the prophets

and your saints and those who reverence your name,

both small and great –

and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

That the elders receive the crown of glory when Christ appears, forever rejects the idea of a second kingdom of Christ on this earth after the Lord appears.

Young Men, Submissive to Those Who Are Older

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Verses 5 through 7 extol the virtue of humility, encouraging young men to display it to one another. These young men are also to be submissive to those who are older. If we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up. In our troubled world, we may cast our anxiety on Him. The Lord promised that the meek would be blessed in Matt 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Paul admonished the church at Ephesus in Eph 4:2, "2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

The Devil, a Roaring Lion

8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

The final warning to these dispersed Christians teaches that they must be self-controlled and alert. Why? Because the devil is prowling around. Peter must have remembered the time with the Lord when the devil got so close to Peter that he became an instrument in tempting the Lord. Mark 8:31-33 records the incident:

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter details the antidote to the poison of the devil:

Be self-controlled

Be alert

Resist him

Stand firm in the faith.

Paul also describes how Christians may equip themselves to fight the wicked one in Eph 6:11-18

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Final Exhortation, the Theme of Suffering Revisited

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

The rhetorical conclusion to the letter is verse 10. After we have suffered for a little while, God, who called us, will restore us. We will be strong, firm, and steadfast. In this letter, Peter has used the word *suffer*, 7 times; *suffered*, 5 times; and *suffering*, 3 times. The power that we align ourselves with is the power of God, which is the power for ever and ever—literally translated, into the ages of the ages.

Finally, Peter recognizes Silas, Mark, and the church in Babylon.

11. 2 Peter 1: Seeking the Divine Nature

Peter claims to be an apostle of the Lord (1:1). He also claims to be an eyewitness to the Lord's majesty at the Mount of Transfiguration (1:16). The epistle is the second of two epistles, which fits the idea of Peter as the author.

Peter writes to the same people as the former epistle (3:1). This would include "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." (1 Pet. 1:1). Pontus is an area to the north in Asia Minor that borders on the Black Sea. Galatia signifies the land of Gaul. Galatia was the Roman province that occupied the central portion of Asia Minor. Cappadocia is in Asia Minor to the east of Galatia. Asia refers to the province that occupies the western part of Asia Minor with Ephesus as its capital. Bithynia was to the west of Pontus in northern Asia Minor and bordered the Black Sea. These people could have been the people spoken of as being scattered abroad in Acts 8:1-4 or those of another persecution.

2 Peter was written near the close of the apostle's life (1:13), after the first epistle. Most scholars place the date around 64 or 65. The first letter was written from Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13), and while the second letter may have been, there is no proof.

By design, the epistle warns against false doctrine and false teachers. The way offered to meet false doctrine is through knowledge.

Address and Salutation

2 Peter 1:1-2

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Peter begins by immediately asserting his apostolic authority [see notes on 1 Peter]: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." *Servant* is a bondservant, a slave, one owned by another. The one who is the bondservant completely gives himself over to the wishes of the master regardless of the cost to self. *Apostle* is the office of an apostle or one sent, in this instance, by Christ. By designating the office that he held, the apostle assured himself a hearing.

The writer appeals to his readers and identifies with them in the faith by saying to them that they had received a precious faith with us through the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ. *A faith* refers to the gospel as a revealed system. It carries the following implication: a system delivered (Jude 3) and obedience to that system (1 Pet. 1:22-23). *Precious* refers to its value. It is just as precious to the ones to whom the letter is written as it is to Peter. *In the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ* describes a faith found in the righteousness of God and Christ and nowhere else. The word *righteousness* is the character or quality of being right or just. The former spelling was *rightwiseness*. It refers to an attribute of God who was righteous in providing all men with salvation through the death of Christ.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (1:2). *Grace* is unmerited favor and *peace* includes peace with God, peace with ones fellow man, and peace with oneself. *Abundance* indicates that grace and peace was to increase in great

magnitude. *Knowledge* denotes exact or full knowledge, discernment, and recognition. It involves participation by the knower in the object known. The other word for knowledge denotes only a seeking to know or an inquiry. This full knowledge involves an impression, and then beyond this, an expression. One may know about God or the facts involved in the gospel but never come to know God.

