

PARTAKING OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1 Peter 4:12-14

Intro: The church for most of the twentieth century has been far different from the church of the first century. Even back in the nineteenth century churches were accepted as a part of national life, state churches being including all of the citizens of many nations. And even today the laws of many nations, including our own, preserve for us the right to meet for worship and to serve God as we may see fit.

And so much of what we read about in the New Testament about persecution seems very remote from our lives today, and some would refer to passages such as we are considering today, as uninteresting, for that very reason.

But when we turn to the Word of God, we are taught to expect persecution. In our text for today the Apostle Peter said that we were not “to think it strange “concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.”

When Ananias was sent to Saul of Tarsus in the city of Damascus, the Lord told Ananias concerning Saul (who became the Apostle Paul, “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake (Acts 9:16).

The Lord Jesus showed in His Sermon on the Mount that persecution would be the lot of His disciples, just as it had been the experience of the OT prophets. I know that you will remember His words as I read them to you:

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:11- 12).

And so our Lord taught that we should not only expect persecution, but that we should welcome it. We should rejoice in it because of the great rewards we will receive in heaven if we handle it correctly.

That same note is sounded in our text for today. Notice verses 13 and 14 of 1 Peter 4. (Read.) The Apostle Paul even wrote in Romans 5 where he said that we not only “rejoice in hope of the glory of God . . . but we glory in tribulations also . . .” (Rom. 5:2b, 3a). It was not that they enjoyed

suffering, but it was because of what the Lord was accomplishing in their lives through persecution.

Perhaps we have some insight from the Word as to why we do not suffer persecution today like they did years ago. The Apostle Paul told Timothy that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim.3:12). True spiritual living is at a very low level in our day. The church has become so friendly with the world, and so much like the world, that the world sees very little reason for opposing us.

Over a century ago, Charles Simeon, one of England’s great preachers, said this in speaking of the lack of persecution even in his day. Here are his words:

But I am not sure that much of our repose may not be ascribed to the low state of religion amongst us: and I cannot but think, that, if God were to pour out His Spirit upon us as He did on the primitive Church, and our light wee to burn as bright as theirs, there would yet be found much the same rancour in the hearts of men against vital godliness now, as there was in former days: for there are not wanting at this hour many proofs of what men would do to suppress real piety, if the toleration accorded to us by the laws did not restrain them (Vol. 20, pp. 254, 255).

This leads me to say that since Peter said, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you,” his words also mean *that we should think it strange if we are not experiencing those fiery trials*. A passage like we have before us today ought to provoke some real thinking in all of us. It may very well be that, in addition to the protection afforded us by the laws of our country, we are not experiencing the trouble that we have been told to look for because the church has become so much like the world, that the world really can’t see the difference between themselves and us. Our favor from the world today ought to cause much heart searching on our part. Let us much sure that we are not a part of the marriage that seems to have taken place between the church and the world. And we need to remember that James has told us in his epistle that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” And he added, “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). We are not to be “conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). Contrary to much of the teaching that you will hear in churches today, our greatest influence upon the world is not when we seek to be like the people of the world, but when we live as only the people of God are able to live.

But now let us turn to our text. In the three verses which we will be considering, the Apostle Peter has given us four reasons why we can rejoice in our tribulations, four benefits that we receive through the persecution that the world may direct our way.

The first benefit is stated in verse 12. The next two are in verse 13. And the last one is in verse 14. So look with me now at verse 12.

I. ONE REASON FOR FIERY TRIALS (1 Peter 4:12).

The two words “fiery trial” here in verse 12 are the translation of one word in the Greek. And it speaks of the way in which by the use of a very hot fire, metals are purified from the dross that is in them. You may remember those words of Job found in Job23:10 where it is recorded that he said, “But He [the Lord] knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

The word “try” means to test so as to prove the genuineness of a person’s relationship with the Lord. The purpose that the enemies of the Gospel have is to destroy the work of God and to do that they have to destroy the people of God. But God never takes His hand off of us. And He sees to it that the measures that our enemies may use to try to destroy us, actually become instruments in the Lord’s hands to purify us, and to make us stronger, and holier. God works all of the circumstances together in our lives for the furthering of His purpose to make us like His Son. That is the purpose of our salvation. And this is one major reason why we can glory in our tribulations. The Lord is not finished with any of us yet. But He is not giving up on any of us either. Trials can be a very strong proof that we belong to the Lord. I just read yesterday morning in Proverbs 3,

11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Prov. 3:11-12).

So we should not think it strange if the Lord uses fiery trials in our lives, because this is what He uses for our perfection. The writer of Psalm 119 said in verse 67,

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word (Psa. 119:67).

And just after that in verse 71 he wrote:

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes (Psa. 119:71).

In times of persecution, or any other kind of testing, the Lord shows us our needs, and He works in them to meet those needs.

II. A SECOND REASON FOR PERSECUTION (1 Peter 4:13a).

We become “partakers of Christ’s sufferings.”

This part of verse 13 has been interpreted in different ways, but I want to tell you what I believe it means.

We can’t add to the sufferings the Lord experienced on the Cross when He died for our sins. He did that work alone, and He did a finished work. He did everything necessary to make us eternally acceptable to God. He put away our sins by His own sacrifice. So Peter could not possibly have meant that we have a part in our own salvation. Salvation is all a gift of God’s grace and God’s love, and not any of it was due to what we have done. We died with Him and in Him, but verses which deal with our union with the Lord in His death are emphasizing that He died in our Substitute; He died in our place.

And so it is not that we share in the Lord’s saving work.

But if we stop to think about *why* the people of God have suffered persecution, we have to realize that it is because of our relationship to Christ. The early apostles were warned not to speak or teach in the Name of Jesus! It is our Lord that the world hates, and the world hates us because we belong to Him, and love Him. You will remember that the Lord said to His disciples shortly before His death on the Cross,

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:19-21).

So in this way we are “partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” The persecution that is directed toward us is really aimed at the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it seems that what Peter was saying in this expression is, that when we are persecuted for the Lord’s sake, *this draws us and the Lord together in an*

even closer bond of fellowship. Cf. Phil. 3:10 - "That I may know Him..."

There are many wonderful passages in the prophecy of Isaiah, but in one of them Isaiah was speaking of how God had redeemed His people Israel, and this is what he had to say:

7 I will mention the lovingkindness of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindness.

8 For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.

9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old (Isa. 63:7-9).

The Lord does not forsake us in times of persecution from the world. He is afflicted when we are afflicted. When we suffer, He suffers. Through the prophet Zechariah the Lord told His people, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8). The Lord is touched with all the feeling of our infirmities (cf. Heb. 4:15). The Lord has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us,

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:6).

Some of the most wonderful times of fellowship the people of God have ever experienced have been when they have been persecuted the most severely. For example, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in lion's den. To be "partakers of Christ's sufferings" is to enjoy the nearness of His presence with us.

This truly something to rejoice about.

But there is still a third reason for our afflictions and persecutions.

III. A THIRD REASON FOR PERSECUTION (1 Peter 4:13b).

When the Lord comes, and we see Him in His glory, then we shall "be glad with exceeding joy." The Apostle Paul told the church at Rome,

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

When the Lord's glory is revealed when He comes for us, what is going to

happen to us. We are going to be changed into that same glory. “We shall be like Him,” the Apostle John said, “for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Then we will rejoice as we have never rejoiced before. Even now those saints who are in heaven with the Lord, are rejoicing with a greater joy than they ever had here on earth.

So it is through persecution that God prepares us more for heaven. We are to rejoice in our sufferings now in anticipation of what the Lord is preparing us for in that day when we shall be with Him.

There is so much more that could be said about this, but I must move on to my last point.

IV. A FOURTH REASON FOR PERSECUTION (1 Peter 4:14).

To be reproached is to be defamed, to be insulted, and put to shame. But the Apostle Peter said that in such times we are *blessed* (the beatitude word). Why? Because in such a time “the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.

God is with us. Christ is with us. And the Holy Spirit will rest upon us. We will experience His presence and His blessing in a very special way, a way we have not known before.

Do you remember how when those in the early church were being persecuted because of their faithful witness, they prayed for boldness to speak the Word of God? And what was the answer? We have the answer in Acts 4:31:

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

We are not seeing in our day the mighty works that the Holy Spirit has done in past days. Perhaps it is because things are too easy for us, too comfortable. If the Lord would move upon us to make us more holy, the world would certainly be aroused against us, but we might see blessing such as we have never seen before. If we are praying in these days for revival, we may also be praying for trouble, but through that trouble the Lord might be pleased to give us blessing greater than we have ever experienced before.

Concl: But whatever may come in the days ahead, we have no need to

fear, but we will have much to be thankful for as God moves upon our hearts in a new way, and once again we may see God working as He has worked in the past when we earnestly pray that we may be what He wants us to be, and that He will enable us, come what may, to live for His glory as we diligently seek to do His will.

