

GOD'S SOJOURNERS

1 Peter 1:1, 2

Intro: We begin today the exposition of 1 Peter. This means that I will be seeking, with the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to set before you the purpose and meaning of that which Peter wrote in this Epistle. We will be looking at this Letter in detail--verse by verse. Every word, actually, is important because Peter was one of those men he spoke of in his second Epistle when he said regarding the Bible, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21b). Peter said this with special reference to the OT, but the same applies to the NT. What this means is that God the Holy Spirit so directed the writers of Scripture that what we have in the sixty-six books of the Bible is truly the very Word of God!

The truth of God is like God Himself: unchanging. It has never needed to be revised. Nothing can be added to it, nor can anything be taken away from it. In fact, judgment is promised for anyone who dares to tamper with the Scriptures. They were written so as to be of permanent and universal value with regard to what we should believe, and how we are the people of God are to live. The Bible is God's Book written especially for God's people.

The Bible has been given to us in two parts: the OT, and the NT. The dividing point between the two Testaments is the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. A large part of the NT is made up of letters, or Epistles, written by the Apostles, or those who were closely related to the Apostles. These Epistles constitute a very important part of the Scriptures because they contain, as one writer has said, "the full development of Christian doctrine" (Brown, p. 2). The writers of Scripture were the original and main teachers; we simply explain and teach what they wrote, and what they taught. The pastor or teacher of God's truth today has no right to teach anything else.

Now we must realize that no one Epistle gives us all of the teaching. Oftentimes we find an overlapping of teaching, but never any conflict between Paul and Peter and John or any of the others in what they have written. There is a wonderful harmony throughout all of Scripture, one of the greatest evidences that it is the Word of God.

And so, as we come to 1 Peter, we are reading an Epistle which was written originally for a special group of Christians, but it was also intended for the people of God in every succeeding generation, including our own, and all generations which may after us. And so, what Peter told those Christians to believe, we must believe. And what he told them to do, we must do. This Epistle is for us!

Consequently, as we consider it together I am going to ask you to be reading it, and re-reading it--just like it had your name at the beginning. Read it like you would read a letter from your dearest friend--because that is what it is. It is from God the Father. In fact, it is from all Three of the Members of the God-head, and you have no greater friends than They are! Learn from this Epistle what you are to believe. And learn what you are to do, and then do it--by the grace of God. Read it over and over until it becomes a part of you and of your life. If you will do that, I can guarantee you great blessing, great joy. Quite a number are memorizing it. I wish all of you would do that. Even if you would read it every day as we study it together, you will memorize it just from going over and over it day by day.

Today we begin with verses 1 and 2 of chapter 1. Let me read them to you.

There are three things in these two verses:

- 1) The writer.
- 2) The recipients of the letter.
- 3) The prayer.

Let us consider these in that order.

I. THE WRITER.

It was customary in the days in which the NT was written for letters to begin with the name of the writer, or writers. And so we read here, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." He was the writer.

"Peter." Over the past twelve weeks we have been learning a little about "Peter."

This was not his name originally; it was the name given to him by the Lord to indicate what the Lord was going to make of him. His name originally was Simon, but the Lord changed it to Cephas, a Chaldean name, which means a rock, and the Greek form was Peter. It was God's purpose to take this fisherman who had many strong points and many weak points, and make him into a spiritual rock, one who would stand firm and faithful in spite of all of the turbulent storms he would encounter in his life and in his service as a Christian.

It is estimated that Peter wrote this Epistle in the early or mid-sixties A.D., perhaps only a couple of years before he was martyred. And here he is a rock, a seasoned, matured Christian and servant of Christ--one we can follow without any fear of being misled. He has not spent his years in some place of retirement, but he has been in the thick of the battle. And so he knew what others needed who were in the same battle with the forces of the Evil One.

He called himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

He was one of those few men, twelve in number (with the later addition of the Apostle Paul) who had the privilege of a very intimate relationship with our Lord. In fact, in order to be an apostle one had to have been with the Lord, to have seen Him and heard Him. So there could not be any successors to this group of men.

Peter was one of those to whom Paul referred when he spoke of those who were "pillars" (Gal. 2:9), and "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 12:11). When the Apostles names are listed in the Gospels, Peter's name comes first. He definitely was the leader of the leaders. And he called himself an apostle here, not to boast, but because this was his authority for writing this Epistle and for saying the things that he was going to say to the believers to whom he was writing.

But he had another reason for calling himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

An apostle is a messenger. He is one sent from one person to others, with a message for them. Peter was writing to these particular groups of the Lord's people with a message, a message from the Lord Jesus Christ! It was from Peter, to be sure, but it was originally from the Lord. The Lord had led Peter to write because He had a message for them to help them to face the troubled times through which they were going. See 1:6, 7 as an illustration of the problems that these Christians were going through.

Now this ought to mean the same to us. This Epistle is a message from Jesus Christ to you and to me. How could I emphasize its importance any more than to say that? So read it carefully. And listen intently to it as we consider it together. If it is a message from Jesus Christ, it has to be of the greatest importance, and should have our closest attention.

But let us move on to look at . . .

II. THE RECIPIENTS, i.e., those who originally received this letter.

Peter identified them in the rest of v. 1, and in most of v. 2--down to the prayer at the end of v. 2. (Read.)

First, let us note . . .

A. Their geographical location: Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

If you will consult a map of the Bible lands in the time of the Apostles you will see that these were areas in that part of the world which is now occupied by the country of Turkey--to the north of the land of Israel. It was predominantly Gentile territory, but there were many Jews there, and it is believed that Peter was writing especially to those Christian Jews who had been "scattered" from their homeland because of the persecution, and they were living in those areas. Peter had probably visited them in the course of his ministry, and so he knew them and their circumstances very well.

The point is that they were "strangers," foreigners, pilgrims, in those areas of the Roman Empire. And they were looked upon by the citizens of those areas as foreigners. They did not really belong.

Now Peter built upon that idea.

He wanted them to know that wherever they might live in this world, even if they were in Jerusalem, they would realize that they were foreigners on the earth. See 1:17 and 2:11. This world was not their home. They were citizens of heaven, and never would really feel at home any place on this earth. This is what we all are--pilgrims, strangers, foreigners. The Lord Jesus said of His people in John 17:16,

They are not of the world,
even as I am not of the world.

Remember this. And if you feel at home in this world, it should give you cause to think about what your relationship to God and to Christ actually is.

Now I am moving from the geographical into the spiritual, so let me say more about what Peter said with regard to . . .

B. Their spiritual condition.

Now in teaching what the Scriptures have to say about the people of God we distinguish between positional truth and practical truth. By positional truth we speak of our position before God, the truths which apply to all Christians regardless of how long they have known the Lord, or how well they know the Lord. Practical truth has to do with where we are in our practical living, the degree to which we are following the Lord, walking with Him, and living for Him.

Now Peter was speaking here of positional truth. We all are pilgrims. We all are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," etc.

Peter would deal later with practical truth, but it helps us to have peace if we remember who we are.

Now in addition to the fact that we are "strangers" Peter mentioned three things that are true of all believers:

1. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God."

THE WORK OF
THE TRINITY
IN SALVATION

THE UNITY OF
THAT WORK

The Greek text actually puts the word "elect" with "strangers" in v. 1--elect strangers. But their election was based, not upon something commendable in them, but upon "the foreknowledge of God," which means, the purpose of God, or the will of God, or the special decree of God.

The people of God are a chosen people, chosen by God, elected by God by an eternal decree to be His people.

So you can see not only that Peter believed in the doctrine of election, but he believed that it was a comforting doctrine for suffering saints.

Cf. 2 Thess. 2:13, 14. Also see Eph. 1:3, 4.

2. "Through sanctification of the Spirit."

The basic idea in the word "sanctification" is that of being set apart. The Holy Spirit has singled out the chosen ones of God, and set them apart to belong to the Lord and to live for the Lord. And, in being set apart, and in living as a people who are set apart from the world, the flesh, and the Devil, the people of God become holy. So sanctification has both a positional aspect as well as a practical aspect. See 1:15, 16.

3. "And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

All believers in Christ have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ. It was for them that the Lord shed His blood. What could speak in any greater way of the love of God for His people? And, if we are assured of His love, what need is there to fear anything? Cf. 1:18, 19, 20, 21.

But you have noticed, if you have been paying attention to the text of Scripture, that I have passed over one expression:

4. "Unto obedience."

This brings us into the area of practical truth, but Peter is undoubtedly thinking of the first act of a sinner's obedience to God, which is to be followed by other acts of daily obedience.

The first act of obedience is what Paul called "the obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1:5), that is, when a person first puts his faith in Christ as his Saviour. AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS CHARACTERIZED BY A DESIRE TO OBEY THE WORD OF GOD, AND BY ACTUALLY OBEYING HIM. Notice, "As obedient children," in 1:14a.

And this is why Peter told those believers in Pontus, Galatia, etc. what they should do--because he was writing to people, chosen by God, set apart by the Spirit, sprinkled with Jesus' blood, people in whose hearts God had done a work to make them obedient in thought, word, and action.

This obedience also comes from God. Cf. 1:21, 22a. Also Phil. 2:12, 13.

Without going any farther, the spirits of those believers to whom Peter was writing should have been lifted to the very gates of heaven by just these few words.

But this is not all. Note . . .

III. THE PRAYER: "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

"Grace" means blessing. It means strength, power. We are strengthened by the blessings of the Lord which He daily pours out upon us. He blessed us immeasurably when we were first saved, but the blessings continue to come, and continue to come. We could not live without them. And God's "grace is sufficient," whatever the trials might be. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9. See also Psa. 68:19,

Blessed be the Lord,
who daily loadeth us with benefits,
even the God of our salvation. Selah.