Exhortation to Make Your Calling and Election Sure

2 Peter 1:3-9

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

God grants us “*everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness*” However, they are through knowledge of him that called us. God who has the power to grant also has the power to condition. This knowledge is the full knowledge spoken of above. His glory and goodness called us. Christ suffered and died on the cross and then rose to glory to make possible the gospel. (Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Thes. 2:13-14). All things of importance are through the word of God. Knowledge is the key; therefore, we must study and gain this full knowledge (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Through this glory and virtue, we have great and precious promises. All the promises of the Christian religion hinge upon the glory and virtue of God and Christ.

Because of this, we have forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. We literally participate in the divine nature. *Participate in the divine nature* refers to that which is from God and is the opposite of that which is of the world. Participants are sharers of that which is the essence of God. A Christian can only escape the world and the lust of the world by relying on this divine nature. *Corruption* signifies the being brought to a worse condition, and corruption is continual in its progress until an individual is morally desolate.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

To obtain this full knowledge, we must add *these things*. *For this very reason* refers to the promises of God in contrast to the corruption of the world. To have these promises and escape that corruption, full knowledge of Christ is essential; for we find that all things are supplied fully in Christ and God.

Peter teaches the necessity of adding to our lives what we now call the Christian virtues (1:5-7). *Make every effort to add* shows that we must strive to add and work for these virtues. God and Christ do not do this for us. To add these virtues requires earnestness and zeal. The first requirement in gaining these things is a sincere desire and a willing mind. We cannot obtain them with an indifferent spirit.

Add is the operative word—the action word. The understood subject is you. We must add each of the virtues.

Faith—Faith is a firm persuasion, a conviction based on hearing (Heb. 1:1; Rom. 10:17). It is

the beginning or the starting place in Heb 11:6: "6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Goodness—To the Greeks, goodness denoted the ideal—the characteristics judged the greatest in humankind—therefore, courage, vigor, morality, goodness, etc. Perhaps the essence of complete goodness is the divine nature of verse 3.

Knowledge—This is not the full knowledge used above, but rather the inquiry—the seeking to know. In the case of Christian growth, it is the knowledge of God's will or knowledge of spiritual truth. Paul taught in 2 Tim 2:15, "5 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

Self-control—This is man's responsibility in relation to what he learns from God's will. Some things he must do; some he must not do. He must subject himself to God's will in all things. It denotes self-government—the ability to control.

Perseverance—Perseverance denotes steadfastness, endurance under the trials in the Lord's work. 1 Cor 15:58 teaches, "58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Godliness—Godliness is humble reverence and deep piety toward God. God-like-ness.

Brotherly kindness—Brotherly kindness is demonstrable love of the brethren as taught in 1 John 5:1-2: "5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.

Love—According to Vine's Expository Dictionary, this is full and unqualified love as expressed in *agape* and *agapao*, which are used in the NT:

(a) to describe the attitude of God toward His Son, John 17:26; the human race, generally, John 3:16; Rom 5:8, and to such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ particularly John 14:21;

(b) to convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another, John 13:34, and toward all men, 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Cor 16:14; 2 Peter 1:7;

(c) to express the essential nature of God, 1 John 4:8.

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers). See 1 Cor. 13; Col. 3:14.

Christians must possess these virtues in increasing measures or they will be ineffective and unproductive. Literally, these words mean *not working, barren* and denote inactivity and idleness. The Lord spoke of *unfruitful* branches in John 15:2: "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." To not have these things is to be nearsighted and blind, unseeing, and forgetful. He has forgotten that he once obeyed the gospel and was cleansed by the Lord from his sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

However, by doing these things we receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. We must be the more eager to make our calling and election sure. *Calling* implies an invitation, but as

an invitation, it can slip from our grasp. Eph. 4:1-4. The *election* part with the *calling* comes from God. Our duty is to make it sure or secure them. Consequently, if we do these things, we shall never stumble. Paul called for the need to stand firm and hold to the teachings in 2 Thess 2:13-15:

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

The "if" makes the statement a condition, and this condition involves doing, obedience (Mt. 7:21). In conclusion, to this part, Peter teaches that God will add the eternal kingdom unto us only if we add these *things* and, therefore, merit the greatest of inheritances.