TWO KINDS OF SUFFERING

1 Peter 4:15-19

Intro: In verses 12 through 14 of this chapter, 1 Peter, we learned that at this point the Apostle Peter gave two exhortations to the people of God to whom he was writing. First, he told them not to think that it was strange that their faith would be tried, severely tried, as the words “fiery trial” indicate. And second, instead of thinking it was strange, they were to rejoice.

And he gave them four reasons for rejoicing:

- 1) The trials would prove the genuineness of their faith, and their faith would be strengthened..
- 2) They would be partaking of Christ’s sufferings, and would experience a real personal fellowship with the Lord Who would not leave them alone in their sufferings.
- 3) Because of what it would mean to them at the coming of the Lord.
- 4) Because the Holy Spirit “of glory and of God” would rest upon them.

So there is always much spiritual benefit to any child of God who suffers because of His relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, his Savior. But immediately following verses 12, 13, and 14, the Apostle Peter issued a warning which he had mentioned previously in this epistle, more than once. And here we have it again in verse 15.

I. A REPEATED WARNING (1 Peter 4:15).

He made a brief reference to this possibility which was to be strictly avoided when he was writing to servants. See it in 2:20. Then he mentioned it again in 3:9 and 3:16, 17.

You see, it is certain that persecution will come if we are really living for the Lord, and people take delight in charging us as the Lord’s people with wrongdoing for any number of things. But we must make sure that they are false accusations. Even though we are saved, we still have our old natures, and it is a part of our old nature that drives us to get even with people who make trouble for us. And this is what we have to be very careful about.

However, we must be equally sure that accusations that people bring against us of being guilty of sin, must be false. And so Peter mentioned a sample of the kind of sins we need to be on our guard against. Note with

me what they are.

A. Murder (v. 15).

Can you imagine writing to the Lord's people, and warning them not to commit murder? Although it is not very likely that a Christian would commit murder, yet it is a possibility. A Christian could become so irritated by what others are doing unjust to persecute him, that he could respond in a fit of anger, and do something for which he could be justly accused, and punished by the law of the land in which he lives. Anger has often led one person to take another's life, and so we need to be on our guard against such a violent sin. As I have indicated, it is not very probable that a Christian would do such a thing, but it is possible. Hence, the warning.

By the way, be sure to notice that this warning has to do with the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).

B. Stealing (v. 15).

This has to do with the eighth commandment in the Mosaic Law. And so we learn from the Apostle Peter that just as it was wrong in OT times to commit murder, it still is wrong. And just as it was wrong in OT times to take from someone else what does not belong to you, it is still wrong to steal.

Solomon began his book of Proverbs with a warning against both of these sins, and indicates that these two sins might be provoked by a third sin which we will consider in just a moment. So let us go on to the third sin which Peter mentioned.

C. Evil doing (v. 15).

Here the Apostle Peter used a word which is inclusive of all kinds of sin. What is a Biblical definition, not an American definition, of sin? Sin is whatever the Bible teaches is sin. Sin is anything that is displeasing to God. We are being deceived in our country into thinking that anything that is legal is OK. And so when something like abortion, or homosexuality, is legalized, people kid themselves into thinking that it is OK to do it.

For example, have you noticed how common it has become to take the Name of the Lord in vain? It is almost impossible to listen to a program

on radio or TV, but what you will hear someone, a man or a woman, and sometimes even a child, taking the Lord's Name in vain.

Yesterday Lucille and Carolyn and I watched the World Championship Soccer game between China and the United States. Actually, we only watched parts of it. And the U.S. team won, as you probably know. But in the celebration afterwards, one of the girls on the U.S. team let loose with a profanity that was shocking. You know, ladies, I think you should know that we men are inclined to think that you are better than we are, and that there are sins which men will commit that you wouldn't commit. And one of those sins is taking the Lord's Name in profanity. And so it is shocking to hear young ladies, and even little girls, swearing. But it is written in the Word of God, and it is there today,

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Ex. 20:7).

And if the Lord does not hold people "guiltless" who take His Name in vain, this means that those who do it will be punished for it unless they seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

People had better start reading the Bible to find out what sin is. And let me say that when a nation, even the United States of America, legalizes what is condemned by God, that nation is in trouble with God, and can expect judgment from God.

So Peter warned against all evil doing.

What is the fourth sin that he mentioned?

B. "A BUDYBODY IN OTHER MEN'S MATTERS" (v. 15).

Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (VI, 128) says that this word (because these six words in English are the translation of one word in the Greek) means "one who spies out the affairs of other men." And Calvin added that this word "seems to designate one who covets what belongs to another" (XXII, Part 2, p. 137).

I mentioned a moment ago that this verse (15) in 1 Peter 4 sounds very much like what Solomon told his son at the beginning of the book of Proverbs. Let me read the verses that I am referring to. They are found in Proverbs 1:10-14:

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

- 11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:
12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:
13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:
14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:

We need to be warned that a single sin hardly ever travels alone. One sin so easily leads to another sin, and so on and on. This is a warning that all of us need to take to heart. Stay just as far away as you can from sin in any form. Christ died not only to save us from sin's penalty, but He died to save us from sinning! So let us not give our enemies any justification for charging us with sin. This is one kind of suffering which must be avoided by all of us who know the Lord – suffering because we have done that which is wrong in God's sight, or wrong according to the laws of the land in which we live.

What is the other kind of suffering?

II. SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN (1 Peter 4:16-19).

We use the word *Christian* very freely today. In fact, this is probably the most common term used for the people of God today. But we also have to recognize that in common usage today it can mean one who has been baptized, or who belongs to a church, or just someone who tries to live a moral, upright life. But what does it mean in the NT?

You may not have discovered that it is only used three times in all of the NT. twice in the book of Acts, and here in 1 Peter.

We find it first in Acts 11:25-26 where we read:

- 25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:
26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

The second time it appears is in Acts 26:28 “when Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

And then the third time is here in our text, 1 Peter 4:16. But what does it mean?

Originally it was a title of scorn, and was used first by Gentiles to identify people who were followers of Christ. And that is probably what Peter had in mind when he used it in connection with the persecution of the people of God. Later on, and even today, it has been adopted by Christians themselves as a title of honor. It means *one who is a follower of Christ*. And as such it speaks of a person who believes what Christ said about Himself, who follows His teaching, and who trusts Him to do what He said that He had come to do, and that is to save people from their sins.

Just to show you how the meaning of this word has been perverted in modern usage, one definition of a Christian in my dictionary is that it is used to distinguish a human being from one of the lower animals. Amazing, isn't it? But it also says that "Christian" means "one who believes, or professes or is assumed to believe, in Jesus Christ, and the truth as taught by Him."

You will find that some people believe a Christian is a person who is civilized, and not a heathen. Peter used it as it was in his day, a term of reproach, a person who deserved to be persecuted because he claimed to be a follower of Christ.

Peter was willing to take up that reproach, and so went on to say that if we suffer as Christians, we are not to be ashamed, but use it as an opportunity to glorify God.

Perhaps in Peter's mind there was the memory of the time when he was not willing to accept the reproach of being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ when He denied, and ultimately denied with oaths, that he even knew the Lord Jesus. So Peter could be very forceful when he wrote or spoke along these lines.

This is the other kind of suffering. It is suffering which is an honor, and we should not shrink from the ridicule that it may bring upon us, especially in this day in which we live.

But look at verse 17, and see what Peter revealed here about the plan and purpose of God.

Peter was indicating that God's hand is to be seen in the suffering of His people. As we have learned from this epistle, God uses the opposition that comes to His people for the purpose of purifying His people, and so preparing them for heaven and glory. We have seen that all Three Persons of

the Godhead care for us day by day, and especially are we aware of Their care of us when the world is most opposed to us. In the meantime, the world seems to flourish in its wickedness, and prospers even though it persecutes those in “the house of God,” which is the family of God. But Peter indicates that though the people of the world feel that they have nothing to fear from God, the truth is that the suffering that is ahead of them is far greater than the suffering that the Lord’s people will ever experience. “What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

What does it mean to obey the Gospel of God? It means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. People of the world despise Christians and despise the Word of God, but they do not know what “the end” is toward which they are hastening, and when they realize the doom that they are facing, it will be too late. What very solemn words these are, and we ought to pray that the Lord might be pleased to use them to awaken some who are in the world to their plight, and to the only way of escape – through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who gave His life to save sinners from their sins.

Verse 18 seems to mean that if the path that the righteous are called upon to take, is marked by such suffering and persecution even though they seek to live to please God, what will be the fate of those who ignore and despise God and His Gospel?

The Lord told a story about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus which is a good illustration of this truth which Peter was emphasizing. Let me read it to you. It is found in Luke 16:20-31:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

And so what is Peter's conclusion to this solemn subject which he had written about? It is in verse 19. (Read.)

Here again we are assured by the words, "by the will of God," that all that we may suffer because we belong to the Lord, is under His sovereign control, and fulfills His purposes in our lives. And we can do no better than to commit ourselves to His keeping by doing what is pleasing to God, and trusting Him as the One Who brought the world and all that is in it, into existence, and Who is His faithfulness, is carrying out His purposes just as they were ordained before the foundation of the world. Life may look chaotic to us, but everything is moving ahead according to God's eternal plan.

