

THE APOSTLE JESUS RENAMED

John 1:35-42

Intro: Today I am beginning a series on 1 Peter, but rather than begin with the text of the Apostle Peter's first epistle, I want to spend the time today thinking about Peter himself. I believe it always helps us to appreciate anyone's writing if we know something about that person. And I say that knowing that the Apostle Peter did not write his epistles "on his own." When he said in his second epistle with reference to the Old Testament that "men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21), his words applied equally to the writers of the New Testament - and so they applied to himself! Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit did not ignore the character of the men He used to give us the Bible, nor did He ignore their own understanding of the truth which they wrote about. And any reader of the Gospels, and of the book of Acts, will readily agree that the Holy Spirit has given us much information about this man who was so marvelously used by God, and yet a man like all of us who had many and deep spiritual needs.

We will be looking at several passages of Scripture today, but I am starting today with what must have been:

I. PETER'S FIRST MEETING WITH OUR LORD (John 1:35-42).

It is ought to be interesting to all of us that John the Baptist was really the human instrument the Lord used to bring Simon (which was Peter's original name) to the Lord. We learn here that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, and it is generally agreed that the other man of the two who are spoken of in John 1:37, was the man who became the Apostle John. Both were disciples of John the Baptist.

You will notice from our text that these two, Andrew and, supposedly, John, spent at least several hours with the Lord. As soon as that time was over, Andrew found his brother Simon, and brought him to the Lord. The only thing we are told about their time with the Lord, was that the Lord said to Peter, "The art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas," and then John the Apostle added, "which is by interpretation, A stone." That interpretation is for our benefit.

This was probably not all that the Lord said to Peter, but this was the main message that He had for him.

"Cephas" is Aramaic, the language spoken by the people of Israel at the time our Lord was here on earth. It is very similar to Hebrew. "Peter" means the same thing, but it is from the Greek. The name Cephas is found only here in the Gospels, but it is found again in 1 Corinthians four times, and in the epistle to the Galatians once.

We are not told what Peter's reaction was, but it must have startled him somewhat for the Lord to tell him this. It meant that he would be known for his strength, especially his spiritual strength. And it is in this direction that the story of Peter in Scripture goes and develops.

We can only speculate as to why Peter's parents would have named him Simon, or Simeon. It was the name of one of Leah's sons, and that may have been the reason. It meant "hearkening," and perhaps they had hoped and prayed that their son would become a man who would *hearken, listen*, to the Word of God. And they may have prayed to that end. If so, their prayers were certainly answered.

As far as we know, Peter and Andrew were the first to be called to be apostles, and Peter's name appears at the first of every list of the apostles in the Gospels. So it was very important that spiritually he would live up to his name. In fact, we all should be Peters because the work of the Lord requires that we "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10).

But let me take you to another passage. This time it is to a very familiar passage in the Gospel of Matthew: chapter 16, beginning with verse 13. It is the account which gives us what Peter understood about Christ. It is often called,

II. PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION OF CHRIST (Matt. 16:13-23).

It is not my purpose to go into this whole passage except to show what it revealed about Peter.

The Lord had taken his disciples unto into Caesarea Philippi. And while they were there He asked them what people were saying about Him, that is, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). They had different answers to give. Some thought that He was John the Baptist. Others thought that He was Elijah. Still others said that He was Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But then the Lord turn the question on the disciples themselves: "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). Peter

responded by saying very definitely, "Thou art the Christ," *i.e., the Christ*, "the Son of the living God."

Peter had come to a true understanding of the Person of our Lord. The Lord declared that Peter was "blessed," meaning that he was blessed, happy, fortunate. But then the Lord went on to say how Peter had come to this understanding: "For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt 16:17).

I think that we can say from this that Peter was ahead of his fellow disciples in his understanding of Christ. He was a man who had been taught by God, the Father. And this is one of the important factors in becoming spiritually strong. No child of God is truly strong unless he, or she, is strong in the Word, and especially concerning what the Word teaches about Christ.

But if you read on in that same passage you will see that Peter went from being declared "blessed" by the Lord, to being the spokesman for Satan himself. And I say this because when the Lord began to tell His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the Jews, and then be killed, but would rise again, Peter began to rebuke the Lord telling Him that the Jews would never be able to do this to the Lord. And Peter certainly meant that he would be there to make sure that they didn't do it.

So Peter was clear on Who the Lord was, but he was completely in the dark as to what the Lord had come to do. And this is what the Lord said to Peter in His rebuke of Peter:

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Matt.16:23).

Peter deserved the same kind of a rebuke that the Lord gave to the two disciples He walked with on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection. Do you remember what He said to them?

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? (Luke 24:25-26).

Peter was like we all are. There were some things that he understood, but there were other things, equally important, that he did not understand. This brings Peter's words at the end of his second epistle into clear focus. I am referring to 2 Peter 3:18 where he wrote:

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

How wonderful it is to read Peter's message in Acts 2 which he preached in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. What he had not understood before, at this point in his life he proclaimed the truth about our Lord's work as clearly as it could possibly be.

In this connection it is also wonderful to see the depth of understanding that Peter had later in life concerning all of the ways of the Lord as they affect our lives.

But I want to point out another feature of Peter's life which was weak while the Lord was here on earth, but which became very strong as the Lord continued to teach him.

III. PETER'S STRONG SELF CONFIDENCE (Matt 26:31-35).

I am referring to an incident which immediately followed the time that the Lord had with His disciples in the Upper Room where they had observed the Lord's Supper for the first time. This is how Matthew related the incident:

- 31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.
- 32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.
- 33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.
- 34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
- 35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Peter's self-confidence was shared by all of the disciples, but he was the one who expressed how he felt about himself to the Lord.

Luke brought in an aspect of what was involved here, and we find that recorded in Luke 22:31-34:

- 31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:
- 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.
- 33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee,

both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

— But Peter did not believe the Lord. He did not understand his own weakness, nor did he understand the power of Satan. Do you remember that it was the Apostle Peter who gave us these words?

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

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

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

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

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

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen
(1 Pet. 5:6-11).

— But before Peter understood how foolish his own self confidence was, and how much he needed to trust the Lord, do you remember what happened? Let me read that for you. I find it to be one of the most heart-moving incidents recorded in all of Scripture. Here is Matthew's account:

69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:69-75).

— Can you imagine an apostle, in fact, the leader of the apostles, talking like

Peter must have spoken at that crucial hour in his life? What had happened to all of that self-confidence which he had spoken about earlier? Here was a man gripped with fear, fear for his own safety.

Satan had things figured out fairly accurately when he told God what Job would do if God would allow him, Satan, to attack Job's body. These were Satan's words:

And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life (Job 2:4).

And just five verses later we have these words from Job's wife:

Then said his wife unto him [to Job], Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die (Job 2:9).

Job didn't do what Satan thought he would do, but he did have his struggles with what was taking place in his life. And Job's wife was completely ready to give up.

What did Peter do? After doing what he said he would never do, "he went out, and wept bitterly." Thayer says that "bitterly" means "with poignant [poin-yant] grief. The dictionary defines poignant as *painfully moving*, but also *piercingly effective*. His faith did not fail, but that revelation of himself that the Lord gave him at that time forever crushed his self-confidence. If Peter could hear all of the talk today even among Christians about self-esteem and self-love, he would tell us how the Lord shattered those characteristics which he had a full supply of by nature. Peter learned the hard way how much he needed to trust in the Lord, and not in himself. Oh, I am sure that Peter struggled with himself all of his life, but he was never the same after the terrible way he had renounced any relationship at all with the Lord he really loved very dearly.

In Peter's first epistle he spoke of believers as those "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). You see, we don't keep ourselves; He keeps us, and no one can pluck us out of his hand.

What experiences have you had where the Lord was teaching you not to trust in yourself, but to put your full confidence in Him? These are times that you and I can never forget. Apart from the grace of God they will leave us in total despair. That is why we need to finish this brief survey of the life of Simon Peter with a remembrance of

IV. THE TENDER MERCIES OF THE LORD (John 21:15-17).

We all need to ask ourselves, "What would I have done with Peter if I had been in the Lord's place? Would I have dismissed him from being an apostle? Or would I have tried to get a pledge from him that he would never again do what he had done? What would I have done?"

Instead of trying to answer those questions, let us see what the Lord did.

The Lord asked Simon if he really loved Him more than the other disciples loved Him, as he had before claimed that he did. And the Lord used the word ἀγαπάω. Peter responded with φιλέω, as though he were hesitant to use the stronger word, ἀγαπάω. The same thing happened when the Lord asked Peter the same question the second time. The third time the Lord used the weaker φιλέω, and Peter used this same word for the third time. You can see by Peter's answers that his self confidence was gone. Adam Clarke in his commentary on this passage has a very possible explanation for the statement when the Lord asked him the third time about his love. He got it from Chrysostom, and this is his comment: on John 21:17:

[Peter was grieved] Fearing, says Chrysostom, lest Christ saw something in his heart which he saw not himself, and which might lead to another fall; and that Christ was about to tell him of it, as he had before predicted his denial.
(from Adam Clarke Commentary)

The Lord Jesus knew that if he had Peter's love, even though it might not be all that it could and should be, yet that was what would qualify Peter to tend the lambs and to shepherd the sheep.

Concl: How amazing God is in His dealings with us! We all have our own spiritual autobiography which could be written. And in every case we would see not only our own pride and failures, but also much evidence of the grace of God, and of His lovingkindness. As we face another year, and as we begin the study of the epistles of this man Peter who knew and loved the Lord so well, let us profit from Peter's mistakes, but also from what he learned. And let us pray that the Lord will work in our hearts that we may live for the Lord and serve the Lord in the same loving and humble way that the Apostle Peter did. We all need to love the Lord more, and to trust Him more. This is where the blessing is, and this is where we can enjoy the sweetest fellowship with the Lord as well as with each other.