The Right of the Apostles to Speak, Exhort, and Remind

12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

Peter states his willingness to fulfill his apostolic right to remind. Peter was always ready just as all preachers are to be ready. 2 Tim. 4:1-2 emphatically states the mission of preachers, "4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction." Even though we—the members of the church—know the truth and are established in it, there is an ever-present need to be reminded by one another lest we fail to fulfill our duty.

The right thing for the preacher is to continue to stir up remembrance as long as he lives. Regardless of the disposition of the hearers or the persecution that others may inflict, preachers should not shirk this responsibility. Peter feels his obligation to the extent that although he knows that his time comes swiftly, they will remember, even after his death.

The statement, *as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me*, shows that the writer of the letter was an inspired man. What he teaches cannot be wrong, but must be right or truth. It is with this authority that Peter turns to the source of the apostles' authority in the verse follow.

16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

The source of their knowledge concerning the power and coming of the Lord did not *follow cleverly invented stories*. In I Tim 1:4, Paul also teaches, "4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work – which is by faith." The word, *follow*, is a word used only in the New Testament by Peter and means to follow up or out to the end (2:2; 2:15). *Cleverly invented* is a phrase meaning to play the sophist; to invent cleverly. *Stories* were myths, stories, and legends that are without basis or fact. Contrast *stories* to the parables of Jesus, in which all the elements were true.

Therefore, the apostles do not rely upon that which comes from another or fictitious stories. In all generations, some claim that Christ, the miracles, the resurrection, etc. are nothing more than mere stories.

Peter begins by saying, "But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." The reference here is to the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17; Mk. 9; Lk. 9). *We* refers to the others present, James and John. *Eyewitness* is a spectator and eyewitness of a happening or an event. In our own court trails, eyewitness testimony rises to the highest level of proof. John also appeals to this same high level of empirical proof in 1 John 1:1-3.:

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

The eyewitness account of the transfigured Lord is the greatest of evidence available. Scholars accept this same level of proof as true for historical writings. In fact, less than eyewitness proof is often accepted. Peter's account has the authoritative backup of the accounts that are given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in their gospels, which all certify the truth of the statement. All of these men are of known good character and have nothing to gain in anything less than the truth.

Prophecies of Scripture

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

That *we have the word of prophets made more certain* tells us the Christ confirmed the prophecies of the Old Testament. The King James translation says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy." The indication in this KJV is that the prophecies offer more sure evidence of the Christian system than does the eyewitness testimony of the apostles. The argument against this is the fact that Peter included himself (we) in the statement; therefore, it would be doubtful that he would think the prophecy stronger evidence than his eyewitness to the transfiguration of the Lord.

The second view is that expressed in the American Standard and the New International translations: "We have the word of prophecy *made* more sure." Here the meaning is that the transfiguration makes the prophecy more sure or more certain. The prophets of old had prophesied concerning the deity and son ship of Christ, and the transfiguration made this more certain.

The word *prophecy* means literally to speak forth. The scriptures use the word to mean one speaking forth the mind of God. Prophecy is not necessarily the foretelling of the future. Sometimes it is predictive. Sometimes, prophecy means the telling of that which cannot be known by private means, whether past, present, or future. Prophecy is always the revelation of God's will. In this passage, the word of *prophecy* means the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

You will do well to pay attention to it, points out the importance of the prophecy to us and all

men, regardless of the weight of other evidence such as the transfiguration. The prophecy is to receive the same metaphoric attention as a light in the dark. *As to a light shining in a dark place* illustrates the illuminating quality of the scriptures. The lamp—the scriptures—is the focal point of our attention *until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*. *Until the day dawns* compares to *rising sun* in Lk. 1:8-9 where the meaning is the same: “8 Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 9 to shine on those living in darkness.” *And the day star arises* is parallel to Rev. 22:16: “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” The passage assures us that Christ enters the heart through the scriptures.