Concl: Let us take comfort in these words, that is, if we know the Lord.

But for those who do not know the Lord, there is an ominous ring to the words of the Apostle Peter. There are two possible ways for believers to suffer: one is for their own wrongdoing, which is not the way for us to go. The other is to suffer because we belong to Christ. But the wordling cannot stand by and smugly feel that he is escaping all suffering. His suffering is far worse than the people of God will ever experience because his suffering will be eternal, and in full measure for all of his sins. I trust that the Lord will give us all hearing ears so that we as believers will not fear to suffer for Christ, but will trust God in whatever suffering may come our way. And may those who are not trusting in Christ be awakened to the judgment that lies ahead, and may you find grace in God to flee from the wrath to come.

SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S FLOCK

1 Peter 5:1-4

— **Intro:** We come today to the exhortations which the Apostle Peter gave to the elders. This means that those Hebrew Christians to whom Peter was writing had formed themselves into a church, a local church, in all of the areas where they had gone, the places mentioned in chapter 1 and verse 1.. They had been forced to leave churches, or the church, probably as I have been saying all along, in Jerusalem, but they had been constrained by the Holy Spirit to establish themselves in local churches where they could worship the Lord together, be taught the Word of God as they had it then plus the doctrine of the apostles, and where they could be united in their efforts to reach others in their communities with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is very probably that some were serving as elders for the first time. Therefore, it was necessary that they receive individual instruction concerning the work that they had been appointed to do. There is no higher calling than that which the elders were to do.

— We don't know why Peter reserved his comments to the elders until he had almost finished his epistle, and I have found only one commentator who has even tried to give an explanation for this. That one (Wayne Grudem has said that it was probably because of what Peter had just written about judgment beginning in the house of God. He was referring to the fiery trials that had already come upon the people of God to purify them and to strengthen their faith. And Peter would have the elders realize that if the people were to be holy, they would need to have holy leaders.

The first four verses of 1 Peter 5 remind me of the time when the Apostle Paul met with the leaders of the church at Ephesus, and the way he exhorted the elders at that time. I am referring to what we find in Acts 20:17 to the end of the chapter (v. 38). But right now I am thinking of Paul's words which are recorded in Acts 20:28 where we read,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Notice that words at the beginning of this verse: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves."

— And then Paul added in the words found in Acts 20:32,

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Elders need to be built up too, just as much as the rest of the people in any church need building up. There can be no holiness without real growth in grace. And so if elders are to be fruitful in their work, there must continue to be spiritual growth in their lives.

So that is probably one reason that Peter saved these verses until he came to this point in his epistle. Another is that it would give special emphasis to what he was saying.

Now let us consider *how* he said it as well as *what* he said.

I. THE TONE OF THE APOSTLE PETER'S REMARKS (1 Peter 5:1).

He addressed himself to the elders, stating that he himself was an elder. The Greek would support the translation, fellow-elder. He could have addressed them as an apostle, but he took his place by their side as an elder.

It was as though he was speaking to himself as well as to them. Matthew Henry said that Peter “puts nothing upon them but what he was ready to perform himself.” Such an attitude always gives power to what we are telling others that they should do. He did not address them as a Pope, because he did not consider himself to be a Pope. And so the spirit of the Apostle would have been very difficult for any elder to resist. It would not have been wrong on his part to speak as an apostle, but speaking as an elder would have made his appeal very, very powerful.

But notice what else he said, and how he identified himself to them.

He said that he had been “a witness of the sufferings of Christ.”

It seems that the suggestion here would bring to the mind of every elder how precious the people of God are to the Lord. He died to save them for their sins. As the Lord Jesus Himself said, “The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep” (John 10:11). And we know how much the Lord loves the church, the whole body of Christ. The Apostle Paul said in writing to husbands,

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

— Peter said, in effect, “I saw the Lord suffer on the Cross, and I know how much the Church means to Him.” It is not because our Lord saw anything loveable in us, but He came to redeem those upon whom He had set His love from before the foundation of the world.

But then Peter added that he was “also a partaker of the glory that should follow.” Some expositors feel that Peter was speaking about his experience with James and John when they were with the Lord in the Mount of Transfiguration. And they may be right. But I also wonder, since this follows his statement about the sufferings of the Lord, if he was not speaking of the resurrection glory of the Lord. Not only did Peter see the Lord after He was raised from the dead, but he saw Him as He ascended into heaven. And Peter knew that it was our Lord’s purpose in saving us that He would make us like Himself, holy as He is holy, righteous as He is righteous, good as He is good.

— And so Peter was striving by God’s grace to be like the Lord Jesus, and here he was exhorting every elder to do the same.

The word “elder” is a translation of the Greek word, πρεσβύτερος. And this is the word from which the Presbyterians take their name. It means that they have an elder-type of church government. The other title that is used interchangeably with elder is the word *bishop*. And it is the translation of the Greek word ἐπίσκοπος. And the Episcopalians take their name from this word. It means *an overseer, or a guardian*.

Putting these two words together we see that leaders in the church are to be chosen for the spiritual maturity, and that their responsibility it of watch over the people of God. We have the first word in verse 1; we have the second word in its verb form here in verse 2. And the verb that Peter used at the beginning of the second verse brings in a third term which describes the work of church leaders. Let me speak of this as:

II. THE MAIN WORK OF THE ELDERS (1 Peter 5:2a).

— It is summed up in this statement: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.” Now the word “feed” comes from a Greek verb which means *to feed*, but it means more than that. It can very

correctly be translated, *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you*. And this verb *shepherd* is the word from which we get the English word, *pastor*. The ministry of the elders is a pastoral ministry, and they are to do for “the flock of God,” a term which Peter used for the people of God, or the members of the Church, just what a shepherd does for his flock of sheep.

What does a shepherd do for his sheep?

He feeds them. He guides them. He protects them from their enemies. He seeks them when they wander away. He makes sure that they have time to rest.

And this is what Peter had in mind when he told the elders to shepherd “the flock of God.” You see, the Lord may have given the elders the oversight of His people, but they remain “the flock of God.” They are the Lord’s people, the Lord’s sheep, and they need to be fed. They need to be led. They need to be protected. They need to be brought back when they wander away, And they need to rest.

This is why we as elders are devoted to the teaching of God’s Word. That is our food. It is only as we grow in our understanding of the Word of God, and in our application of the Word of God to your lives, that we as elders will continue to grow, or that you as “the flock of God” will continue to grow. And it is only as we all are learning more and more about the Word of God, that we will be able to detect false teachers when they come among us. And when the people of God begin to wander off away from the Lord, they need to be brought back. Elders are not to snoop into the lives of the Lord’s people, but they are to do their work of feeding the sheep, and be sensitive to those times when sheep need protection, or when they are spiritually in need, and require help.

Oh, there is so much for us to learn about our helplessness and our constant need of the Lord’s presence and blessing, as we think of how a shepherd cares for his sheep.

But now in doing this work, the Apostle Peter gave three warnings of dangers which the elders themselves need to beware. Let us notice what they are.

III. THREE WARNINGS FOR EVERY ELDER (1 Peter 5:2b-3).

These warnings are introduced by the words which we have just been considering: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof . . .” And then Peter gave:

A. Warning #1: “Not by constraint, but willingly.”

We all should know what “constraint” is. That is the way all of us have obeyed our parents at one time another. We obeyed because we were forced to, or because we were afraid of the consequences if we didn’t obey our parents. But such obedience did not bring any joy to our hearts, nor did it bring joy to the hearts of our parents.

How would you feel if you found out that the Lord didn’t really want to “shepherd” us, but that He did it just because the Father forced Him to do it. That would take all of the joy out of trusting the Lord, wouldn’t it? We would feel like we were an imposition on Him, and we wouldn’t really know what to expect from Him. Sometimes parents can be like this, or they can give the impression that their children are really a bother to them.

But does the Lord have to be forced to take care of us? Certainly not! It is His joy and delight to meet our needs, to protect us from our enemies, to guide us, and to bless us. That is what He delights to do. And we as elders are to be the same way.

Earlier this month I got a letter from another pastor who wrote:

I could not be more happy in ministry. I love what I do and I am grateful that God is letting me be a part of this special family. To minister the Word and to share in people’s lives is a wonderful gift.

These men were not serving by constraint, but willingly. And I can assure you that the elders of Trinity Bible Church, and the deacons, too, are just like this. We love what we do, and we love each one of you, and we want to do everything that we possibly can to help you in your walk with the Lord, and to protect you from all of the evils that are around us every day.

But there is always the danger that things can take place in our lives that make the work of the Lord a great burden. Pray that we will be protected from that, and that each of us will continue to learn about the Lord Who said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

What is the second warning?

B. “Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 5:2b).

I have told some of you of a pastor whom I heard say that he would rather do what he was doing for nothing, than to get paid for doing anything else.