"Peace" also came with salvation--"peace with God" (Rom. 5:1). But we need continuing peace--that restfulness and quietness of heart which results from two things:

- 1) Being obedient to the Lord.
- 2) Enjoying the blessings of the Lord.

This is a prayer that ought to be prayed by every Christian every day, first, for himself, and second, for every Christian he knows. The burdens of life are greatly relieved when we experience each day God's grace and God's peace.

And notice the measure in which God gives His grace and His peace, the divine mathematics: They are "multiplied"! They pour in until you lose count of them. Cf. Psa. 40:5.

Concl: Has your heart been moved by these truths? I would even go so far as to ask you, Do you even feel better after considering the way Peter began this Epistle? Good feelings are the blessing of God when they are based upon the truth of God. "Peace" affects our feelings.

And so let us expect blessing as we consider this Epistle, and let us expect "peace" to be given us in "multiplied" forms. It is here. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will minister to us as Peter prayed that He would.

THE GREATEST JOY
1 Peter 1:3-5

Intro: One of the first impressions that a thoughtful reader of 1 Peter should have is how much the Gospel figured into the thinking of the Apostle Peter. Let me point this out to you in chapter 1, beginning with v. 2. (Go on through the chapter.)

Peter continually came back to the Gospel throughout the Epistle.

We see Peter's emphasis on the Gospel in what we might call the closing benediction of the Epistle: 5:10, 11. In fact, notice the threefold emphasis of the Epistle in that verse, which is seen also in the opening verses of the Epistle: 1:3-7:

- 1) The past experience of salvation.
- 2) The future glory that awaits us.
- 3) The suffering that lies in between those two events, suffering for the sake of the Gospel, and how God is using that suffering to prepare us for the glory that is to come.

So we have in this the three tenses of salvation which I have mentioned to you so many times: past, present, and future. Or,

- 1) We were saved.
- 2) We are saved.
- 3) We shall be saved.

These three are, to state it doctrinally: justification, sanctification, glorification.

But now, notice another thing.

All of this is Bible doctrine. It is the teaching of Scripture. It is theology at its highest and best. But Peter did not deal with this in a cold, matter-of-fact way. His whole soul was very obviously moved when he spoke of the Gospel, when he spoke of Christ, when he spoke of all that it meant to be saved! In our text for the morning we see Peter, the worshipper, worshipping God for this wonderful salvation. It was the subject of THE GREATEST JOY to him, and he indicated that it was the same to the believers who first received this Epistle. Note the first words in 1:6, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice . . ."

This past Tuesday in our Bible Class we had a passage in Luke 10:17-20 which was of special interest to me. (Explain, point out in particular what the Lord said in v. 20: " . . . but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Peter evidently had learned that lesson very, very well! It is clear from 1 Peter that this became the major emphasis in his life, and then in his ministry. It had to be true in his life before it could be true in his ministry. May the Lord enable each one of us to learn that lesson, too.

The word "blessed" sounds the keynote, not only for the three verses of our text, but it is the keynote for the entire Epistle. What does it mean?

It is a word of praise. It meant that Peter was eulogizing God. He was praising God, seeking to glorify Him, exalting Him--and all of this applies as well to our Lord Jesus Christ. As I have said, Peter was worshipping God!

Note that he is not here blessing or praising his fellow-believers. He mentions only the Members of the Godhead because They alone are responsible for this salvation, from beginning to end!

So notice, first of all,

I. PETER'S JOY IN GOD AND IN CHRIST: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:3).

Notice how he identified God--just so there would be no mistake made by anyone reading this Epistle.

Notice how he identified Christ, and his relationship with the Father.

And notice, too, that Peter did not speak of them as strangers, but as those who were very, very dear to himself. He loved them, and the people to whom he was writing loved them too. See 1:8.

Secondly, we see . . .

II. PETER'S JOY IN GOD'S MERCY (1 Pet. 1:3).

Peter called it "abundant mercy" which means that there was much of it, that it was abundant both in quality and quantity. There is no danger that it can run out, that it can be exhausted. There is enough and more than enough for all who seek to be saved.

This is what you would expect if it is God's mercy. God cannot change or be depleted in His character or in His power.

And think of how the "abundant mercy" of God is manifested in:

- 1) What He does for those whom He saves.
- 2) The character of those who are saved, i.e., what they were before they were saved--how guilty, how defiled, how rebellious, etc.
- 3) The number of people who have been and are being saved, as well as those who are yet to be saved.
- 4) Christ.

- 5) What the Lord does for His people after they are saved.
Cf. Heb. 4:16. It can never be exhausted!

But let us go on to a third point:

III. PETER'S JOY IN GOD'S WORK (1 Pet. 1:3).

This is in two parts. Peter actually mentioned the second first.

A. We are "begotten again."

Just because the term, "born again," is being misused by many in our day, we should not neglect it. It is a very excellent term to describe what it means to be saved. It means we are given life when spiritually we were "dead in trespasses and sins." A Christian is one who has been regenerated.

This means that salvation has to be a word of God because none of us is capable of such a work--and no one can be saved who is not born again. Spiritual birth is a second birth, a birth into eternal life, a birth into the family of God.

But how can this be?

B. "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Later on in this chapter Peter also said that we are "born again . . . by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" (1:23).

The resurrection of Christ always assumes His death, and so Peter was teaching that sinners could not be born again if Jesus Christ had not died for them, and been raised again from the dead. If the body of Jesus Christ were still in the grave, there would be no Gospel, there would be no new birth.

This is what we have been learning in our memory work in Sunday School--Rev. 1:5, speaking of Christ: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

But there is a fourth point, and here Peter jumped from salvation in the past tense to salvation in the future tense.

IV. PETER'S JOY IN OUR INHERITANCE FROM GOD (1 Pet. 1:4).

An inheritance is not something we earn. It surely is not something that we deserve. It is something which we receive

because of our relationship to the one who has the inheritance to give--usually a gift from a parent to his or her child or children.

But sometimes an earthly inheritance can be depleted. The parent may be forced to use it because of illness. Or even after it is given, the child may waste it so that there is no more inheritance. This was the case with the prodigal son in Luke 15.

But the inheritance of the child of God is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you . . ."

But what is our inheritance?

It is to be in heaven. It is to be with the Lord. But more than that, it is to be like the Lord. It will mean absolute perfection for us, no more sinning. Nor will we be in a place where others sin. Our inheritance is glorification in heaven with Christ, and all that that means. We do not know all that it will mean because it is far too wonderful for us to be able to understand fully even what we know.

But can anything happen to it? Can we lose it, or could it be used up in some way before we realize what it is in our actual experience?

How would you answer those questions from v. 4?

There is a sense, isn't there, in which the words all mean one thing: NO IT CAN NEVER BE LOST. NOTHING CAN EVER HAPPEN TO IT. WE ARE ABSOLUTELY SECURE IN THE SALVATION WE HAVE IN CHRIST!

But when we look in detail at the words Peter used we will have an even greater reason to be assured in our hearts regarding our salvation.

A. "Incorruptible."

It is not an inheritance of silver and gold which is corruptible. See 1:18. It is not clothing, or lands, or building, things which are themselves perishable. No, our heavenly inheritance is not of such a nature that it can decay and disappear altogether.

B. "Undefiled."

There is nothing around it that can defile it. There is no mixture of good and bad in it, or in the environment of heaven which might affect it.

C. "That fadeth not away."

Even after we get it we will not be able to lose it. Eternity is a long, long time. It is never ending. And this is what our inheritance is. When we have been in heaven for what we now might call thousands and thousands of years, our inheritance will be just as glorious as when we first entered heaven.

D. "Reserved in heaven for you."

No conspiracy, no burglary, no invasion--nothing can destroy our inheritance, or rob us of our inheritance, before we get there. It is securely locked in the safety vaults of heaven, kept for us by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and probably even the elect angels have a part in that as well.

Some people have their inheritance stolen by others, but that can never happen to the child of God.

But let me raise a final question: What if we never make it? What if something happens to you, or to me, so that we are not finally saved? What I mean is, what if we do something so that we are lost, and not saved, after once being saved?

The Lord has taken that into consideration, too, because He knows that if our salvation depended upon us, our inheritance would be totally in doubt.

But how does our text end? With . . .

V. PETER'S JOY IN THE DIVINE GUARANTEE.

Read 1:5. The Lord has made such an inheritance that it is not capable of decay. He has it in an environment which cannot tarnish it. It is under total heavenly security. BUT HE IS ALSO KEEPING US SO THAT NOTHING WILL EVER KEEP US FROM CLAIMING OUR INHERITANCE.

How powerful is the power of God? Can God in His power possibly fail to do what He intends to do? Is there any greater power than His--your power, or the Devil's power, or any other power?

God's keeps our inheritance, and He keeps us for our inheritance. IS IT ANY WONDER THAT PETER WAS HAPPY, AND THAT HE WAS PRAISING GOD? He had "a lively hope," a living hope, which God had given to him, and which neither God nor anyone else would or could possibly take away.

Concl: If you are truly born again, you ought to feel like

Peter did, and you ought to be spending your days praising and worshipping the Lord regardless of the trials that you have--and so should I!

What a heavenly Father we have! And what a Saviour! And what a salvation, what an inheritance! Nothing in this life is secure for us. We live in a world of change, a world of sin and corruption. But everything in heaven is secure.

Is that inheritance yours? Have you been born again? How are you born again? It is a sovereign act of an almighty God. The evidence that you are born again will be that you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation. You will love Him, and you will be resting in the fact that He has done all that needs to be done by His death and resurrection to guarantee you a safe arrival in heaven where your inheritance is waiting for you.