The nature and character of true prophecies of scripture are that they are not *of ones own interpretation*. True prophecies of scripture distinguish themselves from false prophecies that are not scripture, as in chapter 2:1 immediately following in the text. The fact is that true prophecies are scripture and false prophecies are not scriptures. As scripture, true prophecies are inspired of God according to 2 Tim 3:16-17, “16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Peter shows that prophecies of scripture literally, spring into being, and thus, no prophecy of scripture springs into being by *private interpretation*. It must be inspired.

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man sums up the previous statement. Prophecy comes through man but by God’s will where the thoughts and words originate. Peter clearly states the *how* of this prophetic revelation of scripture by saying *men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*. The *carried along* is the inspiration of God as He moved the prophets to His desired end. God is the source; the Holy Spirit is the force or motivating power; the prophets are the instruments used to reveal God’s word. Paul agreed that this is how revelation made known to him the mystery of God’s will in Eph. 3:2-5:

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,
3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The Roman Catholic Church bases a false doctrine on the above passage. They assert that an individual cannot interpret the scriptures privately without the infallible aid of the church. They expect us to understand this passage to prove their point; therefore, they deny in the action the point made. If we cannot understand this passage, then how do we know that this is what it teaches? The real meaning is as expressed in this study – that private interpretation refers to the one prophesying and not the one who is trying to comprehend the divine message. In Eph. 3:3-5, Paul clearly said that when you read you can understand just as clearly as the apostle, himself, could understand. Mankind needs neither priest nor clergy to interpret God’s word.

12. 2 Peter 2: There Will Be False Teachers

Peter introduces his focus on false teachers and teaching in chapter 2. His condemnation of the teachers follows the presentation of his credentials as one speaking for God, presented in chapter 1. He first had established that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). Next, he asserted that it was right for him to teach and to remind them (1:12-13). He did not follow cleverly devised stories, but he was an eyewitness to the majesty of Christ. By the appearance of Christ, affirmed by God to be his son, the one that we are to hear, the prophecies were made more certain. All of this places Peter in a position to criticize the false teachers in chapter 2 in the most direct and condemning words.

The Certainty That False Teachers Will Exploit the Faithful

2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Peter outlines the nature of the false teaching and doctrine in chapter 2. Just as there arose false prophets in olden times, there shall arise false teachers among the people to whom the letter is addressed. Note the comparison involves false prophets and false teachers. This distinction is evidently because the miraculous gift of prophecy was to cease in the not too distant future. 1 Cor. 13:8). With the advent of the inspired book—the faith once delivered according to Jude 3—the inspired man would cease. Whether teacher or prophet, if they be false, they are a great danger to the church. In Acts 20:29-30 and I Tim. 4:1-4, Paul describes these false prophets and teachers.

Peter describes these false teachers and prophets as those who *secretly introduce destructive heresies*. They are secretive. This has to do with the deception of false teachers and expresses the same idea as wolves in sheep's' clothing. *Destructive heresies* indicates the end of those who either teach or accept false doctrine. Vine describes heresies:

. . . denotes a choosing or choice; then, that which is chosen, and therefore, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects. Gal. 5:20 . . . ; such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage. Vine, *Expositors Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. II, p. 217.

Denying the sovereign Lord who bought them can come by action as well as a voiced denial. In this case, the denial is the propagating of false doctrine, and the following of immoral ways under the cloak of religion. Any contradiction of Christ or his doctrine is a denial. Jude agrees with Peter in a firm statement on the nature and character of false teaching in Jude 4:

4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Of course, if we deny Christ, he will deny us. 2 Tim. 2:12. *The sovereign Lord who bought them* refers to the sacrifice made—“with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Pet. 1: 18. In spite of this great sacrifice, false teachers and prophets turn directly to their destructive ways.

Many will follow their shameful ways describes the very nature of the false religion in contrast to the true religion described in chapter 1. The direct contrast is between the adding of the Christians virtues and the adding of shameful ways. Shameful ways connotes excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness. To many, the ways of the world are attractive. A religion that allows them to practice such immorality offers a great attraction. Those not Christian will see the false teachers and their followers and judge true believers by them. The world will tend to associate all believers with these immoral ones, and therefore, they would *bring the way of truth into disrepute*.