Money itself is not filthy, but it becomes filthy when we become greedy and covetous for it. And when this happens in a pastor’s life, he becomes just a hireling. And do you remember what the Lord said about a hireling? Let me read you what He said:

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep (John 10:12-13).

My Dad was a business man, not a pastor. He was a deacon for most of his Christian life in a Baptist church where deacons were the leaders of the work. And he told me one time that there are three things that can ruin a preacher:

- 1) Immorality.
- 2) Laziness – a refusal to study.
- 3) Covetousness -- the love of money.

I have never forgotten those warnings.

What is “a ready mind”? The lexicon says that these words, the translation of one word in the Greek, means *with alacrity*. And that means *cheerfully and eagerly*. It means that there is nothing you would rather do than to faithfully care for the people of God. This is the way the Lord is with us. He is so concerned about us that He knows our needs before we come to Him to tell Him what they are.

The third warning:

C. Warning #3: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3).

We are not to be your bosses, but your examples. We as elders need to ask ourselves continually, “What kind of a church would Trinity Bible Church be if everyone lived like I do, if everyone were just like I am?” It is not that we are to be in competition with each other, or with you. But we are to practice what we preach. We are to live like we are encouraging you to live. We are to feed on the Word like we want you to feed on the

Word. We are to pray like we want you to pray.

— This is probably the hardest part of an elder or a deacon's responsibility. And as we go over these warnings, will you pray that we as elders and deacons may be what the Lord wants us to be, and that He will keep us from failing you, and from failing Him? We pray for you, but we need you to pray for each one of us. Only by the blessing of the Lord can we be faithful.

But finally we come to the good part:

IV. THE ELDERS' REWARD (1 Peter 5:4).

I want to read to you what John Calvin said in his commentary about this fourth verse of 1 Peter 5. Here is his comment:

— Except pastors retain this end in view, it can by no means be that they will in good earnest proceed in the course of their calling, but will, on the contrary, become often faint; for there are innumerable hindrances which are sufficient to discourage the most prudent. They have often to do with ungrateful men, from whom they receive an unworthy reward; long and great labors are often in vain; Satan sometimes prevails in his wicked devices. Lest, then, the faithful servant of Christ should be broken down, there is for him one and only one remedy, —to turn his eyes to the coming of Christ. Thus it will be, that he, who seems to derive no encouragement from men will assiduously go on in his labors, knowing that a great reward is prepared for him by the Lord. And further, lest a protracted expectation should produce languor, he at the same time sets forth the greatness of the reward, which is sufficient to compensate for all delay: *An unfading crown of glory*, He says, awaits you (Vol. XXII, Part 2, p. 146).

The Lord is the One Who works through us, but He is going to give His faithful servants “a crown of glory that fadeth not away,” just like we deserve the reward for all that He has been pleased to do through us.

— You know, in our day it has been customary to have pastors for this and pastors for that in our churches. And so to identify the main pastor, we have a relatively new title, Senior Pastor. Now I am not criticizing pastors who have taken that title because I know of some very faithful men who are called “Senior Pastor.” But I would not like to have that title myself because the Lord Jesus is here called “the chief Shepherd,” which means

“the chief Pastor.” This means that He is the Head Shepherd. He is the Head Pastor. All of the rest of us are Under Shepherds, shepherds serving under Him. So for all of us, He is our Senior Pastor.

— **Concl:** Now our text has had to do with elders, bishops, shepherds. But in closing I want to call your attention to one word in 3, the word “ensamples,” or *examples*. What is the purpose of a living example? It is a life to be followed. And so, while all that Peter has said in these first four verses of chapter 5, applies primarily to elders, it applies also to all of the flock of God. We as elders are to be what God wants us to be, so you will have examples to follow so that you will be what God wants you to be. So, you see, we are all involved in this.

Each of you has someone, or several people, for whom you are to exercise special concern and loving care. It may be your children. Or it may be a special friend that you have. Or it may be someone for whom the Lord has given you a special burden. We never know who is watching us, and so we all need to live every day to please the Lord so that our lives can be examples and inspirations to any who may be watching us to see how we are living day by day. We all have known those who have been an inspiration and a blessing to us; let us pray that we may be an inspiration and blessing to those who are watching us.

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PETER'S APRON THEOLOGY

1 Peter 5:5-7

Intro: My text for today is found in verses 5, 6, and 7 in 1 Peter 5. And here the Apostle Peter singled out and addressed those whom he called the “younger.”

Previously he had spoken in chapter 2 to servants, in chapter 3 to wives and then to husbands, at the beginning of chapter 5 to elders, and now to young people. The word he used here would include children as well as those who are older young people. And he addressed them with what has to be a very unpopular subject to most people of all ages, the subject of submission, or humility. John Calvin wrote that “nothing is more adverse to the disposition of man than subjection” (Vol. XXII, Part 2, pp. 147, 148). But the mention of submission to those who are “younger” is an indication that we are never too young to start learning the importance of submissive humility.

By nature we are all proud, self-willed, and desirous of having our own way. With some people, regardless of age, you can say that they are determined to have their own way. But that desire is strong in all of us. We do not like for others to tell us what to do. And this has become very strong in this present generation among people of all ages. However, Peter was addressing young people who claimed to belong to the Lord. And for all of you who are trusting the Lord as your Savior, this is a very personal message from the Lord for all of you. And instead of being something that we resent, I hope we all realize that this is one of the main characteristics of a happy and satisfying life.

The opposite of submission is pride, and pride has been called *the root sin*. When Paul gave Timothy the qualifications of elders, he wrote,

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the Devil (1 Tim. 3:6).

So pride is an indication, a major indication, of spiritual immaturity, and may even be an indication that a person is not even saved. None of us is exempt from pride, and pride can be a problem to us at any age. But Peter's admonition to young people at the beginning of verse 5 here in 1 Peter 5, is an indication that we can't begin to soon to learn the dangers of pride, and to give ourselves to learn how absolutely essential it is that we learn to be humble if we are really going to walk in fellowship with the Lord, and with each other. Our Lord said on one occasion, and probably repeated it many more times,

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matt. 11:29).

It was also said of Moses that he “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). He was a strong leader with deep convictions, and yet at the same time he was known for his humility, and was not surpassed in his meekness by anyone on the face of the earth in those days.

And to show that pride is not just a sin of young people, or young believers, we have the case of King Uzziah in the OT. He is one who did what was right in the sight of the Lord. But the recorded of his reign in Scripture was this: “He was marvellously helped, till he was strong.” And then this verse was added to his record:

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense (2 Chron. 26:15b-16).

And some of you know what happened to him. “Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death” (2 Chron. 26:21a). A reign which would otherwise have been one of the greatest in the history of Judah, was marred and brought to an end by pride.

We all should remember Prov. 16:18 where Solomon said, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” This has been true of nations as well as of individuals. And it has been a problem to Christians and non-Christians alike. So, young people, learn to be in subjection. This applies to your relationship with your parents, to your peers (those your own age), your teachers, police officers, and to all people in whatever relationship you might have with them.

But let us all notice that Peter went on to say, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another.” So Peter started with the young people, but then went on to include all ages. We never get to the place where pride cannot be a problem to us, and so all of us need to be constantly on our guard.

I have given my message today the title, PETER’S APRON THEOLOGY. You might wonder where I got that title, and I am glad if you want to know. I find it in the statement, “And be clothed with humility.”

I. PETER’S APRON THEOLOGY (1 Peter 5:5m).

Behind those word, “And be clothed with humility,” was a very important

experience in the life of the Apostle Peter. When he said, “be clothed with humility,” his mind went back to the event which Mr. Mathison read for us today from John 13. The verb which is translated “be clothed” could just as accurately be translated, “put on the apron of humility.” And Peter was thinking about that time in the Upper Room when our Lord was with His disciples, just shortly before His death. Apparently there was no household servant present, and so the Lord did a most amazing thing. He “took a towel, and girded Himself” (John 13 :4). And then he began to wash the feet of the disciples. In doing this He was taking on the role of a household servant. It was a very lowly task. It is very clear that none of the disciples were prepared to do what the Lord did. And when the Lord came to Peter, Peter said in amazement, “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?” You will see that question in John 13:6. And then in verse 8 of John 13 it is recorded that Peter said, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.”

I think that most of us would have felt like Peter did. Peter never expected to see His Lord in such a position, humbling Himself before His disciples, and taking on the duty of a household servant. But there He was, with the apron of a servant, and going from disciple to disciple, washing their dirty feet. What a place for the Lord of glory!

Let me re-read to you what the Lord said after He had washed the feet of each one of the disciples. John introduced the Lord’s words, and then told us what the Lord said. I am reading from John 13:12 through 17.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:12-17).

There are some Christians who believe that the Lord was instituting another ordinance to be observed along with baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and some of these are devout believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. I used to have three aunts in southern California, and one of them practiced foot washing regularly. And I had another aunt who practiced it from time

to time. Now I have no objection to that providing those who practice foot washing see the deeper meaning of what the Lord was teaching them. He was teaching His disciples to be submissive to each other, and the foot washing was designed to teach them that the way they could be of the greatest help to each other in their daily walk (because we use our feet for walking, don't we?), was by being submissive to each other.