May it be that God in His mercy will use His Word today that any who hear this message and are without Christ, may come to Him, and believe in Him Who alone gives us the gift of eternal life.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH

1 Peter 1:6-9

Intro: Peter has reminded us in the verses which we will be considering today that the Christian's life often appears to be a paradox, that is, a self-contradiction. I say this because he spoke here of rejoicing greatly, and yet of being "in heaviness," meaning deep and real grief, or sorrow. A child of God knows what it is to be weeping, and at the same time to be rejoicing with an overflowing heart. Or, to be filled with joy one moment, and then to be overwhelmed with grief in the next. Rarely do we have unmixed joy.

However, the question that we need to ask ourselves, arising out of our text, is this: **Are our lives characterized as the lives of these Christians were?** Could Peter have said about us what he said about them, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice"? He mentioned it in v. 6, and he came back to it again in v. 8 where he wrote, "Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This was joy that was so great that they could not adequately express it in words, lit., **a glorified joy**. Is that the kind of joy we have?

Well, we might respond by saying, "If you knew the problems that I have you would know that I cannot rejoice that way until God does something about removing my problems." But Peter would come back at us and say, "What kinds of problems do you think that these people had?" He called them "manifold temptations." As you read through the Epistle you are able to see what some of those problems were. We probably would be ashamed, with all that we have, that our joy is so little when their joy was so great.

But let us begin by looking at . . .

I. THEIR PRESENT JOY (1 Peter 1:6a).

I emphasize that it was a present joy to keep us from the idea that we have to wait until our trials are over before we can really rejoice in the Lord again, especially with great joy.

Please note that their rejoicing looked back at what the Apostle Peter had just written. To begin with we have to see that their rejoicing was in things that had nothing to do with their trials. We will come to their trials in a moment.

Perhaps, to emphasize the importance of this subject of their present joy, I could state it this way: How can we be kept in a state of perpetual joy? How can we be assured that we will rejoice greatly even when we are going through great trials?

Here is the answer: If we learn to rejoice in that which brought joy to the hearts of these "strangers and pilgrims," we, too, can know that distinctive joy which only Christians can experience. Note what the four objects of their joy were:

- A. They were rejoicing in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can always do that. Isaiah said long ago in Isa. 26:3 that we would be kept in "perfect peace" if we kept our minds stayed on Him.

Have you forgotten that little phrase from 2 Tim. 2:8 that I have given you as a kind of a theme for this year, "Remember Jesus Christ"?

There are lots of things to rejoice in when you think about the Lord--all of His glorious attributes. But the one thing that seems to have captivated the hearts of these people was the mercy of God, "his abundant mercy." And their thoughts may have run something like this: "If God manifested such mercy to us when He saved us, then He surely can care for us, and will care for us, in this present distress we are going through."

But, notice a second reason for their rejoicing:

- B. Their new life (1 Peter 1:3).

God had "begotten them again." A Christian is a person who has experienced a second birth, a new birth, by which he has come into the possession of eternal life. He has all kinds of resources that a non-Christian does not have. And this should make a lot of difference in the way we react to our trials--the strength, the love, the holiness, and so on and on.

And then there is a third:

- C. Their new hope (1 Peter 1:3, 4).

Peter called it "a lively hope," a living hope. This has to do with our "inheritance." This means that we have a prospect for the future that ought to encourage the most afflicted child of God. We are on our way to heaven, we are going to see the Lord and be with Him forever. We are going to a place where there is no more sin, and where we will no longer be able to sin. That ought to raise our spirits to new lofty heights.

Fourthly,

D. Their new security (1 Peter 1:5).

If the Lord is keeping us for heaven, then this means that He will keep us all of the way as we go to heaven.

If you and I will cultivate the habit of looking at these good things instead of all of the troubles we are having, then we, too, will know what it is to be able to rejoice greatly, even when things are the darkest.

When we look at a doughnut, it is very easy to see nothing but the hole! Or, like Alexander Maclaren told his people, when you ride on a train, you can sit on the sunny side, looking at the beautiful fields, or you can side on the side where it is dark and a bank comes up to the edge of the track and keeps you from seeing anything.

But let us go on to . . .

II. THEIR PRESENT SORROW (1 Peter 1:7).

They were "in heaviness," in sorrow, in grief, because of "manifold temptations," or trials.

As we will see, some of their trials were big ones, but trials do not have to be great to cause great sorrow; a lot of little trials will do the same thing. Perhaps you had some frustrations almost ruin this day for you before you ever got to church--problems getting the children ready, or getting yourself ready. Perhaps you are bothered by your own weaknesses and failures. Maybe the troubles you have had this week because you are a Christian have bothered you--the opposition, the indifference of people, the weakness and inconsistency of Christians, or their superficiality and hypocrisy.

Or maybe your problems are big. Maybe it is a health problem, or the health problem of someone who is very dear to you, or a financial problem. Maybe it is the death of someone you loved very much.

What is it? What was it for the Christians to whom Peter was writing?

How can rejoice when we are facing them?

Again, let me mention four things about our trials that can be of comfort to us:

A. They are to try our faith, that is, not destroy it, but to strengthen it, and to prove that it is a genuine faith. So they have a purpose, a divine purpose. Nothing happens to a child of God by chance.

B. They are only "for a season," that is, for a little while, or for a certain, prescribed period of time. God controls their length.

Even if they last through our lifetime, that is only "for a season" when compared with eternity.

C. They are valuable. They are much more valuable than gold which has been purified by fire. Gold is only for time; our trials are producing for us eternal wealth and dividends.

D. They bring rewards--they will be "found unto praise and honor and glory (for us) at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

You see, we need to be living with heaven in mind. We are waiting for and momentarily expecting the Lord Jesus Christ. And more than anything else we should want to have His "well done." When we lose sight of the coming of the Lord, our burdens can become unbearable.

But now let us think, finally, about . . .

III. THEIR PRESENT FAITH (1 Peter 1:8, 9).

In addition to their present joy, and their present sorrows which were to strengthen and prove their faith, what could be said about their faith as Peter wrote to them?

Three things:

A. Their love for Jesus Christ, Whom they had never seen.

Do you love anyone, really love a person, whom you have never seen?

These were second generation Christians. Peter had seen the Lord, but they had not! And yet they still loved Him, in spite of their trials, and in spite of the fact that they had not seen Him. That is true faith.

B. Their trust in Jesus Christ.

"In whom, though now ye see him not, **yet believing** . . ."

Oh, let us learn from these early Christians that Jesus Christ is worthy of our complete trust regardless of what the trials might be, or how severe they might be.

Their faith was in good order.

One more thing:

C. The present reward of their faith (v. 9).

This is salvation in the present tense: their sanctification. They were conscious that at that very time they were "receiving" greater holiness of life from the Lord. This, too, shows the value of their trials.

Concl: What a passage! What strength and blessing there is here for our souls! If you have not done so, please memorize verses 3 through 9. If you have memorized them, mull them over and over in your heart.

The question I have for us is this: These words described those believers in that day, but do they describe us? Yes, we have the same Saviour, the same salvation, the same hope, the same inheritance, the same security, BUT DO WE HAVE THE SAME JOY, THE SAME PEACE, THE SAME ASSURANCE?

May the Spirit of God cause us to rejoice in the things that are really important so that we can see our present circumstances as God's work preparing us for the glory that is to come.

CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND GLORY

1 Peter 1:10-16

Intro: Whenever you read a book of the Bible over and over, there are certain themes which stand out which obviously were prominent in the mind and heart of the writer. If you have been reading 1 Peter that way, you have noticed that one of those themes is the one we have this morning: THE SUFFERINGS AND GLORY OF CHRIST. See it in v. 11.

The sufferings of Christ, of course, speak of the Cross.

The glory began with His resurrection, continued with His ascension, and will culminate in His coming in glory.

Note these verses dealing with Christ's sufferings: 1:18-20; 2:4, 7, 21, 23, 24; 3:18; 4:1, 13a; 5:1.

His glory:

- 1) Resurrection: 1:21; 3:18b, 21; 5:1.
- 2) Ascension: 3:22.
- 3) His coming again, His revelation, the Apocalypse: 1:3, 7, 13; 3:15; 4:13; 5:1, 4.

There is no more wonderful theme in all of Scripture than that which is included when we speak of Christ's sufferings and His glory.

But how did Peter deal with this theme in the verses that we are going to consider today: vv. 10-16? Let us look at them carefully and see. Just suppose that someone is here today, or listening on the radio, who does not really understand why Christ suffered, or why He entered into glory. How would these verses help them?

Well, first of all, we note that Christ's sufferings and glory have to do with . . .

I. MAN'S SALVATION.

See vv. 9, 10. See also v. 5 here in ch. 1.

But, salvation from what?

When the angel of the Lord announced the conception of Christ to Joseph, he said,

And she (Mary) shall bring forth a son,
and thou shalt call his name JESUS:
for he shall save his people from their sins.

So salvation means salvation from sin--from sin's penalty, sin's power, and ultimately from sin itself.

And then we would do well to ask the person we are explaining this to, "Do you know that you need to be saved from your sins, and that, if you are not, only the worst consequences await you--eternal, inescapable consequences?"

Nothing any person in any age can possibly hear is more important than this. This message outweighs and overshadows and outshines them all. If you were told today that you have suddenly become a millionaire, it would have nothing of this importance to you that this message does, "for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

II. THE THEME OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS.

They not only wrote about it, but they "enquired and searched diligently" as to WHEN IT WOULD BE! See v. 11.

The subject of the death and resurrection and glory of Jesus Christ is not limited to the NT. It is the grand theme of the OT.

And what does this tell us about salvation?

It teaches us that there is only one way of salvation, and that there never has been but one way. In OT times they were looking ahead to the One Who would come; we look back to the One Who has come, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But notice another point that Peter made to help us understand what he meant by "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow":

III. THE GOSPEL.

You have heard of the Gospel? Well, this is the Gospel! No man is preaching the Gospel unless he is preaching the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ! See v. 12.