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up shows that the aim of the false teachers is to make profit from their followers. *Greed* means a desire to have more, and it is always used in a bad sense; in this case, of material possessions. *Stories they have made up* are fabricated. Compare this with the words that Peter used of the apostles: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories." (2 Peter 1:16).

The Certainty of God's Judgment against the Ungodly

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; 6 if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) – 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. 10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.

Destruction is sure for those who teach and follow false doctrine, as illustrated in the examples of the fallen angels (Jude 6), the destruction of the wicked in the time of Noah, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We may be sure that the Lord will deliver the godly out of temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). He will keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment (2:4; Luke 16:19-31).

This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority shows the certainty of God's wrath against these false teachers.

Characteristics of False Teachers

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; 11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. 12 But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. 14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood! 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. 16 But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey – a beast without speech – who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

Peter lays out the characteristics of bold and arrogant false teachers. False teachers are not afraid to slander celestial being which, by definition, includes God. Even the angels will not do this. They rail and speak against the revealed mystery of God, which includes matters that they do not understand. Peter describes the nature of the ones who are false teachers in the most unequivocal terms possible. Like *brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed* is a simile, which shows their complete degradation and lack of understanding what is right. Railing in matters whereof they are ignorant. Blaspheme means to revile or to speak evil of.

They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done echoes the teaching of Paul in Gal 6:7-8: "7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction." That they carouse in broad daylight shows their lack of shame and implies a nature worse than the worldly, who reserve their excesses for the night and darkness. *Blots and blemishes* are moral spots and blemishes (Eph. 5:26-27).

Reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you – reveling here is from a word used nowhere else and means sporting. Even as the false teachers ate with them, they sported at the deception. With *eyes full of adultery* (Mt. 5:28), they could not cease from sin. They seduce the unstable by approaching them with their false doctrine. They are experts in greed and in how to take advantage. Having a heart exercised in covetousness (See 2:3); they are an accursed brood. They turn away from the right way of truth (2:2), and they go astray as Balaam (Jude 11: Num. 22:1-41). *To fall from the right way of truth* shows that there is a possibility of apostasy.

The Enticing Power of the False Teacher

17 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. 18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Verse 17 illustrates the emptiness of these false teachers and their doctrine. The attack made by these false teachers used *boastful words of vanity*, great promises; great words, but vain, empty, and hollow. They entice people by offering fleshly indulgences without restraint. They attack those that have just come out of the world or newborn babes in Christ (verse 14). They promise them freedom and make them slaves of corruption (Rom. 6:16-17).

A description of the destiny of all those who turn away from the Savior concludes chapter 2. For ones that escape the corruption of the world and then turn again, the latter end is worse than the first. *Knowing* here is full knowledge spoken of in 1:3; therefore, there is no excuse. It is better not to know the right way than to know and turn back. They compare to the dog turning to his vomit and the sow turning to the mire after a washing. Study this passage with Heb. 6:4-6 and Heb. 10:26.

The last passage of this chapter is undisputable proof that a child of God can so sin as to be

eternally lost:

They escaped the defilement of the world; thus, they were cleansed.

They had full knowledge of the Lord.

They knew the way of righteousness.

Then they turned back, or they fell away from the way of righteousness.

The following parallel shows the truth of the passage: Man is polluted and sinful; man gets rid of sin; man takes on sin again. Dog has that in him that is corrupt; dog gets rid of corruption; dog takes it on again. Sow is filthy; sow is cleansed; sow takes on filth again.

The latter end is worse than the first; therefore, man is lost in the first and last states; but for the last, there remains no more sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:26), seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6).

13. 2 Peter 3: The Certainty of the End

The false doctrine taught by the false prophets and teachers in chapter 2 concerned the second coming of the Lord. In this second epistle, Peter is stirring them to remembrance. In 2:12-21, he has established his right to remind them.