So this was actually THE LORD'S APRON THEOLOGY, but Peter had made it His own. I think this is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when in his letter to the churches of Galatia he wrote,

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

And you will remember that when the disciples got into a discussion as to which of them was the greatest, that the Lord said this, reading from Mark 10:42-45:

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

This is APRON THEOLOGY. It is truth we need to know, and then put into practice. And we always need to remember that the Supreme Example of humility is our Lord Jesus Christ. Never did anyone come from such heights or descend to such depths, as our Savior did. Cf. Phil. 2:5-11.

But let us go on to see what else the Apostle Peter had to say about this.

II. THE REASON FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF APRON THEOLOGY (1 Peter 5:5b).

It is to be seen in God Himself. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." This is a translation of the LXX version of Prov. 3:34. It is quoted also by James in James 4:6. So it is a very important verse.

This means that the proud will find that God will bring them down, and the humble will find that God will raise them up, and support them.

Here again we have a page from the life of Simon Peter. There was a day when the Lord said to Peter,

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31-32).

And then Peter said to the Lord,

And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death (Luke 22:33).

And then the Lord said to Peter,

And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me (Luke 22:34).

Peter was full of self-confidence, and the Lord had to bring him down in order that he might learn better how to trust the Lord. And how far down did the Lord bring Peter after he denied three times that he was one of the Lord's disciples, and even that he knew the Lord?

Luke gives us our answer as Peter heard the cock crow. This is what Luke said in Luke 22:61 and 62:

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Everything must have seemed very hopeless to Peter at that moment, but then it was that the Lord began to minister grace to him as he humbled himself before the Lord, and really was never the same again.

And so we come to our final point in these three verses:

III. PETER IN THE PRACTICE OF APRON THEOLOGY (1 Peter 5:6-7).

I know that these two verses are the Word of God to us, but are they not also the words of a restored Peter to us? Is Peter here not washing our feet so that we will not make the same mistake that he did? Personally I am persuaded that one reason we know so much about Peter and his failures, is because we are all just like Peter. We, too, can make our boasts think-

ing that we are trusting the Lord, when in reality it is nothing more than sinful self-confidence. But how wonderful it will be if we learn from his failure, and profit from Peter's ministry to us as, in a very real way, in verses 6 and 7 we can picture him, kneeling before us, girded with a towel, using water in a pan, and gently washing our feet.

What does he say?

Peter tells us to do two things:

A. "Humble yourselves therefore under the might hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (v. 6).

Archbishop Trench, who was in the Church in Ireland, and later taught at Oxford University, said in his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, that to humble one's self is to consider ourselves small, not great, because we are small, and to think lowly of ourselves because that is what we are. Sin has made us think that we are the greatest, when just exactly the opposite is the truth. So when we humble ourselves in a Biblical sense, it means that we in reality have seen ourselves before God as we really are – nothing!

But we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. We are inclined to claim to be able to do great things for God, when the truth is that we need Him to do great things for us. Whatever God may be pleased to do for us, however He may be pleased to exalt us, is not our business, but His! Our business is to humble ourselves before Him.

The Lord used Peter's fall to make him the mighty instrument for good that he became.

But another message in PETER'S APRON THEOLOGY is found in verse 7.

B. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you (v. 7).

We are to cast our care upon the Lord so that we are getting rid of it as we place it upon Him. And the reason we do is because we are assured that He is concerned about us. Years ago I heard it suggested that the verse could be translated this way, "Casting all your care upon Him, for it matters to Him about you." The English might be a little awkward, but the

truth is very clear.

I think it was Hudson Taylor who made this poetic verse familiar. He may have even written it. It goes like this:

Bear not a single care thyself;
One is too much for thee.
The work is Mine, and Mine alone;
Thy work to rest in Me.

Concl: This does not mean that our lives will be care-free, but it does mean that we will have peace in our hearts, and that it would give us an increasing concern that all of the Lord's people might really learn to cast their cares upon Him, so that they can rest in Him. This is the kind of foot-washing that we all need.

“YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL”

1 Peter 5:8-9

Intro: Peter does in this, his first epistle, what Paul did in his epistle to the Ephesians, and what James did in his epistle: They reserved to the last, or almost to the last in the case of James, their comments about our ruthless and ever-dangerous enemy. All three of these men refer to our enemy as, “the Devil.” There are other names and titles which the Word of God gives to him, and all of them bring out different aspects of his evil being and his wicked works. As the Devil, he is a slanderer; he is an accuser. And Peter also said that the Devil is our “adversary.” He is not a friend, but an enemy. He seeks our destruction. And so he is never our friend, but always our enemy, our adversary.

It was as “the Devil” that he appeared to our Lord in the wilderness to tempt the Lord. In fact, although both Matthew and Luke called this enemy “the Devil repeatedly in telling us about our Lord’s temptation, yet Matthew also used the title, “tempter,” and both Matthew and Luke said that when the Lord addressed the Devil directly, He called him “Satan.” And “Satan” emphasizes again that the Devil is our adversary. He is our enemy. He has been called *our archenemy*, our main enemy, the worst and most powerful enemy that we have. To make light of the Devil, is just about the worst mistake we can make.

It has often been pointed out that as Christians we have three enemies: the Devil above us, the world all around us, and the flesh within us. But in this spiritual conflict which we all face, the Devil is the commander-in-chief.

One thing about the Devil which makes him so dangerous, is that we cannot see him. And that goes for all of the demonic forces which stand with him. The Devil is not omnipresent like God is. He is an angelic creature who led the revolt against God in heaven. We can’t see the demons either. But then we can’t see God, nor can we see the countless number of elect angels who minister to us according to Scripture. We simply have to rely on what the Scriptures teach us about God, the elect angels, and about the Devil, and all of the fallen angels. They are very, very real, although we can’t see them. And that is why verses like the verses we are considering today are so extremely important. We are all engaged in this warfare, and, if we are to win, we must follow very carefully what God in His Word has told us to do. That is what makes these two verses in 1 Peter 5 so very, very important.

Most of you know that we have been studying “The Wiles of the Devil” in our Sunday School lessons this summer. The lessons have been outstanding, and I am sorry that any of you have missed them. Our memory assignment has been Ephesians 6:10-18. Every one of us should be able to recite those verses from memory, and they are verses that we need to think about until the Holy Spirit really impresses upon our hearts exactly what they mean. There have been many books written about the Devil and his activities, but the only reliable authority that we have to tell us about the Devil, who he is, and what he does, is the Bible.

Now before we look closely at verses 8 and 9 in this fifth chapter of 1 Peter, I want to remind you of what we learned last week in verses 5, 6, and 7. Peter didn’t expect us to take verses out of their setting in Scripture, and examine them without any reference to what led up to them, or without referring to what follows. I will save what follows until next Sunday, but let me point out what immediately precedes our text for today.

In verse 5 Peter addressed young people and children, exhorting them to be submissive, and then he immediately moved on to include everybody, that is, every child of God, to be submissive to each other, and to put on the apron of humility. Remember we were thinking last week about Peter’s *apron theology*. And then Peter said, as you can see in the latter part of verse 5 that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” God will oppose us when we are proud and when we are inclined to depend upon ourselves. Remember how Peter came crashing down after he had so confidently said that he would never deny the Lord? Our faith must never be in ourselves, nor in anyone else except the Lord. It is humble people who are strong. To them God gives His grace.

Remember how David went out to meet Goliath.

When he offered to go out to face Goliath, this was the conversation that followed between King Saul and David who was just a young shepherd boy:

33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it

out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee (Sam.17:33-37)

But just as important were the words which David spoke to Goliath when he confronted the Philistine giant. Goliath scorned him. Let me read to you what Goliath said to David, and then how David answered him.

42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth (1 Sam. 17:42-49).

And then you will remember how the Israelites routed the Philistines. There was no pride in what David said or did, but a strong faith in the

power of God.

That is what the Apostle Peter was giving to the people of God in verses 5, 6, and 7. They needed to be humble knowing that the humble are the strong. They needed to cast all of their care upon the Lord, and not try to handle their care for themselves.

And so lest those early believers felt that there was nothing for them to do, and thinking that some of them might become slothful in the face of the great danger they faced, the words of verses 5, 6, and 7 were followed immediately by:

I. A TWOFOLD EXHORTATION (1 Peter 5:8a).

You can see them for yourself at the beginning of verse 8: “Be sober, be vigilant.”

This is very similar to what Peter had said in 1 Pet. 4:7. (Read.)

Here in 5:8 the two words mean that believers are to be in their right mind, and to stay awake, always to be on guard, ever in a state of readiness. This is like when we hear that our military is in a state of alert. The Devil has many wiles, many methods. He is liable to strike at any time, especially when we are not expecting him to do anything.

The word “sober” actually means to avoid the mental confusion and helpless condition that a man is in when he is drunk. But a Christian can lack sobriety in more ways than just when a person is drunk of intoxicants. When a person is given to pleasure, or when a person has become careless about the reading of the Word and prayer. If a Christian is concerned about making as much money as he can, sidetracked by a love of money, he is not “sober.” And then he will not be on guard.