PETER, THE COMFORTER

1 Peter 1:1-2

Intro: Last week in our morning service we looked into the Gospel records to get acquainted with the Apostle Peter who wrote the two epistles in the NT which carry his name, *i.e.*, 1 and 2 Peter. We notice that the first time he met the Lord, the Lord indicated that there would be a change in his name. His name originally was Simon, the Lord said that he would be called "Cephas" in the Aramaic, or "Peter" in the Greek. The change was significant because both Cephas and Peter in their respective languages mean *a rock*. And, as we traced the early history of Simon Peter in the Gospels we saw that while he had a very strong personality and was very self-confident, spiritually he was weak. This weakness led to his tragic denial that he even knew the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord so worked in his heart that he became one of the mightiest messengers of the Gospel that we have in the NT. God truly did make him *a rock of spiritual strength*.

His particular ministry was to be with the Jews, but we learn from Acts 10 that he was the one whom the Lord used to open the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul mentioned in his letter to the Galatians, that "He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision [or the Jews], the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:8). Paul was giving God the glory for all that had been accomplished by Peter, as well as all that had been accomplished through himself. At the same time, we recognize that although Paul ministered to Gentiles, yet it seems that when he went to a new city he began his ministry in the synagogues, and among the Jews. In the same way, Peter ministered to Jews as well as to Gentiles. And that seems to be true of this epistle, although there was a special way in which the things he said applied to his Jewish brethren.

Jewish believers suffered greatly in the early days of the church, and many had to leave their homes to escape death itself. This was especially true of Jerusalem Jews. It may have been true, as Kenneth Wuest says in his commentary, that some Jews went to other parts of the empire to take advantage of business opportunities in Gentile centers. However, the fact that the Apostle Peter mentions trials and sufferings in each chapter of this epistle, shows that how they would fare under persecution was certainly one of Peter's major concerns. Furthermore, it is important to notice, as we will see time and time again in going through the epistle, that Peter wanted them to know that their greatest source of strength during their

times of trial and suffering, was in faithfully maintaining a vital fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the values of the epistle for us, too. We never know how we are going to be tried, or what obstacles may fall across our paths. That is the reason we need to be concerned about being spiritually strong every day that we live.

This epistle was probably written about 30 years after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. This would place it somewhere between the early and middle 60's. Remember that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and this epistle was written before that. Nero was the Roman ruler at this time, and under his reign the Christians suffered greatly. And it was thought that both Peter and Paul were martyred during this time.

What the believers in those days needed was encouragement, comfort. And this is why the Apostle Peter wrote. That is why I have entitled my message on the first two verses, *Peter, the Comforter*. Of course, the Holy Spirit is our main Comforter, but Peter, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was the human instrument the Holy Spirit was using to bring encouragement to those suffering saints.

Comfort and encouragement are both possible translations of the same Greek word, and it is from the same word that the Holy Spirit is called our Comforter. It can probably be said that all of us turn to the Word of God every day to find comfort for ourselves. We, like those early Christians, live in a wicked world, and there is always much to discourage us. That is why we need to be reading and meditating on the Word of God every day. And this is a good place for me to ask you to be reading 1 Peter during the weeks ahead when we will be considering together this very valuable portion of the Scriptures. Try to read it at least once a week, and more if you possible can. The more we all read it, the greater will be our blessing as we come together on Sunday mornings to consider it together.

But now let us turn to the first two verses of the epistle. (Read.)

The first information we are given has to do with:

I. THE WRITER: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:1a).

We learned last Sunday (if we did not know it before) that Peter is the name that was given to this apostle by our Lord Jesus Christ to indicate what he would become by the grace of God. And to be able to say that he was "an apostle of Jesus Christ" was his authority for writing. He was one

of a group of men, actually 13 in number, who was commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ for the work that they were doing. It implies that he had been sent forth *from* Jesus Christ, as a personal representative of Jesus Christ. I have said many times that the authority of the NT rests upon the authority of the apostles, and their authority was given to them by our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter, like Paul, undoubtedly wrote many other letters which did not come in the category of this epistle, and Peter's second epistle, but this one did, and it has been given its place in this book we call the Bible. Peter, like all of the other writers of the books of the Bible, used their own style of writing, and their writing reflects their own understanding of the truth, but they were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote, preserved from error, so that what we have here is the very Word of God! No man had the right to take this office for himself; it was only for those who were specifically called by our Lord as His apostles. So Peter's concern for the believers to whom he was writing was an evidence of the concern which their Lord had for them. And it would have been Peter's concern that he write only that which the Lord would have him write.

Our Lord's full name and title is, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the writers of the NT epistles do not always use His full name. And yet we must believe that just as the Holy Spirit guided them in all that they wrote about, so He guided them as to how they were to refer to our Lord. Sometimes it is "the Lord Jesus Christ" (as in verse 3 of this chapter), sometimes "Jesus Christ" (as here in verse 1, and again in the latter part of verse 3), sometimes just "Lord," sometimes just "Christ," sometimes "Christ Jesus," sometimes just "Jesus." But always as directed by the Holy Spirit.

I have just concluded a series on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in which we paid particular attention to the Names and Titles of our Lord. And we learned that "Jesus" was the Name given to Mary's first child because He would "save His people from their sins." And we all should know that "Christ" means *the Anointed One, the Messiah!* The Name Jesus is an indication of His humanity, and "Christ" is an indication of His Deity. The Jesus Christ about Whom Peter was writing here was the same Jesus Christ he had known while our Lord was here on earth. He was at the time of Peter's writing the risen, glorified, and ascended Son of God. And it was primarily that same "Jesus Christ," mindful of every need of His people, who was now speaking through his servant that message which He wanted them to have. Those believers to whom Peter was writing obviously had written and received many letters, but none which carried with it authority and blessing such as this letter!

So even though we are accustomed to such a greeting from other epistles in the NT, let us dwell on each of these words until their authority and love is deeply impressed upon our own hearts.

— But now let us consider:

II. THE ONES TO WHOM THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN: "To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet. 1:1b).

Now I hope that all of you will take the time to consult a map in the back of your Bible, or in some Bible Atlas, to locate the places that are mentioned here. You will find that they are all areas, not cities. And so many cities were included. It would be impossible for us to find out how many individual believers Peter had in mind, but you can be sure that there were many of them. The Gospel had borne much fruit in just the thirty years or so since the Lord Jesus had returned to heaven. It is in that area now occupied by Turkey. Paul had ministered also in many of those cities. The cities mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 were all in this area. And so this letter was to have a wide circulation. It was the equivalent of what Peter would have written today if he were writing to us: Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, etc. And this epistle indicates that the situation in all of those places was basically the same. They were "strangers scattered."

"Strangers" – The Greek text would allow the translation, *to the elect strangers*. But our translators have seen fit to move the word "elect" down into verse two. But perhaps it belongs here. And so then we would have the statement, *to the elect strangers*. Wherever that word belongs, it is important to know that it is here in this passage.

A stranger, according to the Greek word that Peter used, is a citizen of one country who moves into another country and settles down with the natives of that country. Then Peter added the word "scattered." And Wuest adds, "scattered as seed" (p. 18).

— Now it is very likely that many of those to whom Peter was writing were like Paul, and perhaps the same was true of Peter, citizens of the Roman Empire. But their greater citizenship was a heavenly citizenship, and this latter citizenship is what made them strangers and foreigners regardless of where they lived on the earth.

The same is true of us today. I was born in Tacoma, Washington. I am, like most of you, a citizen of the United States by birth, but, because I belong to Jesus Christ Who is my Savior, I am also a foreigner in my own native country. That does not mean that I don't have responsibilities here, but it means that my eternal citizenship is in heaven. This is what the Apostle Paul declared in Phil. 3:20-21. Let me read it to you in the NKJV:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

The KJV has "conversation," but it is the Greek word for *citizenship*.

I met a pastor the other day whom I have known for many years, and he was lamenting how the work of the church has changed in recent years. And he said, "I don't feel like I belong any more." You see, when we bring the world into the church, we don't belong in a situation like that. We are citizens of heaven. Spiritually we are strangers and foreigners here on earth. Peter referred to this same truth in 1 Pet. 2:11-12. (Read.)

Peter was seeking to encourage those believers throughout that whole area, and this is where he started. We are here as "seed." We are here to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel. But this is not really our home. Heaven is our home. We are only here for a short time. And we have this position here on earth because we have been chosen by God to belong to Him and to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is our first line of encouragement.

But how did we get to have this position?

The Apostle Peter described what has made us citizens of heaven in verse 2.

III. THE SPIRITUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (1 Pet. 1:2).

It is not our doing, but you will notice that this position that those believers had in this world was the work of the Father, of the Holy Spirit, and of Jesus Christ.

A. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2a).

This does not mean, as it is often interpreted, that God chose us knowing that we would turn to Him. It is the forethought that God had in choosing us knowing that because of the depravity of our sinful hearts, we would never have chosen Him. One Greek scholar (Thayer) calls it God's pre-arrangement of our salvation. Another (Wuest) called it God's foreordained plan to save us.

If we leave the word "chosen" where it is in the Greek text, it indicates that it was all according to God's plan that those believers were where they are according to the foreordained plan of God. How wonderful it is to be able to say, "I am here where I am by the will of God." Perhaps those believers, as they faced their trials and their persecution, were wondering if they were where they should be. Peter said, "You are." It was God's plan to save them, and it was God's plan to place them where they were. Talk about encouragement, this is encouragement!