Peter's Authority to Remind Them

2 Peter 3:1-2

1 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

They are to remember the words spoken through the prophets, the apostles, and the commandment of the Lord, Himself. *The holy prophets* evidently refers to the New Testament prophets (Eph 2:20; Eph 3:5; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28). Contrast these to the false prophets of chapter 2. *Your apostles* would refer to the ones with whom they had had contact; therefore, Peter, Paul and, perhaps, others (3:15-16). The commandment of the Lord and Savior that is spoken of could be that concerning mockers in the last day (Matt 24:11).

The Second Coming of the Lord and the End of the World

2 Peter 3:3-7

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Peter's message on the second coming is clear. *Last days* refers to the Christian dispensation (Acts 2:17). *Scoffers will come, scoffing* indicates jesting and mocking the idea of the Lord's return. They are walking after *their own evil desires*--not interested in the teaching from above--and saying, "*Where is this 'coming' he promised?*" The false prophets and teachers argue that all things continue as they were since creation. Their reference to the fathers who have fallen asleep might refer to the first generation of the church. Men who had died since the establishment of the church (I Cor 15:18).

Peter answers their false doctrine and teaching. He says that they deliberately forgot the facts of importance in their arguments against the second coming. They forgot that God framed the worlds out of water and amidst water by his word (Gen 1:1-6). By which means (the word), the world was overflowed by water and destroyed in the time of Noah. (1 Pet 3:19-20). By this same word, the heavens and the earth are stored up for fire. The word *heaven* is used in the New Testament to designate three separate ideas:

The air or atmosphere around the earth (Matt 6:26; 8:20; Acts 10: 12; 11:6; Jas 5:18).

The universe (Matt 24:29-31; Heb 11:12; Rev 20:11; 6:14).

The eternal dwelling place of God (Matt 5:16; 12:20; Rev 3:12; 11:13; 20:9; 1 Pet 1:12).

The heavens spoken of must be the first two, for the dwelling place of God, to where we are

going if righteous, is eternal in the heavens (2 Cor 5:1).

This destruction will occur on the *day of judgment* (Rom 2:2, 3, 16; Heb 6:2). *The destruction of ungodly men* uses the word for destruction that indicates a loss of well being and not the loss of being. The idea is not extinction but ruin and loss. 2 Thess 2:6-9 explains:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have as one of their false doctrines the idea that the death of man is complete destruction. To them the death is annihilation, or a ceasing to exist. Their view is false for the following reasons. The meaning of the word *destruction* rules out any chance of loss of being, but means loss of well being.

DESTROY, DESTROYER, DESTRUCTION, DESTRUCTIVE *apollumi* NT:622, a strengthened form of *ollumi*, signifies "to destroy utterly"; in middle voice, "to perish." The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of wellbeing. This is clear from its use, as, e. g., of the marring of wine skins, Luke 5:37; of lost sheep, i. e., lost to the shepherd, metaphorical of spiritual destitution, Luke 15:4,6, etc.; the lost son, 15:24; of the perishing of food, John 6:27; of gold, 1 Peter 1:7. So of persons, Matt 2:13, "destroy"; 8:25, "perish"; 22:7; 27:20; of the loss of well-being in the case of the unsaved hereafter, Matt 10:28; Luke 13:3,5; John 3:16 v. 15 in some mss.; 10:28; 17:12; 2:12; 15:18; 2:15, "are perishing"; 4:3; 2:10; 4:12; 3:9. from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The view is not consistent with the Bible's teaching on eternal punishment Rev 20:10-15; Rev 21:8; Matt 25:46 where torment is forever and ever or literally into the ages of the ages.

The Certainty of the Second Coming and the Day of Judgment

2 Peter 3:8-9

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The second coming and the end of the world will come. Regardless of how it may appear to us, God has not forgotten his promise to destroy the world. A thousand years is as one day with God, and God does not reckon time as we do. Time has no effect on God, for God is infinite. Thus, to say because it has not yet happened, it will not happen, is absurd. To say that a thousand years is one of God's days is a misunderstanding of the passage. The passage is not concerned with telling us how long God's days are, but rather to show that time does not affect God.