It is also called "the grace that should come unto you" in v. 10.

Listen to preachers carefully when they say they are preaching the Gospel, and see if it is some kind of a moral essay, or are they talking about the Cross of Christ, about His resurrection, and His glory. If they are not, they can use the word Gospel a thousand times, but what they are talking about is not the Gospel. It is the Gospel of the grace of God--"grace" because nobody deserves it, nor can it be earned. It is "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But the fourth thing that I want you to see from our text is

Peter's reference in v. 12b to the Holy Spirit:

IV. EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT.

To preach the Gospel "with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven" means to preach it with power, with blessing, with effectiveness--so that people not only hear, but they understand it, believe it, and are saved.

People can be interested in a sermon, can be entertained, can be emotionally stirred, but they will never know God, they will never believe in Christ, they will never be saved, unless the Gospel is preached--because the Gospel is the only message the Holy Spirit blesses for the salvation of sinners.

Do you want to know why the NT records so many wonderful things, people's lives being changed, etc. It is because this message of salvation was being preached, this Gospel of the grace of God, and people were believing, were trusting that Christ, and were being saved.

There is a lot of emotionalism today being attributed to the Holy Spirit, but He only works where the Word of God is being proclaimed.

But notice this also:

V. THE ANGELS.

Is this message important?

The Bible does not say that angels are interested in the explorations of outer space. They know all about that. They probably feel that the greatest knowledge we have of outer space is just child's talk in comparison with what they know.

But they are interested in the Gospel! They are much wiser than we are, but the Gospel goes beyond all of the wisdom that they possess.

If angels are interested in this message above everything else, can you and I possibly afford to ignore it? Next to what Peter said about the interest of the Father, and of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, nothing could be more powerful than this: the Gospel is the one thing that angels are interested in--even as to when the Redeemer would come!

Now all that I have said up to this point in teaching 1 Peter has had to do with doctrine--wonderful, glorious doctrine. But

at this point (moving from v. 12 to v. 13) Peter began to speak of the practical consequences of what he had been saying, the practical results for those who are the people of God. His message had to do with suffering saints. Their comfort was not only in the doctrine of salvation, but in the practice that results from that doctrine.

Let us call it . . .

VI. CHRISTIAN DUTY.

Beginning with v. 13, and going down through v. 16, there are five things which Peter called upon the people of God in that day to do--and the same five things are for us:

A. "Gird up the loins of your mind."

In Peter's day, to gird up your loins meant to tuck your flowing robe into your waist-band, called a girdle, because you had something important to do, and you did not want anything to hinder your action.

He used that expression of our minds.

Peter meant that we have certain things that we are under obligation to God to do, a way of life which we cannot ignore, yet involving all kinds of difficulties, and we need to be prepared to put forth all of the God-given strength we have and to persevere in doing that which God has commanded us to do.

We have to get our thinking straight, get our minds in gear, so to speak.

One writer has expressed it this way:

Set yourself with resolute determination to the performance of these duties. Impress on your minds a sense of their importance, obligation, advantages, and necessity. Let there be no halting between two opinions. Considering Christian obedience as the business of life; a business, the right discharge of which will require all the care you can devote to it; a business, in the prosecution of which no exertion must be spared, no sacrifice grudged; enter on it with determination, that whatever may be neglected this shall be attended to; and with a distinct understanding, that this is not to be an occasional employment for your by-hours, but the habitual occupation to which all your time and all your faculties are to be devoted (Brown, pp. 108, 109).

This is what it means to gird up our minds.

Secondly (in these practical matters):

B. "Be sober."

The first had to do with our attention to the things of God. This has to do with our use of the world. The word calls for moderation.

We are in this world, but we are not of this world. However, we are in this world.

We need money. We need food. There are many things available to us which people in earlier generations did not have. Transportation is much better for us than it has been in the past. We need clothes, and we need to take care of our families. This is why we work. And think of the hours that are devoted each week by all of us just to the business of living.

And it is all important.

But this word, "be sober," means that you and I are not to make this the primary thing in our lives. This world is where we are now, but we are not going to be here forever. And the person who gets all tied up in the affairs of this life is ignoring the shortness of time and the importance of eternity.

Perhaps the meaning of this word is best described by Paul when he said,

Set your affection on things above,
not on things on the earth (Col. 3:2).

See also 1 Cor. 7:31. And Rom. 12:2.

C. "Hope to the end . . ." Cf. v. 13.

This is a verb. This calls for action, for perseverance. Peter has said much about our hope as a doctrine (see vv. 3-5 and 7-9), but this is practical hoping. We do this in the strength of the Lord God, but we are always moving in that direction. Our every action is affected by our ultimate goal, our destination: heaven.

If we are doing this, we will be, in the fourth place,

D. "As obedient children, not fashioning ourselves . . ." (v.14).

This is the more positive side of what it means to be sober. We do not let our lives fall into the pattern of the way the world lives, but our lives are to be

moulded and shaped and patterned after the Word of God. "Fashioned" is the same word that Paul used in Rom. 12:2 translated, "And be not conformed . . ."

The Word of God is our rule of life. It teaches us what we are to be, as well as what we are to do and not do!

And then . . .

E. "Be ye holy."

If you are obeying the first four of these exhortations, you will be holy--holy like God is, holy in every part of your life--not just when you come to church on Sunday, but at home, at work, in all of your relationships during the day, in your heart, in your goals, and in all that you do to attain those goals: "in all manner of conversation"--in the way you live every day of every week of every month of every year of your life.

This is sanctification, and it leads to glorification. There is no salvation without this. You may not be perfect, but you are being perfected.

Remember that you cannot do any of this on your own, but, as you set yourself to do what God wants you to do, you will find that He enables you to be what He wants you to be so you can do, by His grace, what He wants you to do.

Finally, we learn from this passage that Christ's sufferings and glory have not yet been displayed in their most glorious manner.

VII. THE GREATEST GLORY.

See v. 13b.

Christ was glorified at His resurrection. He was glorified when He ascended back to heaven, and was seated at the Father's right hand. But no prophet or apostle, and probably no angel, has ever seen the glory that will be displayed when He comes again.

When He comes for His Church, His glory for us is going to be so great that we will be immediately transformed into the same glory. When He comes to the earth to reign, He said that it would be "in his glory" (Matt. 24:31), "with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30).

Concl: May our hearts be blessed with these great truths, and may our lives reveal that we have experienced the blessed salvation which was purchased by His sufferings and the glory of which will be ours when we share His glory.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

1 Peter 1:17-21

Intro: If someone were to ask you, "How do you identify a Christian?", what would be your answer? The same question in slightly different words is simply, "What is a Christian?"

Obviously the very term Christian shows that it has something to do with Christ--and that is right. A Christian is a person who has been saved from his sins by God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But that is not all!

There are many people who claim to be Christians, but who in their daily lives live and act very much like people who do not claim to be Christians. And yet the Bible very clearly says that, if a person is "in Christ," he is "a new creature." He has a new life. As we learned from 1 Peter 1:3, he has been born again.

And so we can say that a Christian is a person who is trusting in the work of Christ on the Cross for His salvation from sin, but his life shows that he is different, that he has been saved, that he truly is a child of God! As we learned last week from 1 Peter 1:14, he no longer patterns his life according to his former desires, but he now seeks to obey God! And it is this obedience to God that makes him like God, makes him godly, makes him holy. That is what verses 15 and 16 of this chapter teach us. You will never find a truly holy person who is not an obedient person--obedient to the Word of God.

Peter began to emphasize the importance of a Christian's obedience to God in verse 13. He mentioned five commandments in verses 13-16, but the one toward which they all move is the one having to do with holiness: ". . . so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." This is the ultimate purpose of all Christian obedience, to make us holy, to be like God, to be conformed to the image of Christ IN EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. This is what the words, "in all conversation," mean--in what we are, in what we think, in what we say, and in the way we live. A Christian is not perfect, not now, but he is completely different from what he was before he was saved. All of Scripture teaches this--both the OT and the NT.

Now--I want to begin today with 1 Peter 1:17. That verse needs a little explaining.

"If" here can, and should, be translated since. There is no question about the fact that they had called on the Father, which means they had named God as their Father. He was their

heavenly Father. This was the claim that they had made for themselves. Consequently they were to "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear."

Peter had addressed them in verse 1 as "strangers." They were "strangers" in two ways:

- 1) They had been run out of their homes, and were now in another part of the world.
- 2) But they were also "strangers" on earth, wherever they might be. This world is not a Christian's final destination; he, since he became a Christian, is a citizen of heaven, and on his way to heaven. So the time that they had on earth was sojourning time.

AND THIS TIME IS TO BE PASSED, i.e., as long as a Christian lives, "IN FEAR." In the original text the words "in fear" come first, so it would read for the same of emphasis, in fear pass the time of your sojourning. But what does this mean--in fear of what, or whom?

Fear suggests terror, alarm, fright, panic, dread. If you fear something in this sense, you are afraid of it. It makes you anxious and very uneasy. People fear death, disease, war, the future, and lots of other things. Is this the way the Lord wants His people to live? Is a holy life a life of fear, of dread, of terror? No! It is a life of peace and joy and blessing. There is no other life that can compare with it.

What did Peter mean, then?

He meant that Christians need to live in their world, for the time that they are here, in the fear of the Lord.

But what kind of fear is this? What is the fear of the Lord? It means that you hold the Lord in the highest reverence because He is God, eternal, holy, almighty and sovereign. And along with that we are to render the fullest possible obedience to His will. It means that you are more concerned about pleasing Him than you are anything else in your life, and that you exercised the closest watch over your life lest you displease Him in any way. This is what we are fearful about. To fear the Lord is to love what He loves, and to hate what He hates. We want to please Him, not only in our actions, but also in our thoughts, our words, and even in what we are!

Proverbs 8:13 says,

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Proverbs 9:10 says,

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Look at David's words in Psalm 34:11-16, a part of which Peter quoted in 1 Peter 3:10-12. In 1 Peter 2:17 Peter told these

people to "fear God."

Perhaps you have pasted inside of the cover of your hymnal that poem, In the Sweet Fear of Jesus. This is what Peter was talking about--fearing God, fearing the Lord, loving Him with all of your heart, and wanting to do His will completely.

How can I know that I am doing His will? The answer is simple. It is when I am living in obedience to His Word. Therefore, the commands which Peter has given us are extremely important because he has given us the will of God in the words he has written--along with the other writers of Scripture.

But now let us ask, How is this related to the rest of verse 17 and to the remaining verses of our text (down through v. 21)?

Peter has given us three reasons for passing the time of our sojourning here in the fear of God. Let me point them out to you.

I. BECAUSE GOD IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. See 1 Peter 1:17.

The teaching of the Word of God for children of human parents is that they are to "obey" their parents in the Lord. If our earthly parents deserve our obedience, would that not be ever more important for our heavenly Father? Are we really what Peter said these Christians were, "obedient children" (v. 14)?

Surely if your heart is going to be moved to obey God it ought to be this amazing truth: God is your Father!

But there is a second reason.

II. BECAUSE GOD, YOUR FATHER, WILL ALSO BE YOUR JUDGE. See 1 Peter 1:17 again.

What is He going to judge? Your works. My works. Not our sins; they were judged at the Cross. What are our works? They are the things we have done--the way we have lived for the Lord, the way we have obeyed Him or not obeyed Him, the way we have served Him.

And He is not going to respect who we are in that judgment. It will be a righteous judgment. Any excuses we might have will not hold up then. We won't even want to mention them.

When you and I are tempted to please the world, or to please anybody who wants us to do something contrary to the will of God, think about this! When you are tempted to follow your "former lusts in your ignorance," think about this! You are not going to answer to men in that day; you

will have to answer to God.

This is a very strong motive for the fear of the Lord.

But there is a third, and this takes up the remainder of our text for the morning: vv. 18-21.

III. BECAUSE WE ARE SAVED, AND WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR SALVATION.

Make sure that you know what Peter said those believers in that day knew. See how v. 18 begins.

A. The nature of our salvation (a redemption), and its price (vv. 18, 19).

This means that you and I are not our own. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. What have we been redeemed from? What have we been redeemed for? We have been redeemed from the penalty of our sins. We have been redeemed from the power of our sins. This is a change that has taken place in our hearts. And when the Lord comes we will be delivered forever from sinning.

Nothing is as costly as this. The price determines its value. Nothing is so precious. Think of it!

B. The origin of our salvation (v. 20a).

Who planned it and when? The verse is talking about Christ. He "was foreordained." By whom? By God. To do what? To redeem us and everyone else who eventually believes in Christ. When? "Before the foundation of the world."

What does "foreordained" mean? Lit. it is foreknown. But what God foreknows is what He determines shall be. This was a decree of God concerning His Son, and concerning our salvation.

This surely will move a believer's heart, and make him want to live a life pleasing to the Lord.

C. The actual provision has been made (v. 20b).

Back in vv. 10-12 we learned that the OT prophets were wondering when Christ would come, but they never saw Him. But, when Peter wrote this Epistle the Lord had come, His blood had been shed, the provision was made and the promises were fulfilled. And note: Peter said, speaking to believers, this was "for you"! So it was not just a provision, but a redemption accomplished!

But what is even more wonderful . . .

D. The possession of it (v. 21).

For whom was Christ foreordained to provide salvation?
It was "for you who by him do believe in God."
Christ's death was for those who would eventually
believe.

And how can sinners believe? Only "by him," i.e. by
Christ. Notice that even our faith comes from our
Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; it is a gift of God.

Christ did not die in vain. People are believing. God
is accomplishing through the work of His Son what He
ordained to do "before the foundation of the world."
Surely the "God that raised him (Christ) up, and gave
him glory," is able to accomplish all that He planned
to do in eternity past. What a God and what a Saviour!

Concl: Now let me go back to the 17th verse. Has not the
Spirit of God through Peter moved your heart to want to
live your life here on earth in the fear of the Lord. Surely
to do so is the beginning and the end of all wisdom. Any other
life would be folly. Only a life of holiness here can prepare
us for the judgment to come, and for the glory that will be
ours when our dear Lord returns. Let us give ourselves to do
His will because we love Him, and because of the gratitude in
our hearts for all that He had to do to redeem us from our sins
and to make us His children.

BROTHERLY LOVE
1 Peter 1:22-25

Intro: One thing that the writers of Scripture have in common is that they all tell us how the people of God are to be identified--and this always has to do with the way they live! Peter has already indicated twice (1:2, 14) that a Christian is one who is obedience--obedient in believing the Gospel, obedient in living according to the Word of God. He has also indicates that a child of God will be a holy person--holy in his relationship with God, holy like God is holy. See 1:14, 15.

In our text for today Peter brought those two truths together when he wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth . . ."--and then he added a third thing that we need to be concerned about: BROTHERLY LOVE.

Obedience to God is the distinguishing mark of a Christian. This, in turn, produces holiness of life, but it also produces love for his fellow-believers in Christ.

Sin produced hate--hatred for God, and man's hatred for his fellow-man. The story of Cain and Abel proves that, as do many other stories in the Bible. But the grace of God in salvation changes all of that, and if those changes are not to be seen in a person's life, we can only come to one conclusion: that person is not a true child of God. Keep those three words in mind: obedience, holiness, and love. They were very, very important words to Peter as he wrote this Epistle, and they are very important words to you, too, if you are a Christian.

Let us see how Peter spoke of them here in the last four verses of chapter 1.

Note, first of all, the exhortation that he gave here. We have had several others, beginning with v. 13; what did he tell them to do here.

I. THE EXHORTATION (1 Pet. 1:22b): " . . . see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

To "love one another" means that he was speaking of their relationship to their fellow-Christians. Perhaps it would be even stronger if we left it as it is in the original text: Love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Cf. this same subject in 2:17; 3:8; 4:8 (where the word "fervent" is a cognate of "fervently" in 1:22).

What does it take to love the way Peter (and God) wanted

them to love each other? It took "a pure heart," a heart cleansed from sin--a holy heart, a heart that is right in the sight of God.

Whenever you see a Christian manifesting anything but love toward his fellow-Christian, you can be sure that there is something wrong in his relationship with God. And if a professing Christian fails to show love, it is because he is not a Christian at all!

But how are we to love each other?

"Fervently." What does this mean? It means intently. It means that we are to reach out, to be extended, to be stretched out in showing love. Love is not passive; it is active. Love is always seeking ways to manifest itself. And this is what we are to be doing--especially toward those who are in our own fellowship. Peter was writing to a particular group of Christians about their love for each other.

So that is the command--and when you look at the average group of Christians, you can see that that is A BIG ORDER.

How can it be done?

This is where the rest of our text is important. In these verses, the first part of v. 22, followed by vv. 23-25, Peter was showing how such a love, such a unique love, could be displayed by human beings.

It all goes back to our salvation. What happened when we were saved, and what and Who were involved in our salvation?

II. A FERVENT LOVE (1 Pet. 1:22a, 23-25).

A. Made possible through our salvation (1 Pet. 1:22a, 23).

Note how Peter spoke of it.

It is something that we have done in the sense that we have believed in Christ.

But notice that Peter has already made it very clear that salvation is a work of God. Even our faith comes from God. See v. 21. And here in this verse our obedience to the faith has only been possible through the Spirit. But nevertheless it is important for a person to believe in order to be saved. And when we believe we are brought into a new relationship with God which changes our attitude toward others who have

trusted in Christ. We now have an "unfeigned" (lit, an unhypocritical love; not something pretended, but real; we are not putting on an act, but showing how we really feel)--an "unfeigned love of the brethren."

And then to show further what the change has been, and that it is not something that we have done for ourselves, Peter added in v. 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, but the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

To be born again means to have a new life with a new beginning! In John 3:3, 7 (vv. 1-8) the word that our Lord used was being born from above--a life of divine origin, a work of God.

Peter had mentioned this new birth, you will remember, in 1:3. There he said that it was "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Here he said that it was "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Which is it?

Both statements have to be true--and they are!

The foundation of our salvation is the work of Christ in His death and resurrection. The means which God uses to bring about the new birth within us are the Word of God used by the Spirit of God.

This is the Biblical doctrine of REGENERATION. No one is ever saved apart from Christ; no one is ever saved apart from the Word of God.

But then Peter placed special emphasis upon . . .

B. The unique character of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23b-25).

He used three expressions to describe the Word of God. And incidentally he used two different words for "word" in v. 23 and v. 25. The first is _____; the second is _____. These three expressions are:

- 1) "Incorruptible."
- 2) "Liveth."
- 3) "Abideth forever." The expression in v. 25, "endureth for ever," is the same.

(Explain.)

And to prove his point Peter referred for the third time in this chapter to the OT. Here, to Isa. 40:6-8.

There is no book like The Book! It has that rare

quality which no other book possesses: it is living!
It does not have that quality whereby it would destroy
itself (in spite of what some men may say). It is a
word that remains in all generations, and will abide
for ever!

Take man by way of contrast--in v. 24. He is like the
most fragile of God's creation--here today, then gone;
glorious for a few days, then fading and gone!

As amazing as human birth is, it is nothing in
comparison with the new birth!

Concl.: On our love for each other as brothers and sisters in
Christ, cf. Col. 1:4;
1 Thess. 3:12, 13; 4:9;
2 Thess. 1:3b;
1 John 3:10, 11, 14, 16, 4:20-5:2.

This love is a mark of a true Christian. The love of God is
defined in 1 Corinthians 13. May God enable us to manifest
this love for His glory, for our blessing, and that those who
do not know Him may see the reality of faith in our Lord Jesus
Christ. Perhaps the world would not scoff as loudly at the
term born again if there were more evidence in our lives that
what we claim is really true.

THE CHRISTIAN^S WAY OF LIFE
1 Peter 2:1-5

Intro: The word, "wherefore" (or it could be translated, therefore, is one of those connecting words in a language. It is a word which looks backward, but it also looks forward. It ties together that which has been said with that which is about to be said. And so it is a very important word for us in seeking to understand the Word of God.

And so when we come to a word like this in Scripture, we ought to ask ourselves, "What has the writer been saying? What connection does what he is about to say have to do with what he has been saying?"

Well, when we ask that question here, we see that Peter had been speaking about the Gospel and its effect upon the lives of those who believe its message--and basically it is that such a person has been born again! He is different. He has new life. He is a child of God. In the language that we use today, we would say, "He has become a Christian!"

Peter first mentioned this in 1:3. He spoke in 1:9, 10 of salvation, which is another expression for this work of God in the soul. In 1:18, 19 Peter called it being "redeemed." These are all expressions that describe what has happened to the person who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Now we have already seen that Paul has inserted some practical instructions (beginning with 1:13), but at this point in the Epistle where we have come today, he was going to say more. He wanted to emphasize with the believers to whom he was writing that receiving Christ as Saviour is not the end; it is only the beginning! A person who has trusted in Christ is like a newborn baby; he needs to grow and develop into a mature Christian, and not remain in a state of spiritual infancy. And yet we have a lot of people in our churches today who have merely professed Christ, but do not possess Him as their Saviour, or those who have been born again, but have never grow up in their faith. And that causes many problems for any church.

This is what Peter was pointing out.

The people to whom he was writing has already suffered for their faith in Christ, but, if they were to remain steady, they must give their attention each day to certain things that are important for every Christian to be doing--or not doing! There is **A CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE**, a way for a Christian to be living! These are things that every Christian, every true Christian, needs to have as priorities in his life every day.

There are five of these here. Let me point them out for you. Remember: these are not things that we do once, or even once in a while, but they are things that a born again person is to be doing continually every day!

- I. SEPARATION FROM SIN (v. 1).
- II. FEEDING ON THE WORD (vv. 2, 3).
- III. COMING TO CHRIST (v. 4).
- IV. BEING BUILT UP (v. 5a).
- V. OFFERING SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES (v. 5b).

Let us now seek to learn what each of these means.

- I. SEPARATION FROM SIN (1 Pet. 2:1).

Peter touched on this in 1:14-16. See also 2:11, 21-23; 3:9-11; 4:15.

It is apparent that if a person has been born again, he will not continue to live the same kind of a life that he lived before. He is still able to sin, but he does not want to sin. He wants to lay them aside (the expression that Peter used here in 2:1) as a person would take of a soiled garment.

We would like to be able to do this once-for-all time, but that is not possible. As long as we are in these bodies we will be able to sin. And so we will have to be continually laying our sins aside, before we commit them. Our biggest problem every day is how to keep from sinning.

Some people think that the Bible is only positive, never negative. But they have to be people who do not read the Bible, even though many of those who say such a thing pose as teachers of the Word of God. There is plenty in the Bible that is negative--and here we have a good example (as well as in all of those other verses I have pointed out in this Epistle which have to do with a believer's sin.

The sins which Peter mentioned here are representative of a lot of other sins that he could have mentioned. What do they mean?

- A. "All malice" -- that is, all forms of malice, that disposition which is in all of us, a bad disposition, by which we are inclined to hurt people any way we can, verbally, physically, or any other way. These are expressions of resentment. Somebody has done something bad to you, and you would like to do something worse to them. Peter said, "Don't do it; put it off! You may have to do it over and over again on the same day, but put it off; lay it aside."

- B. "All guile" -- the crafty person, like the bait a fisherman uses to catch fish. It is deceit.

Nathaniel was commended by our Lord in John 1:47 as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

- C. "Hypocrisies" -- closely related to "guile," a word which describes a person as an actor. He is pretending to be devoted to the Lord when actually he is not! Lay that aside. Be genuine.
- D. "Envies" -- these are what led to the first murder. These two words appear together in Gal. 5:21. It means to be jealous of another's success, or apparent success. It means to depreciate some one's character.
- E. "Evil speakings" -- lit. this is to talk down, to defame someone else. We are all guilty. Our tongues go into action, and no one is safe.

The power of sin has been broken in our lives, if we know Christ as our Saviour. We can sin, but we do not have to sin. And so every day we will find that we need to be continually laying these things aside. I repeat, it is not a once-for-all act, but has to be done over and over.

II. FEEDING ON THE WORD (1 Pet. 2:2, 3).

While we are not to remain as babes in Christ, we are never to lose that infant appetite. Anyone who has ever seen a baby eat knows what that is. A baby at a mother's breast is content, is concerned about nothing else. Tears are stopped. The baby is content.

And so Peter is saying here that we need to feed on the Word daily, and many times a day--just like you would feed a baby. And feed on the Word "that ye may grow thereby." Just as no one is "born again" apart from the Word of God, so no Christian is going to grow unless he is continually feeding on the Word of God--not just at 11 on Sunday morning, but over and over again daily.

And why take in the Word? "That ye may grow thereby."

Are you doing this?

Before I leave these two verses let me call your attention to two more important parts.

- A. "Sincere milk."

Peter used an expression here which contains two ideas.

1. It means the pure, unadulterated, guile-less Word of God.
2. It means the reasoned, or reasonable, Word of God. That is, the Word which is understood.

If we follow through on the idea of feeding on the Word, it is food that is digested. The Word does not profit us if we do not understand it.

But note this other expression:

- B. "If so we ye have tasted that the Lord is **gracious**."

Peter was speaking here about the Lord Jesus. Have you tasted of His sweetness? Taste is what excites the appetite. If you have tasted of the sweetness of the Lord as you have come to the Word, you will come again and again to feed upon Him in the Word. It is Christ Who draws us back to the Word.

But let us go on to our third point.

III. COMING TO CHRIST (1 Pet. 2:4).

You and I came to Christ when we were first saved. Peter was not speaking of that here. He was speaking of coming to Christ daily, and over and over again in the same day. We come to Him as our foundation stone, our chief cornerstone. He is "a living stone," examined and repudiated by men, but God's choice, and precious to Him. "Precious" is the word which is translated in Luke 7:2 of the centurion's servant "who was **dear** unto him." He outranks all others with the Father. To the Father He is the pre-eminent One.

Have you been with Him already today? You need Him--over and over and over every day!

But notice the last two points in v. 5. First . . .

IV. BEING BUILT UP (1 Pet. 2:5a).

Paul was speaking of this same thing in Eph. 2:20-22.
(Read.)

What is this "spiritual house"? It is the dwelling place of God on earth. It has to do with the people of God in their relationship with each other. This is the Church, the body of Christ, but it is also true of individual local churches. Where two or three are gathered in the Lord's Name, He is there!

But, you see, this fourth point is built upon the first three. It is when the people of God are laying aside their sins, feeding on the Word, and, in doing so, coming to Christ, that the presence of God we find a powerful manifestation in the gathering together of the Lord's people.

This is "a spiritual house," but it is also a growing house, not only as other stones are added to the house, but because the stones themselves are growing! Oh, what a marvelous purpose God has in our gathering this morning-- the manifestation of His holy presence in this place!

One more thing:

V. OFFERING SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES (1 Pet. 2:5b).

We as believers are not only "a spiritual house," but "an holy priesthood." What do priests do? Their most important function is that they offer sacrifices to God.

Notice that all that Peter has said in this chapter leads up to this. This is the believer's work, offering up "spiritual sacrifices." And notice that two things are necessary:

- 1) They must be pleasing to God.
- 2) They will only be pleasing as the right sacrifices are offered through the right Person: "Jesus Christ."

Anyone who has read the Bible knows what the Old Testament sacrifices were, but what are "spiritual sacrifices"?

The Word of God tells us about these, too, and I only have time to mention them.

- A. Our bodies (Rom. 12:1, 2).
- B. Our praise to God (Heb. 13:15; Psa. 50:14, 23). Thus prayer is a vital part of our relationship with God, of our ministry to Him.
- C. Our good works (Heb. 13:16; Phil 2:17).
- D. Our gifts of money (Heb. 13:16; Phil. 4:18).

And see also:

- E. A broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart (Psa. 51:~~17~~¹⁷).

Did you offer sacrifices to the Lord this morning? Will you continue to offer sacrifices to the Lord throughout the day?

Remember that all that Peter spoke of here has to do with that which you and I as believers are to be occupied throughout the day.

Concl: This is THE CHRISTIAN'S WAY OF LIFE. Does this describe the way you live? If not, it should. The truth of God has not changed at all from Peter's day to our own. Peter described the old life in 1:14. That was a life in which we sought to please ourselves. That cannot be the way we live now. Now we are to seek to do what pleases God, and Peter has told us here what that means.

May God enable us to live each day, and throughout the day, so that our lives will please and glorify Him.

CHRIST--PRECIOUS, OR REJECTED?

1 Peter 2:6-10

Intro: We have seen how Peter alternates in his writing between that which is purely doctrinal as compared with that which is primarily practical. In 2:4-10 we have a doctrinal section.

We considered vv. 4, 5 last Sunday, but let me relate that to what we have today in vv. 6-10 so we can all see the connection.

In vv. 2, 3 Peter was exhorting the believers to feed upon the Word of God "if," or since, "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"--"gracious" in salvation! They had tasted of the sweetness of the Lord, and that was in experiencing His saving grace. To taste that the Lord is gracious is to taste what the Lord Jesus Christ is in our salvation.

We came to Him to be saved, and, according to v. 4, we continue to come. We come again and again--daily, hourly, constantly. He is the living foundation of our salvation--solid, unchangeable, strong--chosen by God, and precious to God. This is all in v. 4.

But what God has done with us in Christ is just as amazing.

- 1) He has made us living stones in a spiritual house which He has made His dwelling place here on earth.
- 2) In addition, He had made us a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices in this spiritual house (like the tabernacle and temple of old)--sacrifices which have two requirements:
 - a) They must be pleasing to God. And we are told in the Word what they are.
 - b) They must be offered to God "by Jesus Christ," our Saviour, the only One through Whom God can and will have anything to do with us!

And so we come to our text for today, vv. 6-10. (Read.)

What was Peter doing in these verses?

Two things:

- 1) He was continuing to enlarge upon the unique place that Christ has in this wonderful salvation of God, the place that has been given to Him by God.
- 2) He was going on to show more of the unique positions and privileges of the people of God--truly amazing positions and equally amazing privileges.

But why was he doing this? The Epistle, even thus far, shows that he had at least four reasons, maybe more:

- 1) He sought to honor Christ.
- 2) He sought to attract sinners to Christ. Nothing will do this like the Gospel.
- 3) He sought to comfort, to encourage, troubled, suffering saints.
- 4) He sought to provoke the people of God to live lives of greater holiness and greater service to God.

How did he do this? Let us see.

First, he continued to discuss . . .

I. THE WORK OF GOD IN SALVATION (1 Pet. 2:6).

What has God done? Two things are mentioned here.

- A. He is the One Who has laid the cornerstone of salvation, and that cornerstone is Christ.

This ought to remind us of Peter's great confession in Matt. 16, and what the Lord said to Peter in v. 18 of that chapter. Peter was not the foundation; Christ was!

Christ was chosen by God for this purpose, and precious to Him in that particular place. We have already been told that in 1 Pet. 2:4.

But the second thing that God has done is this:

- B. He gave a promise concerning Him. That promise is found in Isa. 28:16. Isaiah gave it one way; Peter has given it in a slightly different way, but they both add up to the same thing.

1. Isaiah said,

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: **he that believeth shall not make haste.**

By this latter statement he meant that the one who believes on Christ will not hurry off looking for another Saviour! He will be satisfied that Christ is the only One he needs.

2. Peter said, ". . . and he that believeth on him **shall not be confounded.**" By this he meant, shall not be disappointed. He will not be ashamed some day that he had been trusting in Christ, and that he should have done something else. God promised that no one would never regret trusting in Christ, especially when one stands before God in that day.

And so God, to guarantee both of these points, has recorded them twice in Scripture--once in Isaiah, and the second time in 1 Peter. And His Word stands for ever! See 1:25.

God determined what salvation would be. He sent Christ to Zion. And it was there that the only salvation of all time was fulfilled in the coming and death of Jesus Christ.

Next we see . . .

II. THE TWO CLASSES OF MEN REGARDING SALVATION (1 Pet. 2:7, 8).

There are (1) those who believe in Christ, and (2) there are those who do NOT believe in Christ.

A. Those who believe in Christ.

What does it mean to believe, and how can we identify one who has believed?

To believe is to place all of your hope for salvation in the one upon whom you are placing your trust. If that One is Christ, it means you are depending upon Him and His work on the Cross to get you to heaven--nothing more nothing less, nothing else!

And even this faith comes from Christ. See 1:21.

How can we identify a true believer? He is a person to whom Christ is precious!

What makes anything precious?

Well, you know if there is a "limited edition" of anything--of a certain kind of an automobile, or a postage stamp, or of a coin, or of dishes, or of figurines, or whatever else it might be, they become collector's items, and so are precious! If anything is the only one of its kind, like some masterpiece of art, it becomes EXTREMELY VALUABLE, EXTREMELY PRECIOUS! Often its value reaches into the millions!

Why is Christ precious? Is He a "limited edition," one of several saviours? NO! He is more precious than that! He is the only Saviour. There are no others. Peter said that, and his words are recorded in Acts 4:12. If He is not the Saviour, there is none! There is no salvation. We have no hope. We are not God's children after all. We are not going to be in heaven. Oh, how dreadful to have this written over your head: "Without Christ"! But He is the

Saviour, the only Saviour. He is our hope, the only hope. He is the only way to God. Sinners must come to God through Christ, or they will never get there. Oh, how precious Christ is! No price can be put upon Him. And so it is no wonder that Peter has already spoken of the blood of Christ in this Epistle as "precious"!

But what about the other class of people--those who do not believe in Christ?

B. Those who do not believe in Christ. See 1 Pet. 2:7b, 8.

Does the fact that they do not believe change anything about Christ? Absolutely not! In the latter part of v. 7 Peter was quoting Psa. 118:22. Whether people believe it or not, Christ is still "the head of the corner," the foundation stone, the chief cornerstone.

Some people have a strange idea about the Bible. They think that if they don't believe it, then it isn't true, and they don't have to worry about it anymore. They have that idea about God: if you don't want to believe that He exists, then He doesn't exist. The men in Christ's day thought that if they did not want Christ as the cornerstone of salvation, he would not be that cornerstone! What did the Psalmist say? What did Peter say? Read v. 7b.

What else do we find in the Word about those who do not believe in Christ?

See v. 8 where Peter was quoting from Isa. 8:14.

If men did not, or do not, believe in Christ, then He becomes a stumblingblock to them, "a rock of offence." The Jews wanted a different kind of Messiah. They wanted one who would deliver them from Rome. They wanted one who would hate the Gentiles. They wanted a Messiah who would enforce the Law for salvation, not one who would show grace and compassion for the worst of sinners. And so they rejected Christ.

But some will always say, "What a pity! The Lord came to save them, but they wouldn't have anything to do with Him!" That is true, but notice what Peter wrote at the end of v. 8: They were "disobedient" to the Gospel because it was "whereunto also they were appointed"! The NIV says, "Which is also what they were destined for." The NASB says, "And to this doom they were also appointed." Read also Rom. 9:22 and

Jude 4. And note how this word "appointed" is used in 1 Thess. 5:9. When were men "appointed" to salvation? See 2 Thess. 2:13 and Eph. 1:4.

So the divine appointments to either salvation or condemnation were made before the foundation of the world--not when a person either accepts or rejects Christ! These are truths which most people don't like, but they are right there in our Bibles written out for us.

But someone always says, "Then there is no point in preaching the Gospel since salvation has already been decided by God."

It is true that God has determined who is going to be saved, and who is not going to be saved. He is working all things out according to His own will, as Eph. 1:11 says. If He had determined to save everyone, everyone would be saved. He is mighty enough to do that. But we need to preach the Gospel because He has also decreed that no one is going to be saved who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we preach the Gospel to every creature, not knowing who is going to be saved, but knowing that God knows, and that He will use His Word to draw to Himself those whom He has ordained for salvation from the foundation of the world.

But why do those who are believers trust in Christ?

Let me dip just briefly into v. 9. We will have to wait until next Sunday for vv. 9 and 10, but I want to conclude with two things Peter said in v. 9. He tells us here why we believe if we believe--two reasons:

- 1) One is that we have been "chosen."
- 2) The other is that we have been "called."

Are we any different from those who do not believe? No. We are just as bound by our sin as they are by their sins. We are just as deserving of hell as they are. But God has chosen us, and He has called us. And those are the only reasons that we have come to Christ, trusting in Him for our salvation. How can we tell if we are of the elect? By whether or not we are trusting in Christ as our Saviour, and by whether or not Christ is precious to us. There are people throughout the world who will be saved, who are the elect of God, but who do not know it. They must hear the Gospel, and through the Gospel they will be awakened to their sinful condition and will understand that Christ is the only One Who can save them.

Concl: Many of the hymns in our Trinity Hymnal were written by Isaac Watts (1674-1748). In fact, there are more by him than by any other single writer. Charles Wesley is second.

— One of Watts' hymns is #271 in which he was dealing with the question of how it is that we are saved, and others are not. It has to do with Luke 14:16 where we read, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many." Listen to what he wrote. We have sung it many times.

**How sweet and awful is the place With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays The choicest of her stores.**

**While all our hearts and all our songs Join to admire the
feast, Each of us cry, with thankful tongues, "Lord why am I a
guest?"**

**"Why was I made to hear thy voice, And enter while there's
room, When thousands make a wretched choice, And rather starve
than come?"**

**'Twas the same love that spread the feat That sweetly drew us
in; Else we had still refused to taste, And perished in our
sin.**

— And then Watts expressed the cry of the redeemed heart:

**Pity the nations, O our God, Constrain the earth to come; Send
thy victorious Word abroad, and bring the strangers home.**

**We long to see thy churches full, That all the chosen race
May, with one voice and heart and soul, Sing thy redeeming
grace.**

Listen dear Christian, and dear friend if you are not a Christian, don't argue with the Word of God. These truths are stated in plain language in the Word of God. Don't worry if you cannot understand the decrees of God. No one understands them fully. But believe them! God has a right to save whom He will. If He wanted to save only one person, or none at all, that would be His right. What you and I can determine from the Word of God is that people will go to hell if they do not believe in Christ, and that Christ will not turn anyone away who comes to Him to be saved.

— And so, if you have not believed on Christ, believe on Him now. If you have never come to Christ, come to Him now, and you will be saved. And then it will rejoice your heart to know that you have come because you were chosen, and you have come because today He has called you through His Word.

THE CHOICES OF MEN AND OF GOD

1 Peter 2:7-10

Intro: When I speak of THE CHOICES OF MEN AND OF GOD, I am speaking of their choices with regard to salvation-- the choice that man will always make when he is left to himself, and the choice which God has sovereignly made with regard to those who will be saved, and those who will not be saved. We come at this point in Peter's Epistle to two truths in Scripture which people have the most difficulty receiving, and yet they are clearly taught in the Word of God. They are the doctrines of reprobation and of election. One has to do with those who finally will be lost and condemned to the eternal judgment of God; the other has to do with those who will ultimately be saved, and who will be in heaven for ever and ever.

The conflict comes down to what people believe about the will of God as compared with the will of man.

If you were to ask most Christians if they believe in the sovereignty of God, they would say that they do. God would not be God, they would say, if He were not sovereign. He is God; we are His creatures. He is infinite; we are finite. He is almighty; we are weak. He is holy; we are sinful.

The sovereignty of God is a truth that every Christian takes comfort in in times of trial. When we quote Romans 8:28 we are declaring our faith in the sovereignty of God. When we pray, "Thy will be done," we are submitting ourselves to the sovereignty of God. If we believe in the promises of God, we believe in the sovereignty of God. If we have any confidence at all in the prophecies of Scripture, it is because we believe that God is sovereign and able to do what He has purposed that He will do, and what He has promised that He will do.

But the one place that even many professing Christians have difficulty is when we come to the subject of the sovereignty of God in salvation. We have been taught that this is where the will of man can somehow thwart the will of God. Many believe that God has deliberately abandoned His sovereignty in preference for the will of man.

Before we look at the Scriptures, let me ask you a simple question which anyone who is acquainted with the Bible ought to be able to answer. It is this: What is the main subject in the Bible, from Genesis to the Revelation? Or, to state it another way, What is the main thing that God is doing in the world today, and has been doing ever since the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden?

The answer is, the main subject in the Bible is salvation!
The main work of God in the world is the salvation of sinners!
All of God's works have this one thing in mind. This is the
ultimate purpose of God.

The most important events in all of history had to do with the
coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Why did He come? The
answer to that question is found throughout the Bible, but we
have it in the words of the Apostle Paul found in 1 Tim. 1:15,
This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. . .

The Old Testament prophets predicted His coming; the New
Testament Apostles expounded and applied the meaning of His
death with regard to salvation.

Now let me ask you another question: Did man deserve to be
saved? Does anyone deserve to be saved? Again--if you know
anything at all about your own heart, and surely if you know
the picture that we have of man in the Bible, sinful,
disobedient to God, rebellious against Him, and everything
else what could be said, you must admit that man has no right
to expect that God would do anything for his salvation. And
that is right! God is not obligated to man in any way.

But God has done something! That is why Christ came.

Now I have another question--in fact, two.

- 1) If this is the main thing that God has been doing
throughout human history, if this is His greatest purpose
with regard to the future, is it even reasonable to
believe that He would leave this in the hands of men,
subject to the will of man? I think that you would have
to agree that we would expect a sovereign God to manifest
His sovereignty in a special way if this is His main work.
- 2) Since God does not owe salvation to any man, and since He
is doing this work of salvation, therefore, of His own
will, does He not have the right to say what the salvation
shall be, and even who shall be saved and who shall not be
saved? Obviously He does. If He had wanted to save just
one person, He would have been perfectly righteous in
doing it. On the other hand, if He had wanted to save
everybody, He could have done that. Surely you have to
believe if God is sovereign, it would have been no problem
at all for Him to save everyone! THEREFORE, WE MUST COME
TO THIS CONCLUSION: IF NOT EVERYONE IS BEING SAVED, IT
MUST NOT HAVE BEEN THE WILL OF GOD THAT EVERYONE BE SAVED!
And that is exactly what the Word teaches! That is what
the Apostle Peter believed, and what he taught.

I am full of questions this morning. Let me ask another. If
God had left the question of who would be saved up to man, how

many people would have been saved? Would you have been saved? ABSOLUTELY NOT! Neither would I have been saved.

I met a lady just the other day who told me that she had become a Christian about four years ago. And then she said this, "I don't know if I found the Lord, or He found me." I responded to her, "I am sure that it was that He found you." And she said, "I think you're right." You see, if God had waited for that lady to seek Him, He would have waited forever. If the Lord had waited for me to seek Him, He would have waited forever. If the Lord had waited for you to seek Him, He would have waited forever. The Bible says, "There is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11b). But, you say, does the Bible not also say, "Seek ye the Lord . . ." (Isa. 55:6, 7). Yes, it does. How do we explain this apparent contradiction? It is simple. God said to people He was seeking. Whenever you find a person who is really seeking God, you can be sure that God has been seeking him first or that person would have been content to go on to his grave without God.

John 1:11-13 teaches us this:

He (the Lord Jesus) came unto his own,
and his own received him not.
But as man as received him,
to them gave he power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on his name:
Which were born, not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of man,**
BUT OF GOD.

Did you ever hear this song? I will just read the words to you.

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true;
No, I was found of thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand, and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole
of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
Always Thou lovedst me.

How does God seek us? He begins to work in our hearts. We get concerned about our sins. We begin to seek for Him. And in His wonderful grace He brings us where we can hear His Word, the Gospel of His grace through Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt that man exercises his will, makes his choice, but apart from a work of God in his heart, it will always be against God, saying "no" to Christ, rejecting the message of salvation. Why is this the case? How did Peter express it here in our text?

I. THE CHOICE OF MAN.

Remember we are talking about man when he acts on his own, before God has done anything in his heart. Why does man stumble over the Gospel message when he hears it? By stumbling I mean, why does he reject it?

Let me go back to v. 6 for one point.

- A. He does not like the idea of God determining what salvation shall be (v. 6)

V. 6 tells us that the Lord has determined in His sovereignty what salvation shall be.

- B. Men stumble at Christ (vv. 7, 8a).

They may feel that demanding that salvation be through Christ alone is being too narrow.

Or they may feel that getting right with God does not require such drastic action as Christ took on the Cross.

But the point is, they stumble at Him!

- C. Men stumble at the Word of God (v. 8b).

They do not feel that a book that is 2,000 years old can possibly tell them what to do today.

Or they may argue as to whether or not it is the Word of God. But, whatever their specific objections may be, they do not like the Bible. They stumble at it.

We see people going through life like this. They die without ever changing their minds. In multiplied millions of cases, this is MAN'S CHOICE! He can hear the Gospel over and over again, but he does not want to have anything to do with it. Or he may not even want to go where he can hear the Gospel even once. Sometimes they die without ever hearing the Gospel. But what did Peter have to say about this? How does this fit in with the sovereignty of God?

II. GOD'S CHOICES.

It fits in perfectly. In the beginning God not only determined that there would be salvation, but He determined who would be saved, and who would not be saved.

A. Some would not be saved. See the last five words of v. 8.

The NIV: "Which is also what they were destined for."

The NASB: "And to this doom they were also appointed."

Listen to Rom. 9:22-24:

What if God, willing to shew his wrath,
and to make his power known,
endured with much longsuffering **the vessels of
wrath fitted to destruction,**
And that he might make known the riches of his
glory on the vessels of mercy,
which he had afore prepared unto glory,
Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews
only, but also of the Gentiles?

Listen to Jude 4:

For there are certain men crept in unawares,
**who were before of old ordained to this
condemnation,** ungodly men,
turning the grace of our God into lascivious-
ness, and denying the only Lord God,
and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I agree that this is strong teaching, but it is the Word of God. God in the very beginning, before the foundation of the world, made His appointments to salvation and to condemnation.

But, you ask, where do you read about those who are appointed to salvation? Look at v. 9.

B. Some will be saved.

1. Note two words in v. 9

- 1) "Chosen."
- 2) "Called."

The reason some are saved is because of the sovereignty of God who chose them before the foundation of the world, and sovereignly called them to Himself--what theologians have called, the effectual call. There is a general call for all to come, but there is an effectual call, and when God calls men effectually, they come.

Note these verses:

- 1) 1 Thess. 5:9.
- 2) 2 Thess. 2:13.
- 3) Eph. 1:3, 4.
- 4) Rom. 9:10-16.

2. I am going to have to leave vv. 9, 10 for next Sunday. These have to do with the Lord's description of His people. They show us what we are, what we are to be pre-eminently concerned about day by day, and how we came to be what we are.

So stay with me. We will get on to the following verses eventually. But these truths are so important that I wanted to spend some extra time on them for the blessing and strengthening of our understanding and our faith.

But the passages which I have given you leave no doubt, if we are to believe the Word of God, that the Lord has determined what shall be done concerning salvation, and that what we are seeing is the outworking of His will. If man were left to himself, no one would be saved because no one would come to God. But God has not left it to man. He has determined everything that has to do with our salvation so that all of the glory would be His!

If you are hearing these truths for the first time, let me say that I know that I have not answered all of the questions that you might have, but I want you to feel free to come to me to ask your questions. It is very important that you understand these great doctrines of Scripture, and I want to do all I can to help you.

Concl: What is our response to this teaching?

It should be that our hearts would be filled with praise to God (1) that He has provided salvation at all, and (2) that He has been pleased to choose us and call us to Himself.

But beyond that we have a job.

It is to preach the Gospel to every creature. And we can preach a "whosoever will" Gospel because "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). Whoever comes to Christ will be saved; those who do not come to Christ will be lost eternally. We do not know who will come. But, when anyone does truly come to Christ, we know that they have come because God moved upon their hearts to come, or they never would have come.

And so we can say that God is sovereign even in salvation. He

(Over)

has left nothing to chance. He knows who is going to be saved because He has chosen those who are to be saved. And one by one they are coming. The Word continues to go forth, not in vain, but accomplishing that which is pleasing to the Lord. And the glory is all His!