And will you and I take this to heart as we face our circumstances today? Regardless of what happens in the so-called trial that is going on in Washington, we as Americans better realize that we are not going to get away with all of the godlessness that is going on in this nation today. No other nation has done what we are doing, and has survived. How thankful we ought to be that the Lord has chosen us for salvation, and that He has placed us here, where we are, at this stage in our nation's history, to be salt and light to a nation enveloped in intense spiritual darkness. God could have placed us all at any other time in history, but we are here now, and our task is the same that the people of God in every generation have had: we are here to bear witness to Christ by our lives and by the testimony of our lips.

But let us notice the next phrase.

B. "Through sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:2m).

Let us give this word "sanctification" its full meaning here. The Holy Spirit is the One Who sets us apart from the people of the world and set apart for God, and His purpose in doing so is that we might be a holy people. From the moment we receive Christ, the Holy Spirit goes to work in us to make us like our Savior. He prays for us. And He works in us. He teaches us the Word, and then empowers us to live according to the Word. Our only hope of surviving in a world like this is that the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us. He not only strengthens us to do God's will, but He restrains us when we would turn away from God.

Can't you see how this very truth would be an encouragement to those people, just as it ought to be an encouragement to us? Not only do we have God the Father on our side, but we have the Holy Spirit on our side. We belong to God, and He keeps us. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and He is sanctifying us.

But there is even more here.

C. "Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2m).

The result of the Spirit's sanctifying work is obedience to the Lord and to His Word. And that which keeps us walking in fellowship with the Lord is the continuing effect of the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed upon the Cross.

This was Peter's version of what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:6-7,

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Lenski makes this comment in his comments on 1 Peter 1:2:

Living in obedience and constantly being cleansed with Christ's blood, we are what God intends for us to be: total strangers to the world of men around us, wherever we may live (p. 27).

In trials you and I have one major responsibility. It is that we keep walking in obedience to the Word of God. This is the purpose of the Spirit's ministry in our lives. Our circumstances never relieve us of this responsibility. There is never any excuse for disobedience.

Finally, Peter's introduction to this epistle closes with:

IV. PETER'S PRAYER FOR THE BELIEVERS TO WHOM HE WAS WRITING (1 Pet. 1:2b): "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

Doesn't this sound like the Apostle Paul? And wouldn't it be encouraging to the people through all of that area to know that Peter was aware of their circumstances, and praying for them. And often the most effective prayers

are the shortest prayers. The frequent repetition of this prayer by the Apostles is an indication that in all of our circumstances, whether viewed by us as good or difficult and hard, there are two basic needs which we have: "Grace ... and peace." And the words, "be multiplied" apply both to "grace" and to "peace." And "be multiplied" means "in a multitude of ways" (Lenski, p. 28).

Concl: We are saved by grace, and we live by grace. While we may seek to live to please God, we do not merit His blessings. They are all given in grace, and equally accessible to every believer. And to receive grace from the Lord each day is to be made strong – strong to endure the trials, strong to trust the Lord, strong to be faithful when nothing seems to be going right. And as we draw upon the grace of God, that wonderful peace of God which passes all of our ability to understand why we have it, will, as the Apostle Paul said, "keep"our "hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

Let us pray that the Lord will enable all of us to draw comfort and encouragement from this words which came to suffering saints from our Lord Jesus Christ, but was delivered by His rock-like servant, the Apostle Paul. These truths belong just as much to us today as they did to the saints so long ago for whom Peter carried such a great burden.

THE JOYFUL ANTICIPATION OF A LIVING HOPE

1 Peter 1:3-5

Intro: In the NT there are three epistles which begin with special praise to God where the word "blessed" is used. I am referring to 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. The word "blessed" speaks of praising God, and that is the way it is used in each one of these verses. More than that, it is *a word of adoration*. When the Apostles Paul and Peter began their epistle with these words, they were not only praising the Lord, but they were worshipping Him. Let me read the verses to you that I have in mind so you will all know what we are concerned with today in our text in 1 Peter.

First of all, this is what we find in 2 Cor. 1:3-4:

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be
able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort
wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

The second verse is in Eph. 1:3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath
blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

And then the third comes in our text here in 1 Peter 1. Actually, as we have it in our text, verses 3 through 5 make up just one sentence. You follow in your Bible as I read:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto
a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that
fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto
salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Usually when we praise the Lord as the apostles were doing in these verses, it means that they are happy about what the Lord is doing, or has done, or will do, or all three! And that certainly is the case with all three of these passages. And, coming as they do at the first of each of these three epistles, these verses set the tone for each of the epistles. They were not only praising God, but they were adoring Him, and what they said was the expression of the joy they felt in their hearts as they thought about the

works of God.

Yesterday in our men's prayer meeting, I read Psalm 105 to the men. And I pointed out to them that the Psalmist began this Psalm with a series of short commandments which we as the people of God are to observe. Now one of those commandments was this (you will find it in verse 2: "Talk ye of all His [God's] wondrous works." And then farther down in the Psalm, in verse 5, we read this:

Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth (Psa. 105:5).

God's works are manifold. We look all around us and we see His work of creation. History is one long story of the amazing works of God. But the work that surpasses all others is the work of salvation which all of the Lord's people have experienced, and continue to experience, and will yet experience in the glory that is to come. This is the Lord's crowning work. And it is this work with which these doxologies are concerned.

Today we are looking at Peter's doxology in his first epistle, and like the other two which the Apostle Paul has given us,

I. THE DOXOLOGY BEGINS WITH GOD (1 Pet. 1:3a).

The Apostles were always thinking about God, and in their writings they were directing their readers to God. They were conscious of how greatly God had blessed them, had blessed all of His people, and so they were not only expressing their own joy in God, but they were inviting their readers to join with them in praising God.

But different people reading this epistle would have different gods in mind when they see that term "God," and so the Apostle Peter, like the Apostle Paul, to do away with any doubt as to Whom he was praising, added, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, had this to say about God as compared with others who are worshiped as gods in this world. Listen to Paul's words:

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all

things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

So Peter was speaking of the only God, the one true God, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And it is only because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ that God will have anything to do with us. And there is no other one through whom we can come to God except the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through Christ that we can know God, and, as Calvin mentioned so long ago, "they who form their ideas of God ... apart from Christ, have an idol instead of the true God" (*Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, p. 28).

So there is really only one God, and He is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the One we praise; He is the God we adore! No one else is worthy of our praise. In fact, it is blasphemous to offer praise to any who therefore falsely bears the name of god (with a small G). This is the God of the Bible. He is the God of creation. He is the God of the OT and of the NT.

But as Peter thought about God, what characteristic of God was he the most grateful for in this passage? It was what we can well call,

II. A MOST GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTE (1 Pet. 1:3m).

Peter called it "his abundant mercy." "Mercy" belongs to that group of God's glorious attributes which include His love, His grace, His goodness, His longsuffering and compassion. This means that God did not deal with us as Peter was about to describe, because He had to, nor because we deserved such blessings as He has given us, but because of His abundant supply of mercy.

When Paul was speaking of his own salvation from sin, remembering that he had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the people of God, and how he had injured many of them, he went on to say, "but I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. 1:13). He should have been condemned forever and banished from the presence of God, but instead he "obtained mercy."

We had this same truth not too long ago in our Tuesday Class studies in Ephesians. Paul was reviewing for the Gentile believers how grievously they had formerly grieved God and just lived to satisfy their own lusts. But then as he began to speak about what God had done for them, he wrote, "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He

loved us, even when we were dead in sins ..." (Eph. 2:4-5a).

The same is true of all of us. We deserved the judgment of hell, but God extended His mercy to us. This ought to make us love the Lord forever with all of our hearts, or as King David wrote in Psalm 103:1-2,

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits (Psa. 103:1-2).

As I have said many times before, God's mercy is His answer to our miseries. It is sin that makes life miserable, and God has extended His mercy to us to take away our miseries.

But how does He do that?

Now I want you to notice in the remainder of our text that the Apostle Peter spoke of what God has done for His people in the past, they what we can expect in the future, and finally what He is doing for us in the present. Let me point out how he did this.

He was speaking of:

III. GOD'S WORK OF SALVATION (1 Pet. 1:3b-5).

Note that in verses 9 and 10, after speaking of what God has done for His people, he said that the end of their faith was "the salvation of your souls." And then he continued, "Of which salvation..." So Peter was speaking here of salvation, and this is what caused him to praise and adore God Who was the One Who planned and ordained His salvation.

Now let us look first at what Peter said about *the past*. He was not speaking about everybody, but about everyone who was trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation. And so speaking of them, he pointed first to the past.

A. The past (1 Pet. 1:3b).

Here are the words to which I am referring when I speak of the past. God is the subject, and so we say "God ... hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

What a lot of wonderful truth is contained in these words! But be sure to

notice that Peter did not say that they had changed themselves. Instead he said that they had been born again, they had received new life, eternal life, divine life as a work of God which gave promise of "a lively hope," and this life and hope became theirs through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a free gift to us from God, but it was purchased for us at the infinite price paid by our Lord Jesus Christ when by His death He took the penalty for our sins, and was raised back to life again as proof that He had completely satisfied God's righteous demands.

What is "a lively hope"? Well, we would say today that it is *a living hope, a real hope, a glorious prospect for the future that is guaranteed to us by God Himself.*

The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of this hope with these words:

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 6: 17-20).

What is our hope? It is twofold: that some day we are going to be in heaven *with the Lord*, but also that we are going to be in heaven *made like the Lord*. And I can assure you that no one but a real Christian could possibly be interested in either one of these.

Now the mention of "a lively," or living "hope," let Peter to go on to speak of:

B. The future (1 Pet. 1:4a).

Peter called this hope, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." He used three adjectives to show that it cannot decay, nor can it be spoiled by anything else, and that it is eternal. The certainty of our hope could not be stated in any stronger way.

But how can we be sure of this, sure that it will be safeguarded for us, and

even sure that we will get there some day?