Humankind needs to understand that the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise. *Slow* means to tarry or to be slack. Therefore, the meaning of the passage is that regardless of how long it may be in time, the Lord will still fulfill his promise. The Lord is *patient*:

Wanting is a deliberate exercise of the will. Therefore, God is deliberate in His desire for us to repent and in His waiting for that to happen. Repentance—an amendment, a change of mind,

and a turning away and turning to—is here repentance from evil. From all of this, we must understand that the end of the world is sure to come and we ought to be thankful that we have a chance to repent. We should take advantage of the opportunity before the Lord comes with his angels in flaming fire.

The Utter Destruction of the Heavens and Earth

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Peter is very specific as to what one might expect at the second coming of the Lord. *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief* shows that it cannot be predicted. It will come unexpectedly and without warning. (Matt 24:43-44; 1 Thess 5:2; Rev 3:3). *The day of the Lord* denotes the judgment and the coming of Christ (1 Thess 5:2; 1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:6; 2 Thess 2:2). Certain things will assuredly take place at the coming of the Lord. The heaven shall *disappear with a roar*. The *heavens* include the immediate atmosphere where the birds fly and the universe with the stars, planets, and earth (See notes on verse 7). The heavens will perish and the noise shall accompany the passing away. *The elements will be destroyed by fire*. Used in the plural, *elements* signifies any first things from which others in a series, or a composite whole, take their rise—the substance of the material world is the meaning in 2 Pet. 3:10. *Laid bare*—meaning to loose—shows that the elements will separate or come loose from one another. Therefore, the end will be complete demolition of the elements constituting the universe. All of this will result from *fervent heat*. *And the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up*. It is important to note that the earth will be destroyed and all the works in it whether by man or God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach among other false doctrines that the earth shall abide forever; that the meek shall live upon this earth. They say that the New Earth (3:13) (Rev 21:1) is actually this earth, new in the sense that it will be cleansed of wickedness. Their view is essentially that the literal earth is as permanent as God's throne; therefore, never destroyed (Isa 66:1; Isa 78:69; Eccl. 1:4). And the earth to be destroyed is Satan's visible organization of Human Society (2 Pet 3:10; Isa 3:19; Rev 20:11).

The fallacies of this position are that the second point is without foundation and is total assumption. Even the elements of the earth in this passage shall be dissolved and utterly burned up. The earth abiding forever can be understood in the literal translation of the Greek *into the ages*, a designation of a long period. Compare this to the translation of forever and forever, *into the ages of the ages*.

What Manner of Persons Ought Christians to Be

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

What will be the end of the Lord's faithful—those who come to repentance? Peter answers this question directly:

What kind of people ought you to be? Peter answers is rhetorical question, *"You ought to live holy and godly lives."* The Christian's attitude toward the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world should center on *all holy living and godliness*. We should *look forward to the day of God and speed its coming* And we should be looking for the New Heavens and a New Earth (Rev

21:1; Isa 65:17; 66:22).

Conclusion to the Letter and Final Exhortations

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Peter concludes with an exhortation to remain steadfast. We are to *give diligence* (see 1:5), to be *found in peace* (see 1:2), and *spotless and blameless with him*. The end of our faithfulness is salvation. Paul had discussed the same things in his epistle to them. Peter affirms that Paul spoke according to the wisdom given him. Paul describes this wisdom in I Cor 2:1-13). He spoke of these things (I Cor 15; 1 Thess 4-5; 2 Thess. 2). Some of things taught are by nature hard to grasp. (Note that they are not impossible--Eph 3:3-5; 2 Tim 3:15; John 7:17). Here Peter says that what Paul wrote was scripture; therefore, as scripture his writings are inspired, as were the writings of the New Testament apostles and prophets. It is fitting to close these epistles of James and Peter with the scriptures attesting to the inspiration of these men.

As just established, Paul wrote scripture.

All scripture is inspired of God, according to 2 Tim 3:16-17:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul was inspired, according to 1 Cor 2:12-13:

12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

The holy apostles and prophets of the New Testament were inspired of God, according to Eph 3:2-5:

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The Old Testament and New Testament are scripture and inspired as the Spirit of God moved men, according to 2 Peter 1:20-21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Peter concludes that since we know these things, we must be prepared and not let the

wicked carry us away to fall from our steadfastness. In contrast to this, we are to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.