Peter quickly moved on from using these two verbs to give:

II. THE REASON FOR THESE EXHORTATIONS (1 Peter 5:8b).

Note those ominous words, “your adversary, the Devil.” He was not just our Lord’s adversary, or Peter’s adversary, but he is also “your adversary,” and he is just waiting for the opportunity to pounce on you and to destroy you. How those words, “Be sober, be vigilant,” must have filled Peter’s mind with memories of his own failure.

“A roaring lion.” When does a lion roar? He roars when he is hungry. And a lion can be very vicious. Agur, in Proverbs 30:30 spoke of “a lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any.”

What would you think if suddenly a police officer were to come in our service, ask to be able to say a word, and then would tell us that there is a lion outside wandering back and forth among our cars? Which of you would wander out the door and go to your car just like you usually do after church on a Sunday morning? Or which of you with children would tell your children to go on out to your car and wait for you because you would be out in a minute? None of us would take a step outside until we were told that the lion had been captured, or was dead.

And yet this is the kind of a world that we live in. The Devil roams the world just like a vicious, deadly lion, “seeking whom he may devour.” He is the enemy of all mankind, but especially of the people of God. We can’t afford to be careless for a moment. We live in constant danger. But is it possible to live in peace when we are faced with demonic forces continually.

Yes, thank God, it is possible! But only because, as the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:4b, “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” The Devil is in the world, but Who is in us? Well, if you read the remainder of John 4 you will see that the Lord Jesus is in us, that God the Father is in us, and that we have the Holy Spirit in us and with us.

If we had been left to ourselves, we would never have come to Christ to be saved. We had to be drawn to Christ. If it had been up to us to deliver ourselves from the Devil, we would have lost the battle long ago. He is more powerful than we are, and wiser than we are. We are no match for him even if we were all to stand together against him in whatever strength we have.

What, then, is the answer? Peter has given us the way of victory in verse 9.

III. THE WAY OF VICTORY (1 Peter 5:9).

Notice the words, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith.”

Notice in the first place, we do not conquer the Devil by *running away from* him, but by *resisting* him. “Steadfast” means *strong and immove-*

able. It means that we do not back away. But our strength comes not from ourselves but from “the faith.” Peter did not say simply “faith,” but “the faith.” “Faith” is involved, but “the faith” has reference to the teaching of the Word of God. The Bible is “the faith.” We are to constantly be seeking a greater understanding of the Word of God, and at the same time to be diligent in applying the Word of God to our lives in a practical way.

When the Apostle Paul said that we are to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” he was not saying that we are to throw our Bibles around like we were wielding a sword. But he meant that we are to know that Word, and we are to obey that Word, so that when the Devil is after us, we can answer him with the Word of God. This is just what the Lord Jesus did, and this is what we must do. But we can’t use the Word of God unless we know what is in it. And this is what is tragic about our generation. Bible preaching and Bible teaching have been neglected, and the church is more intent on entertaining than she is in establishing all of us in the great doctrines of Scripture. A Christian who doesn’t know his Bible, is defenseless before the Devil. But the child of God who knows the Word, and who knows God as He is revealed in the Word, seeking to live day by day in obedience to the Word, is a child of God from whom the Devil will flee. That is what James says: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7b).

We are to “flee . . . youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22), but we “resist the devil.” But we resist him, not in our own strength, but only as we are strong in the Lord. And we can only be strong in the Lord if we are strong in the Word.

But what did Peter mean by what he said in the last part of verse 9? He said, “knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

This was a word of encouragement from Peter. We just need to look around, and we don’t have to look very far, to see that affliction is the common lot of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But instead of thinking that even the attacks of the Devil come to us just by chance, or completely apart from the purposes of God for us, Peter would have us know that as you look at the sufferings of believers everywhere, and the various activities of the Devil which affect their lives, God is always working to accomplish His purposes for us, *and in us!* The Lord never leaves us at the mercy of the Devil. Instead, he turns the curses of the Devil into blessings which make us even stronger, and teach us in greater ways how to cast all of our care upon the Lord.

Thinking of Peter's denial of the Lord, you would think that such a denial would have ruined his chances for ministry. And it would have – apart from the grace of God. But although it was very wrong for Peter to be so self-confident, feeling sure that he would never fail the Lord, yet out of that failure God was preparing his servant for an even greater ministry as He taught Peter more about what it means to trust God.

Concl: This is not a day for us to be careless and frivolous in our lives.

The devil is busy with his evil work all of the time, so we need to be on our guard. We need to be faithful in reading and studying our Bibles. We need to be faithful in prayer. And we need to remember the exhortation given to us by the writer of the book of Hebrews where he wrote,

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

21 And having an high priest over the house of God;

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb. 10:19-25).

May these words of Peter become guidelines for us in our daily lives, that by the grace of God we may be enabled to “stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

“THE GOD OF ALL GRACE”

1 Peter 5:10-11

— **Intro:** (Read the text.)

Although these are not the last verses of the epistle, yet they are really the conclusion of Peter’s message. The remaining three verses which we will consider next Sunday morning, the Lord willing, contain various greetings, and a concluding prayer.

Our text for today is a prayer. Coming as it does at the conclusion of the body of his epistle, we are all taught how important it is to follow our preaching and our teaching with prayer. This epistle began with a brief prayer: “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Peter 1:2b). And so we learn from that prayer that it is also important to begin our ministry of the Word with prayer. The best teaching that we are capable of doing will only be effective in our lives, as well as in the lives of those we teach and to whom we preach, if our messages are born in prayer, prepared in prayer, preceded by prayer, delivered in a spirit of prayer, and followed up with prayer. All of the apostles were men of prayer, and we need to follow their example in the way they demonstrated their absolute dependence upon God for His blessing in the ministry of the Word.. You will probably remember how the apostle said as the work of the Lord began to grow, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). That is the ideal way for the Word to be taught.

If you will look with me at these two verses, I would like to give you the brief outline that I intend to follow.

Since all prayer is addressed to God, we should notice, first, HOW PETER ADDRESSED GOD: “God of all grace.” Secondly, he mentioned WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR ALL OF HIS PEOPLE: “Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” Third, thinking of the present, he referred to HIS REQUEST REGARDING WHAT GOD WAS PRESENTLY DOING IN ALL OF OUR LIVES: “After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” And then the prayer concludes by Peter expressing HIS GRAND OBJECTIVE: “To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

— So let us now look at these four divisions of Peter’s prayer.

I. HOW PETER ADDRESSED GOD.

He called Him, “the God of all grace.” This is the only time this particular expression, or name for God, is found in all of Scripture. Probably the closest to this is found right here in this same epistle, in chapter 4 and verse 10 where Peter mentioned that we all should be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

The word “grace” is found several times throughout this epistle. Let me point them out for you. You will find “grace” in 1:2 as I have already mentioned. Also in chapter 1 we find it in verses 10 and 13. Then it appears again in chapter 3 and verse 7. I have also pointed out that it is chapter 4 and verse 7. Then here in chapter 5, in addition to our text, you will see it in verses 5 and 12.

As “the God of all grace,” Peter was saying that all grace finds its origin in God, and is poured out upon us by God. “Grace” is a word which speaks of God’s free bestowal of His blessings upon men. Paul attributed everything that he was as a child of God, and as a servant of the Lord, to the grace of God. He spoke of God’s grace as that which was sufficient for him in connection with his thorn in the flesh. Peter said in his second epistle that we are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is by grace that we have been saved through faith, not of ourselves, and not of works. God is not indebted to any of us. He owes nothing to no man. What He gives us is prompted by His own love for us, and not because of any good that He sees in us, nor because of anything that we have done to deserve His blessings.

And the Apostle Peter in this same fifth chapter of his first epistle has told us that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” And that is the reason that a person usually has to be humbled to the point where he or she sees himself or herself as a worthless sinner, before God will save them. And all through our lives it is the humble person who continues to enjoy the blessings of the Lord. Pride always stands in the way of God’s blessing.

So whatever our need for blessing might be, it always comes from God, and it is always bestowed in grace. And this comes down to the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the homes in which we live, and on and on – all of our blessings come from God, and are given to us in grace.

But grace, on the other hand, means that God does not give us what we deserve. We deserve judgment. We deserve to be cast forever from His presence. We deserve punishment because of our sins, including those

sins which we commit over and over again.

“All grace” comes from God. He is the Source, the Author and the One Who bestows our blessings upon us – all undeserved, all by God’s grace.

We have seen that Peter had much to say about suffering in this epistle. And we know that the people to whom he was writing had suffering greatly for their faith in Christ. What welcome news it must have been for all of them to read, or to hear it read, that God, their God, was “the God of all grace.”

I hope we all understand this because it is so very important for us to recognize this truth about God every day of our lives. But let us go on to the next point in our text.