This takes us to:

C. The present (1 Pet. 1:4b-5).

Notice the word "reserved" in verse 4, and then the word "kept" in verse 5. They are two different words in the Greek, but both convey to us the idea of being guarded, protected. The second word was commonly used of a military guard. But when you take both of them together, you can see that our inheritance is being guarded safely for us, and that the same is true for us. We are under heavy guard to make sure that nothing will ever happen to our salvation. There is no such truth in Scripture that we can be saved, and then later become unsaved. How can we be sure that our salvation is absolutely secure? Is it because we can guarantee that we will never again sin nor displease God in any way? No! How then can we be sure? Because we "are kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." *The reason we know that salvation is eternal is because, from start to finish, it is a work of God.* God saves us through Christ, and God keeps us saved. If a person professes faith in Christ, and then goes back into the world, it is not because he was saved and has lost his salvation, but it is because he never was saved! May God forbid that we should ever dishonor Him by saying that He is not capable of finishing the work which He has begun in His people. Cf. Phil. 1:6; Jude 24-25; John 10:27-30.

Concl: Now why was it that the Apostle Peter went into all of this truth about salvation in writing to those who had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire?

There are at least three reasons, and there may have been more than three. But let me point out three which also apply to us today as they have to the Lord's people in all past generations, and will apply to them in all future generations.

First, we can see from this epistle that Peter was assuring them of God's care for them. They were going through hard times. They were suffering persecution. He want to assure them that the Lord would keep them and bless them, that He would never leave them nor forsake them. And so he sought to focus their attention upon God and the work that He had done, was doing, and would finally do, as their God and heavenly Father.

Second, we can see from our text for today that the Apostle was seeking to get their attention focused not only upon God, but upon the blessings that await us in heaven. This is one of the purposes of our trials. It makes us look forward longingly to the time when we will be with the Lord, and like the Lord. Most of us don't think enough about that. We are too earth-bound! Their sufferings made them realize that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth. The earthly hopes that the world offers are corruptible, and defiled, and they do fade away. If our hopes are centered in this world and this life, we are going to be disappointed, and we will end in despair. Our hope in God is altogether different, and we need to look longingly for that day when it will be fully "revealed in the last time" just what salvation is, and how glorious it is. We know, as the Apostle John said, that "we shall be like Him," but we also have to confess that as far as the complete picture of heaven and eternity for us is concerned, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." But let's get ready, and keep looking for the Lord.

Finally, in the light of the truth that the Apostle Peter presented here, and what he would go on to say in the remainder of this epistle, we need to be living in this ungodly, wicked world, and those who have been born again. By the new birth God has made us forever different from what we were before. We are His children. We are to do His will. We are to be a holy people. Peter was not long in getting to this subject. Read what he had to say here in chapter 1, verses 13-16.

We are seeing in our world today how wicked the world is, and how vile people can get when they turn away from God and from Christ. But the commandments of the Lord do not change. The darker conditions get, the brighter our lights should shine. Let us be praying that the Lord will give us the kind of boldness the early Christians had so that we may have the joy of seeing others recognize their spiritual needs as God draws them to Himself. And let us never forget that we have a continuing debt of gratitude that we owe to the Lord to praise and adore Him for all that He has done for us in Christ, all that He is doing this very day, and for all that He will continue to do.

THOSE NECESSARY TRIALS

1 Peter 1:6-9

Intro: Up to this point in the epistle the Apostle Peter's words have been marked by great joy which he felt in his heart, a joy which he was expressing in praise and adoration toward God. And you can see by reading the first five verses of 1 Peter 1 that his joy was in the blessing of salvation which he had experienced in his own life, but also in the prospect that this gave him for the future – "a living hope." He was thankful that it was guaranteed for him in heaven because God was keeping it for him, but also because he himself was being kept for that grand day. He knew that his inheritance was "incorruptible, and undefiled, and" that it never would fade away! He was more certain of the blessings of salvation that he ever could have been about an earthly possession that he might have. The people of this world are so prone to get as much as they can in the way of earthly possessions, but they do fade away and need to be replaced, or they can be stolen from us, or destroyed as many people in several of the southern states have experienced this past week when their towns have been damaged by storms, and many people have lost all of their possessions.

Just yesterday morning I read in Proverbs 23, verses 4 and 5,

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

In our study of the Sermon on the Mount you will remember that our Lord said this about treasures on earth and treasures in heaven:

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

In every generation there are many, many people who know nothing about laying up treasures in heaven. But this is what the people of God are exhorted to do. At the same time, we have many treasures, such as Peter was mentioning in our text which God is holding in reserve for us, treasures which we did not acquire by our own works, but treasures which we have by the grace of God.

In a world where so much emphasis is laid upon acquiring money in order to purchase things, things which never bring the joy that we thought they would bring, it is both refreshing and enlightening to read in the Bible of an inheritance, a living hope, which the people of God can never lose.

However, we all know that even for a Christian not everything is easy in this life. We have our joys, but we also have our sorrows. We rejoice in our blessings, but we sometimes, as the Apostle Peter said here in verse 6, "are in heaviness through manifold temptations," or trials. And if you read verse 6 carefully you will see that the Apostle was saying that we can be rejoicing greatly, and yet at the same time be "in heaviness through manifold temptations." Such talk seems to a person who doesn't know the Lord like an impossibility because gladness and sadness seem to be mutually exclusive. If you are glad, then you are not sad, and if you are sad, then you are not glad. But a careful reading of the text indicates that it is possible for us to be glad and sad at the same time.

Be sure to notice this in verse 6 where I want to begin my message today. In this verse the Apostle Peter spoke of:

I. A CHRISTIAN'S BLESSINGS AND TRIALS (1 Pet. 1:6).

If you are reading through this epistle each week in preparation for the Sunday morning messages, you will notice as I pointed out in, I think it was my first message in this series, that Peter referred to the trials and sufferings of his readers in every chapter.

We have it here in chapter 1. See it in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2. In chapter 3 notice suffering in verses 14 through 17. More than once in the epistle Peter spoke of the sufferings that our Lord experienced here on earth, and related our sufferings to His. In chapter 4 we have a very strong section on suffering, beginning with verse 12 and continuing on to the end of the chapter. In chapter 5 I will read just two verses: 10 and 11.

So we have trials referred to throughout the epistle.

In verse 6 of chapter 1 we are given some real encouragements regarding sufferings. One is, as I have been mentioning, trials do not have to mean that our joy must come to an end – even temporarily. In fact, if we are rejoicing in the right things, trials can actually increase our joy. When Paul was writing to the church in Philippi, he exhorted them not to worry, but to make their requests known to God, and he promised them that if

they did, they could experience "the peace of God which passeth understanding." By this he meant that they would have peace when, as far as their circumstances were concerned, there was no earthly reason why they could be at peace. Peace and joy usually go together. So we can be having a tough time personally, and yet at the same time can rejoice in the Lord and the many blessings that we have in Him. And Peter said that they would not only rejoice, but "greatly rejoice." That ought to be encouraging to us.

But notice also that Peter spoke of our trials as "for a season." That is, life is not one long trial, or one trial after another. It may seem like that at times, but God is the One Who is in control of our trials, and these words "for a season" means that He sets time limits on our trials.

Another thing that Peter mentioned is that we have "manifold temptations," or trials. The word that Peter used here which is translated "temptations" means anything that is a testing time for us. And he called them "manifold temptations" because there are different kinds. The main idea in the epistle regarding trials has to do with ways in which the believers were being persecuted for their faith in Christ. Sometimes it was just words of accusation that were thrown their way, at other times the trials became more physical, and sometimes resulted in death. But we have other trials such as physical problems, or financial problems, or the sorrow of losing in death someone we love. There are "manifold temptations," and it seems that we all, at one time or another, get a taste of each one. As far as persecution is concerned, we do not experience persecution and the threat of physical harm or death like those early Christians did, and perhaps the reason we don't is because we may not be as devoted to the Lord as those early Christians were. We all need to give some thought to that.

Trials always produce "heaviness." This is a good translation of the word that Paul used. When we are sad or unhappy, we speak of having a heavy heart. And sorrow can make us feel like we have a heavy weight pressing down on our hearts, or on our chests. I am sure that most of us know what that is.

But before I leave this verse I want to point out to you that little phrase, "if need be." These words are the translation of three words in the Greek text.

Some of you will remember that some time in the past I brought a series of messages on the word "must" which is often used in the NT. We have it

in statements like, "Ye must be born again." Or, John the Baptist's statement concerning the Lord, "He must increase, but I ... decrease." Or, "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." That word always speaks of something which was absolutely necessary in the plan and purpose of God.

Well that is the word that Peter used here. He was saying that our trials are what God sees that we *need*, experiences or testings which are *necessary* for our spiritual growth. When I was going through a time of considerable opposition in my ministry a number of years ago, my doctor brother who was living at the time, said to me as we were talking about it all in his office one day – he said, "Well, Cuss, if you didn't need it, you wouldn't get it." He didn't mean that God was punishing me, but he was encouraging me to believe that it was all a part of God's plan for me, and that God's purpose was to bring me blessing through the testing!

That is always God's purpose in our trials. We need to be careful as Peter also tells us in this epistle, that we do not suffer for our wrongdoing. But trials will come even though you and I sincerely try to live the ways the Lord wants us to live. As we often hear it said, "Untried faith is always weak faith."

And this is what Paul called these trials in verse 7:

II. "THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH" (1 Pet. 1:7).

These testings which God brings into our lives are in reality *trials of our faith*. They are testings which God brings along to make us stronger in the life that we are called to live, a life of trusting God.

You know, it is relatively easy to say that we are trusting God, walking by faith, when things are going smoothly in our lives, but when the trials come our way, then we realize how much we need to depend upon the Lord to keep us trusting Him. We are like Peter was when he boldly stepped out of the boat to walk on the water to meet the Lord, and then he began to notice how rough the water was, and being to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me!" He really wasn't trusting the Lord as much as he thought he was. How often you and I find ourselves in that same position. We may not be walking on the water, but we begin to sink when our trials hit us.

Now at this point in Peter's epistle he compared our trials with gold, *i.e.*,

with trials and money. And his point was, Which will make you the richer person, gold or trials. If we had a choice, I am afraid that most of us would be inclined to take the gold. But at this point we need the Word of God to help us to keep our values straight. Peter tells us (and he knew by his own experiences) that the trials of our faith, trials to prove the genuineness of our faith, trials to strengthen our faith, are not only more valuable than if the Lord were to give us a bag of gold, but they are "much more precious," much more valuable, even if it gets to the place where it is a *fiery trial*. The gold can perish. It can become devalued. Or we can spend it and it is gone. Or, when we die, we have to leave it behind. But the trial of our faith will "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Through our trials of faith the Lord is purging away the dross from our lives, so that when the Lord Jesus returns, we will "be found unto praise and honor and glory," that is, we will be to His "praise and honor and glory." This is like the Apostle Paul said in Eph. 1 three times, "That we should be to the praise of His glory." God is working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. Cf. Heb.3:20-21. All of our trials are designed especially by God to make us more like our precious Savior.

Our trials make us look longingly for the coming of the Lord when we will be with Him and like Him for all eternity.

III. PRESENT AND FUTURE RESULTS OF THE TRIAL OF OUR FAITH (1 Pet. 1:8-9).

Peter mentioned four present results in verses 8 and 9.

A. We will have a greater love for the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:8a).

Peter had seen the Lord, and loved Him, loved Him deeply. We haven't seen our Lord, but nevertheless we love Him. And there is something about going through the trials that the Lord brings into our lives, regardless of what they are, that makes us love the Lord more than ever before. He become a greater reality in our lives. Prayer becomes more extended, and even more spontaneous as we go about our daily lives. And we delight to see the Lord as He is revealed in His Word. And we look forward to that glorious day when we will finally see our precious Lord Jesus Christ *face to face*.

Face to face with Christ my Savior,
Face to face – what will it be –
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ Who died for me?

What rejoicing in His presence,
When are banished grief and pain;
When the crooked ways are straightened,
And the dark things shall be plain

Face to face! O blissful moment!
Face to face – to see and know;
Face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ Who loves me so.

But there is a second present result.

B. We will trust Him more (1 Pet. 1:8m).

We see this in the words, "yet believing." In trials we are taken beyond our own resources, and what we can do for ourselves. And so we learn how much we need to trust the Lord, and we do trust Him more. This always follows loving Him more. What peace this brings to our hearts, and what joy this brings to His.

And the third present result is:

C. We will rejoice in the Lord more (1 Pet. 1:8b).

We learn more about what it is to delight ourselves in the Lord. We joy in God, as the Apostle Paul said, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We want the Lord, not just for what we want from Him, but just because we want Him.

The fourth present result, having implications for the future is in verse 9.

D. By God's grace we will be making progress toward God's ultimate purpose in saving us (1 Pet. 1:9).

It is wonderful to see how God's purpose in saving us, is furthered along through the trials and testings, those "manifold temptations," which He has planned for us. Even our Lord "learned obedience" as a Man "by the

things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). We learn the importance of obeying God in our trials, and through our obedience to the Lord, the Holy Spirit continues to work in us, making us more and more like the Savior.

Concl: This is truly a very important and a very precious passage, isn't it?

I trust that we all have received encouragement from it. We all have our trials, and are in them in one way or another right now. Let us look to the Lord to keep us in our trials, and to work His perfect work in us. Then by His grace we can be the recipient of these blessings which He directed Peter to tell us about in the early part of this epistle.

I close by reading the words of one of William Cowper's hymns which he wrote back in 1774, and it gives the message of our text today with real insight into the ways of the Lord. (#21 in the Trinity Hymnal.)

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the cloud ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.

THE GRACE OF GOD AND OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

1 Peter 1:10-12

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:10-17.**Intro:** The truth of salvation has always called for the exercise of faith.

We see this in the Old Testament, but we also see it in the New Testament. And even down to the present day, salvation always calls for trusting God in special ways because events in our lives do not always work out as we expect them to.

We see right from the beginning of this first epistle of Peter that he was writing to "strangers scattered" throughout the Empire. This does not mean that Peter did not know them (although he was not necessarily acquainted with everyone who would receive this letter), but it meant that he was writing to believers in all of those areas which he mentioned who were realizing that Christians are likely to be treated as foreigners by the people of this world. They had been scattered from their homes because of their faith in Christ. And it would seem from verse 12 of chapter 2 that Peter was writing primarily to Jewish believers. They had been rejected and driven away by their fellow Jews, and now they were being subjected to a hate campaign by the Gentiles. So they were getting trouble from both Jewish and Gentile unbelievers. Life for the people to whom Peter was writing had, from a human point-of-view been worse for them since they had been saved that it had been before they were saved. And this often causes confusion in the minds of the people of God. Their experience seemed to be in conflict with the promises of God. And that often is the case. It must have looked to the people like God did not care for them, or that He was punishing them for sins that they were not aware of.

I call your attention again to what Peter said to them in chapter 4, verse 12 and 13, where he told them not to think it "strange" that they were going through fiery trials. This means that they were thinking that it was "strange." And Peter meant by this word that they were not be shocked, nor surprised, nor astonished by what had happened to them. They were not to react as though what had happened to them had never happened to God's people before. I think that most of us know the feeling that they had because we often go through trials which baffle us and test our faith. It is difficult for us to expect what Christians often go through.

This feeling was demonstrated over and over again by the children of Israel as God led them from Egypt to the land He had promised to give to

His people, the land of Canaan. And you will remember how constantly the people rebelled against Moses and Aaron, but in reality against God, because of the difficult situations they had to face.

This problem is behind all that the Apostle Peter wrote in this epistle. And so we find that Peter began by restating some of the great truths of the Gospel (as he did in verses 1 through 5, and then by saying what he said about trials and testings in verses 6 through 9.

This brings us to our text for today: 1 Peter 1:10-12. Here we find him referring to:

I. THE DILEMMA OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS (1 Pet. 1:10-11).

This reference to the Old Testament prophets would also be an indication that Peter was writing to Jewish believers. The message of the prophets carried a great deal of weight with Jewish believers. And so Peter was seeking to show that the salvation which he preached, and which he mentioned in verses 5 and 9, and here in verse 10, was the same salvation that the prophets preached in Old Testament times. Peter said here that they prophesied "of that grace that should come unto you."

Now by the word "grace" he was referring to the grace of God in salvation. And he did not mean that it only applied to this latter generation, but that the full doctrine of salvation would only be apparent after the Messiah had come. They spoke prophetically of this salvation, relating it to the Messiah, or Christ, and then they preached what God had made known to them, and which the writing prophets were led by God to record for their own generation, and for following generations. Let me repeat what I have said before about the prophets: they were foretellers, but they were also forthtellers. They were enabled to foretell coming events, but they were primarily forthtellers, preachers, of that which had been revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

Now these verse are very interesting from more than one standpoint.

In the first place, Peter was indicating here that because the message of salvation had come through the prophets, this was an indication that the message of God's grace had not originated with them, but that it had been revealed to them by God. The theme of the prophets was, "Thus saith the Lord." Moses was one of the greatest of the prophets, and he repeated

these words over and over again. And the prophets were told to say this: "Thus saith the Lord." The Lord wanted the people to know that the message was from Him! In fact, most of you will remember that the Holy Spirit led Peter, in writing his second epistle, to give us one of the grandest and clearest statements of how we got the Bible. You will find his words, given by the Holy Spirit, in 2 Peter 1:20-21. (Turn to it and read.)

The idea in these verses is that OT prophecy did not originate with man. It is not the product of man's will, or man's wisdom. But "men of God," men especially chosen by God, spoke in their writings, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul has given us another great statement about the divine origin of Scripture when he wrote in 2 Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." It means that Scripture is *God-breathed*. It is God's Word. It was written by Paul or Peter, or by Isaiah or Jeremiah, but they were so directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit in their writings, that what they have given us is the very Word of God.

Therefore, when Peter in our text for today, referred to the prophets of the OT, he was not only saying that his message, *i.e.*, Peter's message was not only the message of the OT prophets, but that the message had come to the prophets and apostles alike from God. They were not different messages, but the same message, and they had come from God.

But there was another point that the Apostle Peter was making.

Peter spoke of the way the prophets studied their own writings. This is further proof that prophets preached and wrote the message which God had given to them.

When I have read some books I have wondered if the authors knew what they were writing about, but that was really the case with the OT prophets. And notice that their big question was, "When?" They did not doubt but that what God had revealed them was true, but the divine time schedule was what concerned them. I doubt if Abraham realized that what God had revealed to him about salvation, would not be fulfilled for approximately two thousand years. I doubt if David realized that what God had revealed to Him about the coming Messiah, would not be fulfilled for a thousand years. And I doubt if Isaiah and Micah realized that the coming of the Messiah was still seven hundred years away from the time in which they wrote. They did not doubt the Word that God gave them, but the part that

was lacking was the question as to *when* their prophecies of the coming Messiah and Redeemer would be fulfilled!

— So what did they do? Our text says that they "enquired and searched diligently ... searching ..."

Matthew Henry gives a vivid description of the words which the Apostle Peter used here. This is his comment:

The words are strong and emphatic, alluding to miners, who dig to the bottom, and break through not only the earth, but the rock, to come to the ore; so these holy prophets had an earnest desire to know, and were proportionably diligent in their enquiries after the grace of God, which was to be revealed in the days of the Messiah: their being inspired did not make their industrious search needless; for, notwithstanding their extraordinary assistance from God, they were obliged to make use of all the ordinary methods of improvement in wisdom and knowledge. Daniel was a man greatly beloved and inspired, yet he understood by books and study the computations of time, (Dan. 9:2). Even their own revelation required their study, meditation, and prayer.