II. WHAT HAS GOD DONE FOR ALL OF US?

He has “called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”

When we speak in Scripture of God’s call to men, we need to know that there are two kinds of calls. There is *the general call* which we have when we call upon people to be saved. For example, Rev. 22:17 gives us an illustration of a general call to salvation in these words: “And whosoever will, let hi take the water of life freely.” But there is also *the effectual call*. This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote in Rom. 8:30, “For whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified.” These are people who are “the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28), that is, God’s purpose. This when God calls individuals, and they come to Him. All of us who are saved, have responded to the call of God. He has called us to Himself, and we have come to Him for salvation.

Peter was referring here to *the effectual call of God*. To what has God called us when He called us to Himself and saved us. There is more than one answer to that question, but the answer as far as our text is concerned is that God has called us “unto His eternal glory.” What does this mean?

I believe we can say that it means two things:

- 1) God’s glory is what we speak of when we speak of God Himself. None of us has ever seen God yet, but the time is coming when we will see God. But we have to wait for this until we go to heaven.
- 2) However, there is a second meaning to this expression. To be “called

... unto His eternal glory” means that we are called *to share in the glory that is God*. In other words, God’s purpose in saving us was to make us like Christ. And since the glory of Christ and the glory of God are the same, in being like Christ we will be like God. We will never be Deity, but as much as creatures can be made like the God Who has saved us, we will be like God! This is our destiny as believers. We will be conformed to the image of God’s Son. See Rom. 8:29. Or, as the Apostle John said, “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

You and I should never stop marveling at such a truth. At the same time, when we look at God or Christ as they are revealed to us in Scripture, we must ask ourselves, “How can this be?” The more we learn about the Persons of the Godhead, the more we realize how far we are from measuring up to what they are.

And I agree. But this is where we must remember that God is a God of “all grace,” and so He is sufficient for even this. But we also need to notice that a part of this call is that we are called to this eternal glory of God “through Jesus Christ.” And here is grace again. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners. And He has saved us! But He came not only to save us from sin’s penalty, which is eternal death, but He came to save us from sin’s power, and ultimately He will deliver us from sin altogether so that it will never be possible for us ever to sin again. And this wonderful hope is ours by grace. There is not a single part of it that we deserve, but it is all what we could never deserve. We can’t earn it by our good works. It can’t be bought at any price. It is ours by the grace, the undeserved favor of God, where instead of giving us the judgment which we deserve, we have this glorious prospect ahead of us.

But now let us move on to the third point that Peter made. This has to do with:

III. WHAT GOD IS DOING IN OUR LIVES RIGHT NOW – TODAY!

After having read this epistle, how would you describe what the people were experiencing to whom Peter had written. Well, even a superficial reading of this epistle would give us our answer: They were suffering! Why were they suffering? They were suffering because they belonged to the Lord. The world hated their Lord, and the world hated them because Jesus Christ was their Lord. And Peter had written to encourage them in their faith. They were in a very real sense, as we learned in 1 Pet. 4:13,

“partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” We don’t know the full extent of their sufferings, but many had been driven from their homes, had lost their possessions. Probably there had been many who had been killed, and this brought grief to those who remained. Was God “the God of all grace” in all of those circumstances, plus the trials which come upon all of us as we live in this world, suffering material loss, suffering physical problems? What was God doing, or was He doing anything?

The subject of the last part of verse 10 is “the God of all grace.” Let me read the verse like this: “But the God of all grace . . . after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

Through their trials God, “the God of all grace,” was preparing them for heaven, that purpose for which He had saved them, to make them like Christ, was even then going on, and God was using their sufferings to make them like Christ, and like Himself.

Let me explain the words which Peter used here.

A. “Make you perfect.”

The idea here is that through our sufferings the Lord is going to equip us by making us realize that in Christ we have resources that we never knew that we had.

B. “Stablish.”

This word is just an old English form of our word, *establish*. This means that the God of all grace will make us firm in our faith and in our convictions. This is what Daniel’s three friends expressed when they faced the possibility that they might be thrown into the fiery furnace. Do you remember what they said? Reading from Dan. 3:16-18 we find these words:

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

God had used their time in Babylon to *establish* them in their faith. The

courage that they showed was not from themselves, but from “the God of all grace.”

C. “Strengthen.”

This means that they would be made stronger in their lives, not destroyed by their trials, but brought to a place of greater spiritual strength than they had ever experienced before.

The writer of Psalm 119 referred to afflictions several times in that great Psalm. Let me read three of them to you.

Psa. 119:50 – “This is my comfort in my affliction: for they word hath quickened me.”

Psa. 119:67 – “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”

Psa. 119:71 – “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” And he added in verse 72, “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”

Again, as Peter wrote the words of this verse, it is very likely that his mind went back to his denial of the Lord, his bitter tears, and how “the God of all grace” had used that terribly humiliating experience to make Peter stronger in his faith and in his relationship with the Lord than he had ever been before.

But there is one more word:

D. “Settle you.”

This word speaks of building an unshakeable foundation under the people of God through their sufferings. Think of how some buildings are totally destroyed when hit with hurricane winds, while others stand unmoved.

All of these words in one way or another describe the mighty work that the God of all grace does in our lives through our sufferings and trials, whatever they might be.

We have not been called upon to suffer for our faith like these early Christians suffered, but that day may come for us. However, we have our trials and our testings. And “the God of all grace” works through all of our trials, whatever they may be, to further the work that He is committed to do in our hearts, to make us like Himself and like His Son.

But now we come to verse 11 where Peter was discussing:

IV. GOD'S GRAND OBJECTIVE (1 Pet. 5:11).

— God always works all things together for our good, our good spiritually, but, as glorious as that is, there is still a grander purpose that He has as His greatest objective. And that is expressed in the words of the 11th verse. (Read.)

Cf. the latter part of 4:11 where Peter used the same words.

We who are the recipients of the grace of God and the work of “the God of all grace,” should never fail to give God all of the glory for what He has done, and ascribe to Him alone the “dominion,” which means *power*, by which the changes have been made in our lives.

Let us never, never, never be guilty of taking any of the glory to ourselves, or to imply in any way that it is in any way because of our doing that we are what we are.

— **Concl:** How important it is for us to learn the lesson which God sought to teach Judah in the days of Micah the prophet. I am thinking of Micah 6:8 which tells us,

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Humility should characterize our lives at all times. Andrew Murray said in his little book entitled, “Humility,” that we have three reasons for being humble. First, because we are creatures, secondly, because we are sinners, and thirdly, because we are saints. This is how we are to live day by day, in true humility before God. And then, when the trials, come it is comforting to know that, while God resists the proud, He gives grace to the humble.

How thankful we can be that even our trials do not come to us by chance, but they are ordered by the Lord for our spiritual blessing.

— (Close with the words of John Newton’s hymn, *Amazing Grace* -- #402.)

THE NAME OF THE EPISTLE

1 Peter 5:12-14

Intro: I doubt if I need to spend a lot of time emphasizing to you who are here today how thankful we should be that God has been pleased to give us His Word. We believe that the Bible *is* the Word of God. We are not satisfied to say, as some do, that the Bible merely *contains* the Word of God, so that we have to determine for ourselves which is His Word, and which is not His Word. *It is all His Word, everything from the book of Genesis at the beginning of the Old Testament to the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ at the end of the New Testament.*

But let me take this thought a step farther.

We need to be thankful for the people that the Lord used to give us His Word. That includes Peter, who wrote this epistle which we have been studying now for twenty-eight weeks. It includes Paul who wrote most of the New Testament epistles. It includes the writers of the four Gospels. And this is not all that I could mention. Peter mentioned one of them in our text for today: Marcus, in verse 13. It has generally been thought that John Mark (because he is the one Peter was referring to) got much of the information we have in the Gospel which bears his name, from the Apostle Peter.

Going into the Old Testament, how thankful we should be for Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and all of the prophets. Nor is this an all-inclusive list. We ought to be thankful for everyone of them.

Here at the conclusion of Peter's first epistle, we have the name of another man who had an important place in giving us the Word of God. Of course, I am referring to Silvanus, who was Silas. This is the same Silas who accompanied the Apostle Paul during much of his ministry. Men like Silas were important, not only for the work they did, but for the added confirmation that they gave to the ministry of the apostles. Reading verse 12 of this last chapter in 1 Peter, we can see that Silvanus assisted Peter in the writing of this epistle, and his name attached to the epistle is an indication that he was in agreement with everything that the Apostle Peter wrote. He may have served as Peter's secretary, and it is also thought that he was the one who delivered the epistle to the believers who are addressed in verse 1 of the epistle! And so, although Silvanus' (or Silas') testimony was not absolutely necessary, it does encourage us to believe that this truly was the writing of Peter, a very important Apostle. And for the Apostle

Peter to call Silvanus, “a faithful brother,” meant among other things, that the believers who received this letter, and all who would ever read it, would know that Silvanus’ name here meant that they could trust Silvanus in standing behind all that Peter had written.

So this leads me to make another statement regarding the Bible.

When we say that the Bible is the Word of God, all of it, we are saying that verses like we have come to at the end of this letter written by Peter, must also be considered as the Word of God. Not every part of the Bible is of equal importance, but all that we find in every book is the Word of God, and therefore worthy of our careful consideration. And that is why I am taking a service today to consider with you what obviously is Peter’s conclusion to his letter.

Therefore, let us give our attention to these three concluding verses, asking the Lord to give us instruction and inspiration that will be added confirmation in our own hearts that here we are dealing with the Word of God, and that the Holy Spirit led Peter in writing these verses just as much as He did in writing everything that we have considered up to this point.

Notice with me, first of all, that here

I. THE APOSTLE PETER NAMED THIS EPISTLE (1 Peter 5:12).

He called it, “the true grace of God.”

Usually we would look for a title, if there is to be one, at the beginning of an epistle, or any other book of the Bible. But here it comes at the end, and quite obviously it was Peter’s desire to emphasize what he had been saying. This is what he had been writing about, “the true grace of God.”

When he said that it was “the true grace of God,” he meant that it was *genuine as opposed to something that was false*. And he was indicating that there is none other that is true. There is no question but that when the Apostle Peter used this expression he was speaking of salvation, or what the Apostle Paul called, “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), or “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Titus 2:11).

Or look back to 1 Peter 1, and verses 9 and 10. (Read.)

So the salvation which the Apostle Peter preached was the same salvation

that was prophesied and preached by the prophets of the OT. It was a salvation that depended upon the sufferings of Christ (1:11), a salvation which depended upon “the precious blood of Christ” (1:19). It is salvation in which people are “born again” (1:23). It is a salvation in which people’s lives are changed.

And “grace” means that it is totally undeserved. In fact, because we are sinners we deserve judgment, not salvation. We can’t buy salvation. In 1:18 Peter wrote that salvation is not by “silver and gold.” All of the wealth of the whole world could not purchase salvation for a single person.

You and I know that there are many different religions in the world. I doubt if they could be counted, but their number runs into the thousands, and perhaps into the hundreds of thousands – and maybe even more than that. But Peter in using this expression, “the true grace of God,” was indicating that the message he proclaimed, about which he had written, was the only true, real, genuine way of salvation. All other ways are false. This is what Peter preached in Jerusalem shortly after the ascension of our Lord, and these were his words:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

And our Lord Jesus Christ said the same thing when He was here on earth. He was speaking to all of His disciples, but then responded to Thomas when Thomas asked Him a very important question:

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:3-6).

With all of the religions in the world, there is only one that is right, only one that is true, only one that is genuine, only one where sinners can find the forgiveness of their sins, only one that guarantees us salvation. I don’t like to call the work of God in salvation a religion. One characteristics about all religions is that there is something that man has to do to find acceptance with the god, or gods, they worship. Only in Christ can we find the true way of salvation. Only in the Bible will anyone find “the true

grace of God.”

But notice something else that the Apostle Peter said about this “true grace of God.” He said that in this epistle he had been:

II. “EXHORTING AND TESTIFYING” (1 Peter 5:12).

This means that he had been encouraging them to continue believing the truth, and obeying the truth, and that he had in this epistle been giving them added confirmation that what they had believed about Christ and salvation, was actually the truth, and the only truth.

You see, this is why we come to church. There are so many pressures upon us to doubt what we have been told, or to turn aside from what we have professed to believe, that we need constant encouragement in our faith, and we need to have our faith supported and strengthened by a greater understanding of the Word of God.

If you know of anyone who professes faith in Christ, but who is not getting more teaching regularly, do what Peter did: write to them! And encourage them to read their Bibles faithfully and systematically. Also be prepared to recommend to them books written by godly people which can help them in their understanding of the truth. The Devil will do all that he can to discourage us, and to turn us aside. And our own hearts are so weak apart from the strength that God gives us through His Word, that we will fail unless we are getting regular and faithful instruction.

One of the greatest tragedies of our tragedy-ridden generation, is that there is so little “exhorting and testifying” from the Word of God going on in our homes and in our churches. Those who profess faith in Christ can show the reality of their faith by continuing to stand on the truth of the Word of God.

But let us go on to verse 13 where Peter mentioned:

III. THE CHURCH AT BABYLON (1 Peter 5:13).

Perhaps you are aware that many expositors prefer to think that when Peter mentioned “Babylon,” he was speaking of *Rome*. I think one reason that they have done this is because they are used to doing the same with the mention of Babylon in the book of the Revelation. But is such a thing usually done in the NT? Why can’t Babylon mean Babylon? It is said

that it was a very small place in the first century, but what difference does that make? It is very possible that there was a church there. And I am inclined to think that there was because of Peter's use of the word "elected" – "elected together with you." This is that precious doctrine of Scripture, *the doctrine of election*.

How was it that you and I came to Christ for salvation? 1 Peter 1:15 says that we were called by God. In chapter 2 and verse 9 Peter spoke of the Lord's people to whom he was writing as "a chosen generation." And in the same verse he said that believers in Christ are those who have been "called . . . out of darkness into His marvelous light." And in verse 21 of the same chapter, Peter said again that we were "called."

Take these words back to Romans 8:28-30, and there we read these words:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

And before Paul wrote those words to the church at Rome, he wrote the following words to the church at Thessalonica:

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

None of us had either the wisdom nor the power to come to Christ on our own. God in eternity past chose us for salvation, and in time He called us, and we came to Him. He saved us, and we are trusting in Him for our salvation. And this great truth of election binds all of us together because we have all come to Christ because we were chosen and have been called. No one is worthy to be saved; all of us are eternally indebted to grace of our God, "the God of all grace" (as we learned last Sunday), and what we believe by God's grace is "the true grace of God."

When Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said, "Elected together with

you,” he meant that when God chose one of us for salvation, He chose all of us at the same time. And when time is no more and we are all in the presence of the Lord, not one of us will be missing whom the Lord has chosen and called.

These greetings from the church at Babylon, and from Marcus, were from believers who were not where they were. But there was a bond of fellowship with them in spite of that because of their mutual relationship with God through Christ.

But the next exhortation has to do with:

IV. “ONE ANOTHER” (1 Pet. 5:14a).

Sometimes we can get more emotional about believers in Japan, or Germany, or Guatemala, or some other place, than we can with the believers we are with all of the time. That which is to mark our fellowship is a love that God has given us for each other. And so Peter exhorted them concerning each other to “greet one another with a kiss of charity” – that is, men with men, and women with women. Usually this was cheek to cheek, not mouth to mouth. Such kissing is mentioned in Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26. Paul always called it a “holy kiss,” and in 1 Thessalonians it is addressed to the brethren.

But the point is that we are to love each other in the Lord, and this is not to be just a pretended love, but a genuine love. Cf. 1 Peter 4:8. What a difference it makes when the people of God in any place genuinely love each other. In fact, the Apostle John said that it is one of the marks of a true believer. Cf. 1 John 3:14.

Then we come to:

V. PETER’S CONCLUDING PRAYER (1 Pet. 5:14b).

Peter’s opening prayer for these believers was, “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Pet. 1:2b). As he closed his epistle, he had much to say about “grace,” but he could not conclude without adding “peace.”

You remember that as the Lord was preparing to leave His disciples to go to the Cross, he said to them,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it

be afraid (John 14:27).

And then at the end of His words with them, He added,

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

We can never have peace if we are depending upon what we have in ourselves, nor can we have peace if we are looking at what is going on in the world. But we can have peace when we are trusting in the Lord. We may have troubles swirling all around us, and be concerned when things seem to be destroying everything around us, but know the Lord, loving Him, trusting in His promises, and rejoicing in the fellowship we have with each other, *we can have peace even with conditions as they are in each of our lives today, and even with conditions as they are in the world today. Peace is not the world's word; it is a word that belongs to those, as Peter said here, who are "in Christ Jesus."*

And then Peter added, "Amen."

Concl: Let me give you in closing what Thayer said about this word,

"Amen." It is a word which we all need to understand better because we use it every day when we close our own prayers. He said that it basically means *firm* or *faithful*. But it also means *verily* or *amen*. At the beginning of a discourse, it confirms the truth of what is about to be said, like our Lord's, "Verily, verily. At the end of a discourse, or a prayer, it means, as Thayer said,

So it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled. It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed, had offered up solemn prayer to God, the others responded "Amen!" and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own.

And then he added:

The word "amen" is a most remarkable word. It was transliterated directly from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament, then into Latin and into English and many other languages, so that it is practically a universal word. It has been called the best-known word in human speech. The word is directly related --in fact, almost identical --to the Hebrew word for "believe" ('aman), or faithful. Thus, it came to mean "sure" or "truly", an expression of absolute trust and confidence.

As Peter concluded his epistle with its exhortations and testifying concern-

ing the grace of God, he did so in the absolute confidence that whatever might remain in testings and trials for those suffering believers to whom he had written, that God would bless them with His peace, and that God, “the God of all grace,” would never fail them. May we believe that the same is true for us today.

Closing verses: Philippians 4:6-7 -- reading from the NKJ:

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

(NKJ)

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