— What a description these words give us of the way the prophets searched out the meaning of that which the Lord had revealed through them. For how many of us can our study of the Word of God be likened to the hard work that a miner does in searching for ore of any kind, breaking not only through the earth, but through rock, until they find that which they are looking for.

We, too, have trouble with the promises of the Word, don't we? And how often, instead of delving deeply into the work through reading, meditating upon, and praying over the Word, we turn away and get absorbed with our disappointments. The prophets did not respond in that way. They "enquired and searched diligently," seeking from God the answer to their questions. They craved an answer, but they did not go outside of the Scriptures to find the answer. Instead, they searched within the limits of Scripture to make as sure as they possibly could that they understood what was written, and did not overlook any detail.

— If such an attitude were to characterize us as the people of God today, what a difference it would make in our lives, and how it would strengthen our faith! May the Lord give us such a hunger for the truth that day by day we will searching for the treasures of the Word of God.

But this applies to our trials and testings as well. None of us knows the Word as well as we should, nor as well as we can, by the grace of God. But the Bible has the answer to our needs. As we shall see tonight in Psalm 19, there is a magnificence about the Word of God that goes beyond any other book that ever has been written, or any book that ever will be written. It was "the joy and rejoicing" of Jeremiah's heart when there was nothing in his circumstances which could give him joy. And the Psalmist has told us in Psa. 119:165, "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." And the Apostle Peter was certainly speaking of the Bible when he wrote in his second epistle that God, "according" to "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3).

But let us not overlook the fact that the main object of the prophets' inquiries and searches was *Christ!* He, as far as they were concerned (and they were right in this), was the key that unlocked the treasures of the Word of God. The Lord Jesus said when He was here on earth, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). The truth of salvation, and the doctrines of the Christian life, all find their center and circumference in Christ! So, as we turn to the Lord for comfort and guidance in our times of need, let us be a people who are always looking for our Lord on the pages of this sacred book which God Himself has given to us.

You see from verse 11 that they were searching the Scriptures not to see *if* the Messiah would come, but *when* He would come. And it was not to determine *if* He would suffer, but *when* He would suffer. And it was not to see *if* He would rise from the dead, but *when* He would rise from the dead. And it was not to see *if* He would enter into His glory, but *when!*

I can't emphasize too strongly that a great deal depends upon how we approach the Scriptures. If it is with suspicion and doubt, we will never learn the truths of Scripture. But if we come, approaching it as the Word of God, then we will be blessed and come away with our faith strengthened.

All of the OT saints had to deal with the question of *time*. And the writer of the book of Hebrews, after relating the way many OT saints demonstrated their faith, concluded in this way:

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

CHAPTER 12

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 11:39-12:2).

And before these words in the book of Hebrews, we read some other encouraging words in Hebrews 10 which apply to our text for today. They are found in Heb. 10:35-37:

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

But I must hurry on to finish.

Verse 12 of our text gives us:

II. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE PROPHETS' DILEMMA (1 Pet. 1:12).

The God Who gave His Word is the One Who guides us in understanding His Word. Here in verse 12 the word "revealed" does not mean that somewhere in the Bible each of the OT saints was told from Scripture that the promised Redeemer would not come in their day, but that they came to understand it in their hearts. So "these all died in faith" (Heb. 11:13). They did not die in unbelief and despair, but they died in the assurance that God would be faithful to His promise of salvation.

Neither does this mean that God told them in what generation the Lord would come. But Peter could say looking back upon the ministry of Christ that it had always been in the plan of God that the Lord would come in their generation. And that all of those OT promises which had to do with the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, had been fulfilled in their

day. And he must have been referring to the ministry of the apostles of our Lord, to himself included, when he wrote, "Which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit send down from heaven."

So the message of the apostles was the same as the message of the OT prophets, with this difference: the prophets spoke of the Messiah and Redeemer Who was to come; the apostles were able to proclaim the glorious truth that He had come, He had died and had been raised from the dead, after which He ascended back to the Father, having completed the work of salvation. The same Holy Spirit Who gave the promises to the OT prophets, and who blessed them as they proclaimed the good news of a coming Redeemer, was in Peter's day using apostles and NT prophets and many others to proclaim the good news that the Messiah had come, and had accomplished the work of salvation. Here we have two great ministries, that of the OT prophets and that of the NT apostles, but the message was one.

What a testimony to the faithfulness of God!

But will you notice that in closing this 12th verse of 1 Peter 1, the Apostle added what I would like to call:

III. THE APOSTLE'S POSTSCRIPT (1 Pet. 1:12b).

What is it? It is this: "Which things the angels desire to look into." What does this mean? It means that the angels in glory are interested in looking into the truths of the Word as they relate to the salvation of the people of God, and they want to do it like the OT prophets did.

Is that the way you feel about the Word of God?

Concl: We have no greater testimony to the faithfulness of God and to the truth of the Word of God than what we have in the coming, the death, and the resurrection unto glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the fulfillment of all of those promises regarding the first coming of our Lord, is proof that you and I can rest assured that our Lord is coming again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

And the ministry of our Lord gives added confirmation that you and I can trust all of the promises of God with the greatest confidence that they are true. This is what we need as we face our trials day by day.

LIVING BY HOPE

1 Peter 1:13-16

Intro: I feel sure that most of you have noticed that there is a difference between the writing of the Apostle Peter as compared with the writing of the Apostle Paul. As far as their teaching is concerned, they are in agreement in every detail. But I am referring to the arrangement of the material in their letters. In Ephesians, for example, the Apostle Paul really waited until he had gotten through the doctrinal part of that epistle before he began to concentrate on the practical application of his teaching. And this seems to be the pattern that he followed in most of his epistles. But before we have gotten through the first chapter of 1 Peter, we come to a very practical application of what the Apostle Peter had been saying up to this point. My text for today is 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 13 through 16, and it is all practical. And then, before we get to the end of the chapter, we have another practical exhortation in verse 22. (Read.) I would encourage you in reading this epistle to note how the Apostle Peter quickly moves in his teaching from the doctrinal to the practical, and then back to the doctrinal again. Both apostles agree that the doctrinal needs to be followed with practical applications, but they just go about it in different ways.

I have taken my subject, *Living By Hope*, from the statement in verse 13, "and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Now if they were to "hope to the end," this is an exhortation to *live by hope*, that is, to make *hope* one of the outstanding characteristics of their lives.

The practical exhortation in verse 22 to which I referred a moment ago gives us another characteristic that was to be dominant in their lives, and that was *love*. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesians that they were to "walk in love" (Eph. 5:2). So love is to be very evident in our lives as Christians – love for God, love for Christ, love for each other, and even a loving concern for people who are without Christ.

Paul was describing all Christians when he said that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). He meant by that statement that trusting God should always be an outstanding way to identify a child of God.

I could go on to speak of other things that are marks of a true Christians, but I think this will help you to see what I am thinking about. The Apostle Peter was teaching those early Christians that "hope" always needed to be

a trait that others would be aware was a very important part of their daily living.

The way the Apostle Paul expressed it in his letter to Titus should help us to understand what Peter was speaking about here. I am referring to the way Paul began Titus 2:13. He said that we are to be "looking for that blessed hope" which he said would take place at "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Our "hope" is the fulfillment of the purpose that God has had in saving every one of us. It is the hope of being in heaven, but, even more than that, *it is the hope of being like the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Peter was preparing his readers for this emphasis when he called them, in the first verse of this epistle, "strangers." This is what we all are in this world – "strangers." In chapter 2, verse 11, Peter called those Christians to whom he was writing, "strangers and pilgrims." You see, we are headed for heaven and glory, and we must not live in this world like we belonged here, and that we are going to be here forever. This world is not our permanent abiding place. The Lord is coming to take us to be where He is. Heaven is our home.

Someone reminded me the other day of the statement that used to be made of some Christians, that they were so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good. I personally have never known anyone like that. Most of us are not heavenly minded enough. We are too attached to this world. Besides, the Bible teaches us that the most heavenly minded of God's people are the ones who are doing the most good here on earth. We are not to put ourselves above other people because we know the Lord. That fact should make us the most humble people on the face of the earth. But the Lord leaves us here on earth that He might use us to make other people realize that there is an eternity ahead, and that we need to get ready for the day when either we die and go to be with the Lord, or the Lord will come to take us all to heaven. There is only one other alternative to heaven, and that is hell!

We speak of heaven and being with Christ as our hope, not because they are uncertain in our future, but because they are our certain future! They are guaranteed to all of us who know Christ as our Savior, guaranteed by God Himself.

Have you noticed that the Apostle Peter spoke of our hope *four times* in this epistle? First in verse 3 of chapter 1. (Read.) Next in our text for

today – verse 13 of chapter 1. (Read.) And then you will find it a third time in verse 21 of chapter 1. (Read.) The fourth time is in chapter 3, verse 15. (Read.) And all of these verses speak of the same thing, that future certain prospect that some day we will be in heaven with the Lord, and like the Lord.

If anyone should need further clarification on this great truth, we can find it in the writing of the Apostle John: 1 John 3:1-3:

- 1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
- 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
- 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Please notice that the Apostle John said that if you really have this hope in Christ, the proof will be seen in your desire to be holy – and this is exactly the emphasis that the Apostle Peter was making in our text for today.

As we look at verse 13 in 1 Peter 1, please notice the first word:

I. "WHEREFORE" (1 Pet. 1:13a).

This is a word which connects what the Apostle Peter had been writing about, with what now would follow. This means, "For what reason? What was His purpose, in this case, God's purpose? What objective did He have in mind?" Or we could translate it with a simple, "Why?"

To sum up all that the Apostle Peter had said up to this point, it was like here in verse 13 he was saying, "Why did God choose to save us? Why did Christ die and shed His blood on the Cross? Why have we been born again? Why are our trials here on earth a necessary part of what God is doing with us? And why did the OT prophets prophesy of the Gospel message?"

And the answer is, *because God was preparing a people to be in heaven with Him some day!* It all begins, as far as we are concerned, when we are born again. But we need to know that this is only the beginning. It is a glorious beginning when the Lord makes us new creatures in Christ, but it is still only the beginning of what God has planned for us. All of us need to move on from there.

Now Peter was speaking of what we are to do now in preparation for that which is to come. It could have been the Lord's plan to take each one of us to heaven the moment we are saved, but that is not what happens, at least, not usually. We are left here to live in this ungodly world, but we have certain prescribed responsibilities in our relationship to God. And first and foremost Peter described:

II. HOW WE ARE TO LIVE (1 Pet. 1:13b).

The life of Christians is described in various ways in the Bible, as I have pointed out to you already, but that which we read here is that we are to "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The Apostle Peter meant by this that we are not just to think about the coming of the Lord once in a while, and take comfort from that great truth, *but we are to live this way!* We are to be waiting expectantly for the coming of our Lord when we will experience what Peter said in verse 9 of this chapter. (Read.) When the Lord comes, and we are in heaven, we will then experience "the end," the completion of our salvation, the full realization of all that pertains to our salvation. This is not only when we will be in heaven, and not only when we will see the Lord and be with Him forever, but it will be when we are finally made like our Savior, conformed to the image of God's Son. We can't fully understand now what all of that will mean, but we know beyond any doubt that it will take place.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ" is the manifestation of His glory, the revelation of His glorious Person. His glory was veiled when He was here on earth before, but when He comes again, in the words of the Apostle John, "we shall see Him as He is." What a wonderful day that will be!

"The end" that Peter was speaking about here in verse 13 is until the Lord returns, or until He takes us home. This is always to be before us, ever in our minds, the greatest of our expectations.

But how do we do this? Is this just a feeling that we have in our hearts, or is there something that we need to be doing, or some things that we need to be doing. How do we "hope"?

III. THE PRACTICAL DETAILS OF OUR HOPING (1 Pet. 3:13-16).

There are three things in this passage which the Lord tells us to do, and one thing we are not to do. And, as I understand what it means to "hope," these are the details.

A. "Gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13a).

This expression really came from the Lord. In Luke 12:35 we read that the Lord His disciples in connection with His return,

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.

The Apostle Paul also used this expression in Eph. 6:14, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth..."

Thayer, in his Greek dictionary, says that it is a metaphor which speaks of being prepared, and that it is

derived from the practice of the Orientals, who in order to be unimpeded in their movements were accustomed, when starting a journey or engaging in any work, to bind their long flowing garments closely around their bodies and fastened them with a leather belt.

So it would seem that the Apostle Peter was speaking about being prepared mentally, since he referred to "the loins of your mind." This would mean that he was encouraging them to become informed and convinced about the truth of salvation, actually, the truth that Peter had been writing about in the preceding part of this chapter.

I think that all of us who know the Lord realize that when we are saved we need to "un-learn" a lot of things. By nature we have no place for God in our thoughts and lives. We are inclined to think of things in terms of our own welfare. The world's standards and God's standards are as different as night and day. The Apostle Paul in Rom. 12:1-2 spoken of "the renewing of your minds." The only way our minds can be "renewed" or *girded up*, is by learning the truth of God's Word. That is where we must start. We can't get along just by what others know. We must make the truth our own through faithful reading, meditating, memorizing, and hearing the Word as it is taught, trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth. He is the One Who gives us understanding.

So as we wait, we are learning, and we are living, and serving the Lord, but it all has to be in harmony with the Word of God. This is basic. If we ignore this we will not be prepared for the coming of the Lord, and that which is to follow.

Secondly,

B. "Be sober" (1 Pet. 1:13m).

Cf. 1 Pet. 4:7 (where it is translated, "watch"); 5:8 -- where Peter used the same word.

We probably would not be surprised to know that this word means to be free from intoxication. A person who lives according to the wisdom of this world is like an intoxicated person. And when people are saved, they feel like a person who is getting over a drinking spree where they think things and say things and do things if they were not under the influence of intoxicating drinks. A saved person will often say, "How could I ever have thought that that was right?" Or, "How could I have ever done such a thing?" Or, "How could I have ever lived like that?" It is only the Word of God that sobers us up, and makes us think straight about life and death and eternity.

It is easy for us to fall back into the old way of thinking and living, and so *watchfulness* is often connected in Scripture with being sober. We have to be constantly on our guard to make sure that we are living as God wants us to live, as He has taught us to live in His Word.

Please note how all of these points flow together. And this is true when we come to verse 14 where Peter spoke in terms of what we should not do.

C. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14).

The Apostle Peter has had much to say about the Word of God and what we learn from it. At this point he encouraged the Lord's "children" to be "obedient children," that is, not patterning their lives according to the way they used to live when they were ignorant of the Word of God, but by living in obedience to the Word of God.

"Not fashioning" is the very word that the Apostle Paul used in Rom. 12:2 when he wrote, "And be not conformed to this world."

The fashion of this world is to be seen in the way people *think* and the way they *act*. It is a way of life that is entirely different from the way the Lord teaches us to *think* and *act* in His Word. "Lusts" are desires, usually sensual desires. But they can include other desires – the love of money,

the love of pleasure, all connected with self-love. Peter said here that before these people were saved what they *thought* and the way they *lived* was guided by their ignorance – their ignorance of God, their ignorance of right and wrong, their ignorance of themselves and their true needs. Peter was saying that there needs to be a break with all of that. The person who claims to be a Christian, and yet has a lifestyle that has not been changed, is probably deceiving himself and is not a Christian at all.

But there is another side to this, a positive side, and this is the fourth point that the Apostle Peter made.

D. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1 15-16).

Instead of being worldly and sinful, we are to be holy because that is what God is. Remember that our hope is not just to be in heaven, but our hope is that we will be like Christ. And one thing that we have to say about the Lord Jesus Christ, is that He was holy. God is holy. And the Spirit is the Holy Spirit.

And this holiness is to apply to "all manner of conversation."

To us, our conversation is the way we talk. And the word that is used here in the Greek text includes our talk, but it includes much more than that. You will find if you consult your dictionary that this word used to mean *the way you live, your conduct*. It is a word which includes what you think, what you do, what you say, and ultimately all that you are as a person. This holiness is to extend to every part of our lives. And the new pattern of our lives is God Himself.

Now we all know that we have not reached that standard. And so we can easily understand that we have a life-long task ahead of us to become like God, and like our Lord Jesus Christ. As I have been saying over and over again, this is the end of our salvation, this is the goal God has set for every believer in Christ.

How is it to be realized? Certainly not in our own strength, but by the strength which the Lord gives to us, a strength that comes to us through the Word of God, and which is ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. "It is written," *it stands written*, this was God's purpose for His people in the Old Testament, and it is still His purpose for His people.

And here we have a good test for our faith, a test to show if we really have been saved. Do we want to be holy? Do we hate sin because of what it has done to us, and because of what the Lord Jesus has to experience in order to save us from our sins? Do we hate sin because God hates sin? Are the things that are abominable to Him, abominable to us? When God saves us, our attitude toward sin under goes a major change, and we find that we have a new desire to be like the Lord.

Concl: This is as far as a lot of people want to go in this first epistle of Peter. But this is the starting point in a life that is pleasing to God. There is much more to learn, but this is where we begin.

I know that what we have been reading about here in 1 Peter today is not new to many of you. But it behooves all of us to make an examination of our own hearts to make sure that this is the way we are living, and that by the grace of God we are seeing changes in our lives that can not be explained in any other way than that we have become new creatures by the mighty work of God in our hearts as He has given us the faith to trust in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we come to the Lord's table, this is an excellent time for all of us to do some self-examination to see how our lives measure up to 1 Pet. 1:13-16.

After the Lord's Supper: Rom. 15:13

LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

1 Peter 1:17-21

Intro: Let me encourage all of you again to be reading 1 Peter. I know that many of you have your own scheduled Bible reading, and I would not want to interfere with that, but I think that most of us can use some time that otherwise would be wasted to read, and re-read, this delightful first epistle of Peter. You can read it aloud and prayerfully and thoughtfully in twenty or twenty-five minutes. And you will find that the more you read it with the Lord's blessing, the more you will understand it, and the more you will profit spiritually from it.

The more I read this epistle, the more I see how greatly concerned the Apostle Peter was about the people to whom he was writing. They were probably a very large number of people who knew the Lord, but who had been driven from their homes and scattered throughout the Roman Empire because of their faith in Christ. Peter wanted them to understand the meaning of their trials so they could get the most benefit from them. He also warned them against the tendency to meet wrong with wrong. This would only raise the possibility that they would be charged with wrongdoing – a charge that was not acceptable for people who know the Lord.

The more I read this epistle, the more impressed I am with it. You might call it *a manual for suffering Christians*, and yet so much of it applies to our lives regardless of what our circumstances might be.

If you were here last Sunday, you know that Peter began to make some practical applications of his teaching in verse 13, and it all had to do with hoping "to the end for the grace that" would be "brought" to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). That is, they were to form the habit of looking forward to what would happen to them when the Lord Jesus would come back. And the main way in which they were to show that they were looking forward to the coming of the Lord was by their intention to be holy as the Lord is holy. He called them "obedient children." not necessarily because that is what they were, but because that is what they needed to be. Their lives needed to be characterized by obedience to the Word of God because there can be no holiness without obeying the Word of God. And, if they were to be holy, this would mean that there had to be a break with the kind of living they did before they were saved.

Now when we put all of this together, we can see that looking expectantly for the coming of the Lord, is one of the greatest incentives we can have

for holy living. None of us would want the Lord to find us compromising with sin in any way when He returns. So to avoid that possibility, we need to concentrate on being a holy people.

In the passage before us today, 1 Peter 1:17-21, the Apostle Peter added another exhortation to the one in the latter part of verse 13. This second main exhortation is in the latter part of verse 17: "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." We will come back to that exhortation in just a moment, but I want you to see that these two commandments seem to be at the heart of what the Apostle Peter was instructing the people to do. Of course the other commands that are given in connection with these two commands are important because they would help those early Christians to know how they were to do what Peter said that they should do. And these verses, of course, serve the same purpose for us.

In verse 14 the Apostle Peter addressed his readers as "obedient children." And by this he meant "obedient children" *of God!* They were members of God's family, born into that family by the new birth. Now in this section that we are considering he began by recognizing in another way that they were in the family of God. Please look at verse 17. Here we have:

I. A CHILD OF GOD DEFINED AS ONE WHO CALLS ON THE FATHER (1 Pet. 1:17).

A sentence which begins with an "if" is called a *conditional sentence*. For example, we can say, "If it rains, we will get wet when we go to our cars." But we will only get wet if it rains. So the condition is, *if it rains*. If it doesn't rain, we won't have to worry about getting wet.

When you take such an idea to 1 Peter 1:17, it seems as though Peter was saying to his readers that there were some who called upon the Father, and others who did not. But in this case, the Greeks had a way of using "if" to indicate that Peter was assuming that his readers did call on the Father. The Greek language is a very wonderful language because it is capable of so many different shades of meaning.

In this case, Peter did use a Greek word for "if" which he followed with a present tense of the verb, so that those who know the Greek language would immediately see that Peter was not questioning anyone's faith in Christ, but he was assuming that they did know the Lord. And so the proper translation of this verse is what is given in the NIV translation where instead of the word "if," the translators have used the word "since."

So this is the way it reads:

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear (1 Pet. 1:17, NIV).

So the word "if" assumes that his readers do call on the Father, and therefore the "if" becomes "since." He was not doubting their salvation, he was assuming that they really knew the Lord. And so Peter was addressing himself to those who are believing in Christ for salvation.

But what does it mean that *we call upon the Father*? We have called upon Him to save us. We call upon Him daily, or we should, in order to have fellowship with Him. We call upon Him to meet our needs, and the needs of those for whom we pray. We call upon Him in thanksgiving and worship. Our lives consist of calling upon God Who is our heavenly Father. We look to Him for guidance and blessing every day we live. It is another distinctive characteristic of Christians that they call upon the Lord. We are a people who pray.

But let me make a second point from our text, and this is the main point in what Peter was saying in these verses. Let me give it the title:

II. HOW SHOULD THEY THEN LIVE? (1 Pet. 1:17).

Our KJV text says very correctly, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." The NIV translates it, "Live your lives as strangers in reverent fear." He was reminding them again that they were strangers in this world, and that they were not to live like the people of the world live, but they were to live in the fear of the Lord.

That statement to "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" does not mean that we are to live in fear of what God might do to us, like we would fear a Caesar or some other wicked tyrant, but, in the words of Charles Simeon who lived in the last century, to fear the Lord to live with "a holy fear of offending Him, and a tender concern to please Him in all things" (Simeon, Charles, *Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 20, p.165). I think that is an excellent definition of what it means to fear the Lord.

Several years ago when I was teaching at Multnomah, we had the privilege of having Pastor J. B. Rowell in our home. He was the pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Victoria, B. C., and was lecturing at Multnomah. That was the occasion of his visit with us although I had known Dr.

Rowell in my teen years when he had visited my parents in Tacoma. Dr. Rowell was also a college classmate of Dr. Mitchell when both of them were students at Brandon College, in Brandon, Ontario. At breakfast one morning, Dr. Rowell quoted a poem which made a real impression on us. Lucille asked him where we could get a copy of it, and he told us that the only place he knew where it was, was in his memory. But he gave us a copy of it. After we began Trinity, I used this poem in a message, and I think it was Dr. Lockwood who found some music to go with it. We have it in our hymnals as insert "C." Please take your hymnal, and let me read it to you. It also gives us a wonderful explanation of what it means to fear the Lord. (Read.)

And you know that Mr. Jerry Bridges' latest book is on this subject, *The Joy of Fearing God*. I heartily recommend that you read it if you have not already done so.

So this is the way we are to live, reverently seeking to please the Lord in all that we do, and seeking by His grace to avoid anything that would displease Him. *This is the main exhortation of these verses we are considering today.* And how important it is that all of us who know the Lord make sure that this is the way we are living today and throughout the rest of our pilgrimage in this world.

In the remainder of this passage we have:

III. THREE MAJOR REASONS WHY WE SHOULD LIVE IN THIS WORLD FEARING GOD.

The first is in verse 17:

A. Because God is not only our Father, but He is our Judge (1 Pet. 1:17).

Peter said here that the Lord will judge "every man's work." And He will do this without any respect for what our position has been in this life. I am not going to get any special treatment because I have been a pastor. In fact, James says that the Lord might be a little more demanding of me because I have been a teacher of the Word.

But what is our work? You know, the majority of Christians never teach a class or preach a sermon. So our works cannot be limited to those things, as important as they are. No, our works have to do not only with our ser-

vice, but with the way we have trusted the Lord, the way we have obeyed Him, and the way we have persevered in our trials.

I asked Mr. Harvey Frisco to read to us from 2 Corinthians 5 today because that is the passage where we have the verses,

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:9-10).

That word "bad" can mean *wicked*, or *morally bad*, but it can also mean *worthless, of no account*. We are not going to be judged as to whether or not we are saved. When we stand before the Lord, that will have been settled. But we are going to be judged according to our works. And this is one of the major reasons that we need to "pass the time of our sojourning here in" the fear of the Lord.

But let me give you Peter's second reason as to why we should live in the fear of the Lord, fearful of displeasing Him and always wanting to do what pleases Him. It is this:

B. Because God our Father has redeemed us by "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-21a).

God has redeemed us for Himself by the payment of a ransom. He has delivered us from our sins, and set us free to love Him and to live for Him and to serve Him.

And it was not by silver or gold, that which by the world's standards is the most valuable. Our need was far greater than that which all of the money could meet. Nothing short of the infinitely "precious blood of Christ" could be sufficient to save us from not only the power of our sins, but also from the final penalty that will fall upon those "who know not God," and who do not "obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8).

Evidently there was among the Jews the idea that salvation could be purchased with "silver and gold." Do you remember the story of the young man who came to the Lord asking what he needed to do in order to be saved. The Lord spoke to him about the commandments, and the young man said that he had kept all of them from his youth. Then the Lord told him to sell all that he had, give the money to the poor, and then follow Him. The young man then went away grieved because he had great

wealth, and did not want to part with it. Then this conversation followed between the Lord and His disciples:

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? (Matt. 19:23-25).

Even the disciples were not clear on how a person could be saved, and they seemed to indicate by their question that if a rich man could not be saved by buying his salvation, then there was no hope for anyone else.

The Apostle Peter called this "your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." In other words, what the fathers had passed on to their sons was a false doctrine of salvation. Any other doctrine of salvation beside the true Gospel of the grace of God, minimizes sin, and can never save anyone. The Jews should have known better because all of their sacrifices taught them that salvation was through the sacrifice of animals who were without blemish, and they all pointed to "the Lamb of God Who" would take "away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

The Jews might have claimed antiquity for their doctrine, but Peter went on in this passage to show that the true doctrine of salvation was older than the world because it "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" that Christ should come as a Man, without sin, and lay down His life as a sacrifice for all who would ever be saved. And it was not by works of any human being but by faith in God Who had given His Son as the Savior of men.

So we are not our own. We have been bought with a price. We belong to the Lord, and that is the reason that we are to live our lives in the fear of the Lord, doing what pleases Him, and refusing to do that which is displeasing to Him.

But there is one short, but very important phrase left in our text, and this gives us the third reason why we are to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear," in the fear of the Lord. And this is it:

C. That our faith and hope might be in God (1 Pet. 1:21b).

If our salvation were dependent upon what we did, or upon money that we

paid, then our "faith and hope" would be in ourselves, but not in God, and not in Christ.

But perhaps Peter had more in mind that just how we are saved initially. He could also have been thinking about the way we live because this is the emphasis in verse 17. So it behooves each one of us to ask ourselves, Does my life show that I am trusting God? And does my life also show that my real hope in this life is the prospect I have that someday I will be with the Lord. It is easy to say that we are trusting the Lord, and that we are looking for His return, but our lives may be showing that we are all involved in the world and its ways rather than in seeking to please God.

Concl: The big tragedy about all that has taken place in Washington in recent days is that as far as most of the politicians in government are concerned, "there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). And one of the biggest lies that is being told is that "it is all over." It isn't over! Our politicians do not realize that they are the ministers of God, not of the people! The key to their success is not the popular support of a sinful nation. Nothing can succeed when God is not pleased. I don't know how it will come, but I know that there is a price, a great price, to be paid for the failure of our President and our Senators and our nation to go their own way, and not even to be concerned about the will of God.

But regardless of how our leaders have gone, we as the Lord's people must remain true to Him and to His Word. He is the One Who determines what is right and what is wrong, and those who violate His will are going to pay for it both now and hereafter. It is not a matter for us to be proud about, but we have every reason to be keenly thankful to God that we are numbered among those who "call on the Father." We belong to Him because He has saved us by the blood of His Son, the precious blood of His Son. This world is not our home. We are strangers and foreigners here. We are on our way to heaven. Let us live to please God, to walk in His ways, and to seek in all that we do to glorify Him, and to love Him with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind.