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Introduction

I first discovered the value in the life of the Apostle Peter, as given us in the Bible, over 40 years ago when I was a student at the Bible College of Wales, Swansea. My first book "Peter Meets Jesus" is now followed by "Peter's Teaching". He is now a Christian leader and has suffered for Christ. In his first epistle he wants to help believers troubled by persecution. In his second letter he tells them how to respond to false teachers. My main aim in writing this commentary, is to help all readers discover the changed life and to grow toward maturity. I have provided questions for discussion. Please use them in your local group. These questions will get more difficult as you progress, but through it your understanding of God's Word will increase. You will "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen". 2 Peter 3: 18

Time Line on the Life of Peter Points for Preachers.

Birth



Death

Decision	Matthew 4:19
Description	John 1:42
Deliberation	Matthew 14:29
Denial	Matthew 26:69-75
Dedication	John 21
Declaration	Acts 2
Deception	Acts 5:1-10
Delegation	Acts 6:1-7
Deliverance	Acts 12
Doctrine	Acts 15
Didactic (teaching)	1 Peter
Discernment	2 Peter


If these books on Peter have been a blessing, please tell us.
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 "King David, Preparation for Leadership"

Grow

"But grow" (verse 18), make the contrast between this and the previous verse. Believers must grow in order to be strong against false teachers. The believer has become a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1: 3-4) and therefore able to possess all things important to life and godliness. It is now his duty to become mature, "attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4: 13). The grace of God is immense. His favour is toward us. (Ephesians 3: 18,19). God is infinite. Therefore seeking to know God is seeking to know the infinite. Impossible, yet wonderful, for the more we know God and His ways the more thankful we are. Our worship of Him is enlarged. These are the areas of growth referred to here. As Peter closes the chapter, he ends with a song of praise. "To him be glory, both now and forever! Amen"

Discussion:

1. How does Peter describe the end of the world? (verse 3: 10)
2. How should a believer live in the light of this? (3: 11)
3. What has the believer to look forward to? (3: 13)
4. What main Biblical teaching did the false teachers deny? (verses 1,2)
5. How do false teachers seek to take advantage of people (verse 3) and what will happen to them?
6. What can we learn from past judgements and how they affect today?
7. With what words does Peter end his second epistle and why?

 **Prayer.** The greatest thing in my life is knowing You, my God. Help me to know you more.

Study 1

PETER AND SUFFERING

Read: 1 Peter 1:1,2

Peter probably wrote this book between the years AD 60-64. He was put to death during the reign of Nero (AD 54 – 68). By the time he wrote his second letter, Peter knew that his life was going to end soon (2 Peter 1:14). But Peter's life could have ended sixteen to twenty years before when he was imprisoned by King Herod (AD 44). At that time God's people had prayed earnestly for him (Acts 12:5) and God rescued him from prison in answer to their prayer. God had more for Peter to do. One of those things was to write two letters which are still with us in our Bibles today. During those years Peter had matured considerably. Now he is able to talk to others who are suffering and say that the trial of their faith is worth far more than gold (verse 7).

Rev. Andrew White, known as the Vicar of Baghdad in Iraq, writes in his book "Faith under Fire" that terror and violence is all around. But at the heart of St George's Church is amazing joy, not just in theory but in practice. He says, "We cry and grieve and often despair when our people are injured or killed, but we soon return to joy. Maybe our joy is a type of survival mechanism, but it is real nonetheless. It means that living in the shadow of terror we are not a sad people."

Peter wrote this letter with the help of Silas (1 Peter 5: 12) who probably helped to put it into good Greek. It was written to Jewish and Gentile (non Jewish) believers scattered in various Roman provinces of Asia Minor. Some of these people were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: Some may have become believers through the visits and preaching of the Apostle Paul. Probably some Christians had been forced to live in these places because of persecution. It is also possible that the Apostle Peter had visited the believers in these places and that they had been helped through his ministry.

The Trinity

Read: 1 Peter 1.3-9

Peter refers to the Trinity, thus establishing his belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The verses that follow expand this theme: the Father (v 3-5), the Son (v 6-9) and the Holy Spirit (v 10-12).

In verse 3, the word "hope" is used and is a key thought of Chapter 1, verse 13, verse 21, and Chapter 3 verses 5 and 15. It is Peter's sure belief as he looks to the future. This hope comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When Peter thought about this he gave praise to God. Peter talks about "the **Lord** Jesus Christ". Lord means one who has authority. He is head over everything. (Colossians 1: 16-18). Sometimes He is not head over everything in *our* lives until we allow it. The name, Jesus, means 'God is the one who saves'. Jesus saves people from their sins. 'Christ' is the Greek word for the Hebrew word 'Messiah', which means 'the one whom God has anointed'. To 'anoint' means to mark a person with oil. It is a sign. It shows that God has chosen that person for some special service (Matthew 1: 21).

Your inheritance is what is given to you by law after the death of the present owner. It is usually land, property or money. The Christian's inheritance includes forgiveness of sins and power to live a godly life now. Believers will enjoy God's presence after this life in eternity. Hebrews 9: 16-17 tells us that this inheritance is ours because of the death of Jesus.

Peter described this inheritance in three ways:

1. It will never wear out or get old. Nothing can destroy it.
2. It will not spoil or go bad. Sin cannot affect it.
3. It will not lose its beauty. It is not like metal that stops shining. Nor is it like a light that goes out.

It is easy to be a Christian when life is good. But Christians can often have troubles in their lives. God uses these troubles to make their faith in God strong and pure. If you melt gold in a pot in a hot fire, you can find out whether the gold really is pure. As the pot gets hotter, any other metals or bits of dirt rise to the surface. Then someone can remove them. Peter said that troubles in a person's life are like this fire. 'Your genuine faith will bring praise, glory and honour to Jesus when he comes again'.



Molten gold is poured out purified by fire. Faith purified by the fire of trials is of greater worth than gold.

Suffering and Glory

Read: 1 Peter 1.10-15

In his early days as a disciple of Jesus, Peter could not understand why Jesus had to suffer (Read Matthew 16: 22-28, John 18: 10-11). Rather than suffer, Peter said that he did not know Jesus. Now Peter has changed. The prayers

Christ died for him, is called to make every effort, and to be diligent to live a pure life without sin. By diligence the Apostle refers to hard work to achieve an intended goal. This word in Scripture includes study, and labour. The believer must work to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him so as not to be ashamed at His coming (1 John 2: 28/9). This was in contrast to the false teachers. Their lives were not pure. They were like "stains" and "dirty marks" (2: 13). When Christians live a pure life, it pleases God. They do not have a guilty conscience. Therefore, Christians can eagerly wait for Jesus to return.

Longsuffering

God is longsuffering and patient (verse 15). Because of this, there has been time for more people to repent and find God. He is delaying bad events while He waits for people to repent and turn to Him. To strengthen his argument, Peter refers to the writings of the Apostle Paul, particularly his letter to the same group of Christians to whom Peter is writing. Paul taught that Jesus will return. He emphasised in his letters that Christians needed to live godly lives before this event. The Christians to whom Peter was writing probably knew of Paul's letters. Peter says that God gave wisdom to Paul as he wrote the letters, but some people found Paul's letters hard to understand. Today, people still have difficulty with Paul's letters. We should, however, not give up. We must also never change what the Scriptures mean and wrongly explain them. Instead, we should pray that God will help us understand. We should learn from good Bible teachers and mature Christians.

Warning

Read: 2 Peter 3: 17-18

Here is a warning by both Peter and Paul. "Since you already know this, be on your guard" (verse 17). The warning here is not to go astray because of "wrong" teaching. This "error of lawless men" is rooted first in character, who they are. Then in their creed, what they believe and finally it is shown in their conduct, how they behave. The picture is of a man or woman rebelling against restraint while the word "error" lays emphasis upon their creed (belief). These two problems bring about the terrible behaviour mentioned in 2 Peter 2: 7. Those who do not have Christian foundations, who are untaught, are likely to be swept along by many voices saying different things and the selfishness of society around them. The believer must "beware" of this for it is possible for him to fall from a faithful and secure position.

Study 15

THE END TIME



Read: 2 Peter 3: 11–18

The world as we know it is going to disappear (verse 11). False teachers like Jehovah Witnesses who hope to inherit the earth will be disappointed. Afterwards, however, there will be new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness, (verse 13, Revelation 21: 1). Since the present world will end like this, Christians must live holy lives. People, who do not know God, say "Eat and drink. Be happy" (Luke 12: 19). They just want to enjoy themselves now. God will punish people who do not obey Him (chapter 2). Peter encouraged the Christians to be holy (see also 1 Peter 1: 15-16). "Holy" means to be set apart for the service of God and separate from evil. When Jesus returns He will reward Christians (1 Peter 1: 4 and 2 Peter 1: 11).

Godly Living

Peter did not want to frighten Christians. He repeated here what he had already spoke about in verse 10. Christians should eagerly expect the day when Jesus will return to this world. It seems that day can come sooner by Christians living godly lives. They must live as Jesus did. Then they will encourage that day to arrive. That day will come as Christians tell the good news about Jesus to other people (Matthew 24: 14). It will come as Christians obey God.

A New Heaven and a New Earth

Peter does not stop here. He adds one other encouragement to godly living in verse 13. The promise of new heavens and earth, first given by Isaiah (Isaiah 65:17; 66: 22), where everyone will obey God. No wicked people or false teachers will be there. Sin will never spoil everything again. It will be a wonderful place to live. "The home" suggests settled living which will be true for individuals, families and nations. In one continuous stream of life, righteousness will flow, covering the earth as the waters cover the sea, It will spread through every event and through all time. For this reason the believer should redouble his efforts for the Lord.

Make Every Effort

The believer (verse 14), who is aware that his sins are forgiven because

of Jesus for him made the difference. (Luke 22: 32). The words Jesus used were not "if" you turn back but "when" you turn back, strengthen your brethren. In the book of Acts we read how he suffered imprisonment and beatings. In verses 10-11, Peter talks about how the prophets before Christ tried to understand when they predicted "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow". (See Isaiah 53: 4-6 and Psalm 22). Suffering and glory will be the same for believers too. "Glory" that follows suffering is frequently written about throughout this epistle. It is an encouragement to us who believe to know that beyond suffering there is a new, glorious experience of God and His blessing.



Discussion:

1. If at least 16 years had passed between Peter being in prison in Acts 12 and the writing of 1 Peter. What had changed in his life and views?
2. List the important things we can learn in Chapter 1 verses 1-12 about: The Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit
3. What is the hope of every believer for now and in the future?
4. What is the believer's inheritance through the death of Christ?
5. What problem did Peter have with suffering in the Gospels and how does he view it now? (Matthew 16: 21-23)
6. How does Peter see the positive side to trials? How can this help us?



Prayer: Thank you, Lord, that You allow my faith to be tested through suffering. Help me to be faithful to You in times of testing that I too may experience Your glory.



For the next study read 1 Peter 1.13-25

Study 2

PREPARE YOUR MINDS

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-25

Peter uses an oriental expression about the lifting up of the long loose Eastern robes which get in the way when running. He says "prepare your minds for action" (v.13). When the mind is not used, a man allows himself to do things without thinking of the consequences. A mind that is crippled by worry, fear, jealousy, impurity, hate and unforgiveness is not ready for action. So what should we do? We must repent of sin. We must give ourselves to God and let our minds be renewed (Romans 12: 1-2). We must set our minds on the hope of God's favour yet to be shown. New believers can sometimes be pulled back into their old way of life by friends. Verse 14 talks of "obedient children" who are not pulled back into their old way of life. God says "Be holy because I am holy". We are to live differently now.

Kevin was a taxi driver who used his spare time to drink and go with women, but his parents prayed for him. One day at an Alpha Course meeting Kevin received the Holy Spirit. Within a few days he told his girlfriend, with whom he was living, that he could no longer sleep in the same room with her in his house. Another day he stopped drinking and closed up the bottle of wine, something he had never done before. Then he stopped smoking. He went from 20 cigarettes a day to nil. Kevin's life was changing. Now his mind was ready for action, to hear more from God and follow Him fully.

Kevin, in his former way of life, liked watching violent films. After he became a believer the Holy Spirit convicted him. He knew he should not watch these films. As time went by he began to slip back into his old way of life and watch violent films again. A year later he could watch these films without feeling guilty at all. He had silenced his conscience. One day he went for prayer at church. God met with him. He was convicted again. This time he listened and obeyed. He stopped watching violent films.

Gold Coins

Read: 1 Peter 1:16-21

Don't conform to your former way of life, says Peter, (verse 16) but be holy. Remember that God will judge each man's work with fairness (1 Corinthians 3: 13).



Judgement came and it will come again says Peter. The next time judgement will be by fire affecting the heavens and earth (verse 7).

God's Time

Read: 2 Peter 3: 8-9.

In verse 8, Peter looks at the problem of waiting for a long time. Verse 5 tells us that the false teachers did not remember what God had done in the past. God's time is different to human times. To the Lord, 1,000 years may be like a day (Psalm 90: 4). This is hard for people to understand. A person may think that a period is a very long time. To God it may be a very short time. People like things to happen quickly. Sometimes nothing seems to happen. This does not mean that God has forgotten.

God's Patience

God will always keep his promises (verse 9). Many people thought that Jesus should have returned already. Peter explained that God is willing to wait. He is not slow, as people may think. He is patient. God loves everyone. He sent Jesus to free people from their sins (John 3: 16). God is waiting because He does not want anyone to die. He "desires that all people... will come to know the truth about Jesus" (1 Timothy 2: 4). God wants all people to turn back from their wrong ways. He wants to give people more time to obey Him.


God's Warning

Read: 2 Peter 3: 10

Jesus will not continue to wait for ever. Jesus said that people would not know when He would return (Luke 12: 39-40). When a thief comes, he comes suddenly to a house in the middle of the night. In a similar way, Jesus will suddenly return to this world. God will not give people any more time to obey Him. Instead, Jesus will come to judge them. When Jesus comes, the sky will disappear with a fierce roar. Fire will burn up the earth and everything on it. This had been revealed to Peter by the Lord.

Discussion:

1. Why do people laugh at Christians who believe in the second coming of Christ? Why is this wrong? (3: 2)
2. What do these people forget? (3: 5,6)
3. What should we remember about God's time scale and why?(verse 3:8,9)

 **Prayer.** Seeing this world will one day end, help me to live a godly life.

 **For the last study read 2 Peter 3: 11-18**

Study 14

REVIEW

Read: 2 Peter 3: 1-10

Peter tells his friends that this was his second letter. The book of 1 Peter was most likely his first letter. Here he continues from chapter 1 and encourages his readers whom he calls his friends to have pure thoughts. The false teachers did not have pure thoughts.

Faith in the Word of God

Read: 2 Peter 3: 1-4

Peter reminds his readers that the prophets in the Old Testament spoke the Word of God, (verse 2) as he had mentioned earlier (1: 20-21). He says also that the Apostles had been with the Lord Jesus Christ, so they knew His commands. Christians should not, therefore, believe the false teachers.

Jesus came over 2000 years ago and He is coming again. The "last days" is the time between these events. Many people do not think Christ will return. They will laugh at the Christians. They say that nothing has changed since the creation of the world (verse 4) and nothing will change now. At the same time they continue to live according to their own desires (verse 3). They want everything to stay the same. They do not want to be accountable for the way they live. They say that since the fathers died till now there has been no change. Their belief is based on a small amount of time which is within their own experience. A surprise awaits them. Peter answers the argument of the false teachers in four ways. He refers to:

- ◆ God's Word (verses 5-7)
- ◆ God's time (verse 8)
- ◆ God's patience (verse 9)
- ◆ God's warning (verse 10)

God's Word

Read: 2 Peter 3: 5-7

The false teachers did not remember that God judged the world. God's word created the sky. He commanded the earth to appear out of the water (Genesis 1: 9-10). Every plant and animal needs water to keep it alive (Genesis 2: 5-6). However, people in the world were wicked. So God judged the world. He caused the water to flood the earth (Genesis 7: 11). Noah, his family and the animals were safe in their floating home (Genesis 8: 1). Everyone else who lived in the world died. Things did not continue the same since the beginning of creation.

Remember also the price Jesus paid. In Peter's day silver and gold coins were used to buy slaves. Peter reminds us that a higher price has been paid for our salvation: the precious blood of Christ. It is far more valuable than "silver or gold" (verse 18).


True Love

Read: 1 Peter 1.22-25

Verse 22 is interesting. Peter says "you have sincere love (Greek word: "phileo") for the brothers, now love (Greek word "agape") one another deeply from the heart." These are the two words used in John 21 when Jesus asked Peter if he loved him (See Study 5). Peter only had affection ("phileo") for Jesus. Now Peter has an "agape" love for Jesus. He is encouraging believers to allow the Holy Spirit to flow through them to others with "agape" love. We must open our lives to God so that His love will fill us (1 Thessalonians 4: 9-10). This chapter ends by comparing the shortness of life, which is like grass that withers, and the living Word of God which is like undying seed.

Discussion:

1. How can "the mind" hinder action? What does Peter say we need to do (verse 13)?
2. What kind of things in your old nature try to pull you down?
3. What were silver and gold coins used for in Peter's day and how does this help us value what God has done for us in Christ?
4. Will believers be judged and, if so, on what basis (v17, 1 Corinthians 3: 13)?
5. How should we love one another (verse 22)?
6. How does Peter compare "all men" with the word of God (v. 23-25)?

 **Prayer:** Help me when I am tempted to go back to my old way of life. At such times enable me to obey Your Word.

For the next study read 1 Peter 2.1-12

Study 3

HUNGRY FOR GOD'S WORD

Read: 1 Peter 2: 1–2

Peter is referring here to new Christians as “new born babies” (verse 2) (See 1 Peter 1: 23). A healthy new born baby is hungry for milk.

The new believer should be hungry for God's Word. Sometimes he loses his desire for basic teaching from the Word of God. Something is wrong. Is it something from the old way of life? The New International Readers' Bible says:

“Get rid of every kind of evil. Stop telling lies, Don't pretend to be something you are not. Stop wanting what others have. Don't speak against each other.”

We can be hurt when relationships in the family are damaged. We can feel hurt when we lose a paid job, and we think it was unjust. Sometimes someone offends us. It is easy to behave badly when these things happen. Peter says “No”. Better to suffer for doing good than act in bad ways. He says also that we should not pretend to be something we are not. The word “hypokrisies” in Greek is close to the English word “hypocrite”. This person is like someone who judges others at the same time covering his face with a mask. The word was used of an actor on the Greek stage. Sometimes a person appears to be happy, but underneath he or she is sad. Everyone thinks all is well when it isn't. Sometime famous singers appear to be happy on the outside but in spite of their money, they are really unhappy people. Christians should not pretend to be something different, but be like an open book, easily read. The believer who stops sinning will be hungry for God's word.

Living Stones

Read: 1 Peter 2: 4–9

Peter refers back to the Old Testament. King Solomon built a place of worship, a temple in “Zion” the city of Jerusalem. They built the temple of very big stones, the most important one being the cornerstone. It is a big




African Mask
Drawn by Roger.Smith

or later their true nature will appear. Watch out for them!

Discussion:

1. Can a young person brought up in a Christian home drift away from the faith, accept wrong teaching and become a false teacher? If yes, how can this be avoided?
2. What do false teachers usually want?
3. Why is Balaam (Numbers 22) used to illustrate the way of the false teacher? What is the problem with knowing the truth and not doing it? (James 1: 23)
4. What does the picture of “a spring without water” teach us? (verse 17)
5. Other religions sometimes seem attractive to some people. How can the enquirer avoid wasting years of his life in the wrong group? What should he find out about it? See verse 19. “They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves”.
6. Discuss the steps that may lead the believer to become “worse off at the end than at the beginning”. (Verse 20)
7. What do the illustrations of the dog and the pig teach us?
8. What is one of the main doctrines of the Bible that Islam does not accept?
9. How would you help a Muslim find the God of the Bible?

 **Prayer:** Please help me to stay true to your Word and not to be deceived by false teaching.

 **For the next study read 2 Peter 3: 1–10**

Their Direction

Read: 2 Peter 2: 20-22.

What happens to the false teachers, who may have started well in church, is shown in three areas in verses 20-22.

- ◆ Behaviour compromised
- ◆ Beliefs denied
- ◆ Being (who they are) exposed

Behaviour

The man, who has known the truth and experienced a changed life and who goes back to his old ways, is in a worse situation than the one who never knew the truth. He is like someone caught in a thorn bush and entangled. He is like a man who is swimming and is attacked by sharks in the sea. He is pulled under and is overcome" (v.20). What may have started as simple friendships with the wrong people, has led to a bad lifestyle. As this leads to meeting other similar people he begins to accept their ungodly ways as normal. The return to a bad lifestyle is gradual. It is a time of repeated defeats, each one a little worse than the last. Finally things are worse than if they had not known the truth. The clean "house" is made dirty and becomes the place for demons to live and bring others with them (Matthew 12: 43-45).

Beliefs Denied

In the churches there was a declared path of faith followed by believers, accepted in the church. The false teachers turned their backs on this path. This path is called "the way of righteousness"(verse 21), or "the way of truth" (verse 2) or "the straight way" (verse 15). They openly rejected "the holy commandment" (verse 23). False teachers may once have known Jesus as Saviour but they turned away. Therefore it would have been better for them if they not known the way of righteousness than to have known it and turned away.

Being (who they are) Exposed



Peter describes the false teachers by referring to the dog and the pig. The proverb about the dog comes from Proverbs 26: 11. The statement about the pig must have been a popular saying at that time. In both cases the nature of the animal is not changed. If the pig was clean, it was an outward change only. It soon

becomes dirty by rolling in the mud again. In other words, a person's nature will show itself. While false teachers show outward reform in public, sooner

square stone with straight sides. The builders put it at one corner of the building. They then built the walls in a straight line from the cornerstone. Jesus is the cornerstone. He is precious to us. However, he was rejected by men. He was not the person Israel wanted as a Messiah. To God, Jesus was a "chosen one and precious". The Greek word "precious" (entimon) was used of the Centurion's servant in Luke 7: 2 as one who was dear to him. The word "precious" (verse 6) which Peter highlights in verse 7, means "held in honour". Believers honour Jesus and trust in Him. Verse 6 continues "He that trusts in Him will never be put to shame". This being put to shame is in the sense of hoping for something but being disappointed. The believer will not be disappointed in Jesus. People who cannot accept Jesus' claim to be equal with God, trip up and fall (verse 8 & Acts 5: 33) because they refuse to believe in Him.

In verse 5 believers are called "living stones" built into a "spiritual house". In the book of Leviticus we are told about priests who offered sacrifices to God. Peter says that believers should offer spiritual sacrifices to God. This includes:

- ◆ offering our bodies to God (Romans 12: 1)
- ◆ praying and interceding before God (Hebrews 4: 15-16)
- ◆ praise and worship, (Hebrews 13: 15-16)
- ◆ doing good, and sharing with others. (Hebrews 13: 16).

The truth about Jesus being the foundation, the rock, was developed in Peter's thinking over a period of time.

1. In the Gospels Peter declared that Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 16: 16-18). Jesus declared that on this rock of His deity (godliness), not on Peter, He would build His church.
2. When preaching in Acts, Peter declared that the stone you builders (the Jews) rejected has become the keystone. He goes on to say "Salvation is found in no other" (Acts 4: 11-12). In other words faith is built around Him. Otherwise it is an empty religious practice.
3. Now in his first epistle, a more mature Peter, who had studied the scriptures referred to the passage in Isaiah which speaks of a cornerstone (Isaiah 28: 16). Jesus is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophesy. He is the chief corner stone. The building is the church which is likened to a holy temple but consists of people who love and worship Jesus. (Ephesians 2:20-23).



The Cornerstone

In ancient times, the cornerstone was very necessary. It kept all of the other stones in a straight line so that the walls wouldn't collapse. If one row of stones or bricks was off by just a centimetre, the whole structure would be unsafe. Since the church is built on Christ, we can be sure that it will last.

Chosen

Read: 1 Peter 2: 9-12

"You are a chosen people" says Peter. Israel was a chosen people. The twelve disciples were chosen people. Believers too are chosen by God. (Ephesians 1: 4). This includes Jews and Gentiles. Believers are likened to "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God". They are set apart to God to declare His praises. They are to intercede like priests in prayer for others. Believers are people who have received God's mercy. They are called out of darkness into light. They delight to share with others what God is like – that He is good.


In verses 11 and 12, Peter reminds the believers to live good lives among non believers and not to give in to sinful desires. Our old nature can always pull us down if we let it. This is particularly true of men who start meeting up with other women regularly, especially when working away from home.

A Visitation from God

Christians are watched and sometimes wrongly criticised by the people around them because they are different. These people should also notice the good works a believer does. "The day God visits us could refer to Christ's second coming or it may be a day when God visits a person with salvation. At such a time the critics may recognise they were wrong and believe.

Discussion:

1. Why do people pretend to be something they are not? Why do they wear a mask?
2. What parts of the Bible are most likely to be "milk" by which new believers can grow?
3. What is the meaning of these words, "living stone" ?
4. Why is it OK as a believer to be different from other people? (verse 9-11)

 **Prayer:** Thank you God for making me as I am and that I do not have to pretend to be someone else. Help me to be honest and sincere so I do not have to hide who I really am.

 For the next study read 1 Peter 2: 13-25.

When evangelist David Hathaway preached in the former Soviet republic of Georgia some people called it a "visitation from God". He preached for three nights to 10,000 people in the Sports Palace. Thousands responded and many were physically healed. Local pastors described these meetings and the following TV broadcasts as an "historic event". For many it was a day of visitation from God when their lives were changed.

Spirit would live inside people. The Holy Spirit would be like the water that always flows (John 4: 13-14; 7: 37-38).

6. False teachers attract the unwary with their words (verse 18).

These teachers sound very confident and they attract people who don't know much about God. Some of these people are new Christians who don't yet know how to live the right way. The false teachers tell them lies by saying they can live as they want and especially enjoy wrong sex.

Islam was not in Peter's mind when writing his letter. The question here is this: Does the teaching of Peter agree with Islam? We will deal with one important teaching only.

Christians have much in common with Muslim people. Muslims accept the law of Moses (Tawrat), the Psalms (Zabur) and the Gospels (Injil). They do not accept that Allah would allow Jesus to die on the cross. Muslims believe it only appeared to the people watching that Jesus died, but Allah rescued him. Many Muslims believe Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus, was "the one the unbelievers killed".

Peter also found it difficult to believe God would allow Jesus to be killed. When Jesus had talked about His coming death, Peter had declared, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you" (Matthew 16:22).

After Jesus had been crucified, God raised Him to life and He appeared to Peter. Peter realised that Jesus had died to take the punishment he deserved because of his sins. God is holy and just and the punishment for sin is death. But God loves us so much that He allowed His only Son to take the punishment we deserved. Peter said in his first letter, **"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18).**

The crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ bring the certainty of forgiveness of sins. This loving, merciful God welcomes you now. Because of what Jesus has done, He freely offers you forgiveness of your sins and the power to live a good life.

Their Deception

The Gnostics (Gnostic means "he who knows") were a sect who became a great threat to the early church. They led untaught people to believe matter was evil in itself and they could do whatever they wanted i.e. "freedom". At the same time these teachers were slave themselves to evil practices. However scripture says "He that says I know Him and does not keep his commandments, that person is a liar" (1 John 1:4). They promised freedom whereas they made their followers slaves to the things that would destroy them (verse 19).

Study 13

THE CREED (BELIEF) OF FALSE TEACHERS



Read: 2 Peter 2: 15-19.

The belief of false teachers in verses 15-16 is marked by six things:

1. **They have left the "straight-way"** (verse 15). The 'straight-way' is the path to God (Isaiah 40: 3; Matthew 3: 3). False teachers have wandered away from this path in their thinking, in their emotions and morals. They do not do what is right.

2. **False teachers want money.** Balaam "loved the wages of wickedness". He was promised money by Balak, King of Moab, for speaking bad things like a curse against the people of God. He could not do so, instead he prophesied blessing. The story of Balaam is in the Old Testament (Numbers, chapters 22-24).

3. **False teachers lead people astray.** They know the truth but do not do it. Balaam knew the truth but he did not follow it. In Revelation 2: 14 we read that Balaam taught Balak how to make the Israelites sin and so lose the favour of God. It was by inviting the Israelites to the sacrifices of the Moabite gods (Numbers 25: 1-3). By eating food offered to an idol called Baal of Peor, and by committing sexual immorality the Israelites were led away from the straight path of following their God.

4. **False teachers are sometimes rebuked by God** (verse 16). Balaam rode on a donkey. He went to speak against the Jews. An angel stood on the path in front of him. Balaam's donkey stopped, but Balaam could not see the angel. So Balaam hit his donkey. He tried to force his donkey to move. Donkeys are dumb animals. This donkey spoke to Balaam with a human voice. Afterwards, Balaam saw the angel. The angel spoke to Balaam. He rebuked him for beating his donkey which saw the danger and stopped (Numbers 22: 32). Balaam was acting in a senseless way by carrying on. It was madness.

5. **False teachers make big promises but disappoint** (verse 17). Peter uses picture language to describe the false teachers. A traveller in the desert hopes to find water. When he finds a well but it contains no water he is disappointed. He sees a dark cloud, but it gives no rain. People who are thirsty for God will not be helped by false teachers. They will be disappointed. The place of "black darkness" is for false teachers. This probably refers to the darkest place in hell. The false teachers will have the same punishment as the wicked angels (2: 4). By contrast, Jesus promised that He would make people alive for ever. Jesus also described how the Holy

Study 4

AUTHORITY



Read: 1 Peter 2: 13-18.

Peter did not teach rebellion against the King and leaders, but taught submission to their authority (verses 13-17). This can be compared with Paul's teaching on the same subject (Romans 13: 1-7). At the time he wrote these letters, there was a bad emperor called Nero who ruled over many countries. Later he killed many Christians. Usually Christians should respect and obey even bad leaders except when they are told to do something wrong (Acts 4: 19, 5: 27-29). Perhaps people were wrongly accusing believers of rebelling against the ruling authorities. To answer this Peter says that believers should do good works. Then their accusers will be silenced (verse 15). Jesus silenced the accusations of the Pharisees by a wise answer to their question (Matthew 22: 15-22).

The Abuse of Authority

Household slaves (verses 18,19) probably formed a large part of the Christian community at that time. Therefore Peter specifically writes to them. They are told to submit to their masters, not only to those who are kind but also those who are cruel. The natural reaction to unjust treatment might be rebellion, hatred and moodiness. The believer with a conscience toward God suffers the bad treatment without these reactions. He has a testimony to maintain before his unjust master. Our father, our husband, our boss at work, or police, may request something from us that we do not like. When we react with rebellion against reasonable demands then we have fallen far below God's standard. We do not like to think that married life could become similar to slavery. However, some women married to unbelieving husbands can find themselves treated like slaves, with no rights. They are made to obey unreasonable demands on their independence and freedom, or face violence. If they can keep a right attitude without becoming rebellious, this is commendable by God. In some countries, women also have rights as men do.

Unjust Punishment



Read: 1 Peter 2: 19-21.

Peter now compares suffering for doing good with suffering for doing wrong. If a believer is late for work, and does not do his job well, and he suffers for it, this is not to his credit. If a believer works hard at work, and fulfils his family responsibilities and lives a godly life yet suffers for it, God commends this. Stephen was a godly man (Acts 7: 54-60) yet his godly life made his

enemies angry. They killed him. As he died he saw the "glory of God and Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God". Jesus who is sat at the right hand of God (Mark 16: 19, Hebrews 1: 3) stood to honour this martyr about to enter heaven.


 **Read: 1 Peter 2: 22-25.**

Jesus suffered insults (verse 23) but He did not answer back. Words can hurt. When we have hurtful words spoken against us, we find it hard not to answer back especially if what is said is untrue. Jesus never sinned (verse 22) and was punished for our sins (verse 24).

The word "bore" is used in Jewish Scriptures for when the priest carried the sacrifice up to the altar. This was four and a half feet high. The word translated "tree" refers to an object made out of wood, in this case a cross. Being dead to sins means that the power of the sinful nature is broken in the believer. When Jesus was whipped He suffered deep cuts and bruises caused by pieces of lead, brass or small pointed bones attached to those whips. "By His wounds we are healed." This healing includes our body and our whole personality if we return to Him (verse 25).

 **Discussion:**

1. Why will a visitation from God be a blessing to all? (verse 12)
2. When is submission good and right?
3. "My boss gives me too much work and complains when it is not done. I may lose my job." Discuss what this person should do.
4. How can submission be abused?
5. How does the suffering of Jesus help us?

 **Prayer:** Help me to live a godly life so I will not suffer for doing wrong. If I do suffer for doing right, help me to bear it.

 **For the next study read 1 Peter 3: 1-17**

Doh was Vietnamese. He told me this story of what happened to him as a child. Sweets & biscuits, in those days, were kept in a bag. The bag was hung from a piece of string tied across the room to keep it from the rats and mice. One day his mother saw that the sweets and biscuits had gone. The six children were put in a line. They were asked one at a time, "Did you take the sweets and biscuits?" All of them said, "No". So they were all punished with a stick. Then they were asked again. My friend Doh stepped forward and said that he took the sweets and biscuits. He was severely beaten till he cried in pain. When he came out of the room his sister ran up to him crying and put her arms around him saying, "Thank you, thank you." Doh took the punishment for his sister's sin.

Study 12

THE CONDUCT OF FALSE TEACHERS


 **Read: 2 Peter 2: 10-14**

Peter shows in these verses how bad the life of false teachers can be. He tells us that these people live to satisfy the desires of their body especially with wrong sex (verse 10). They are full of pride, and pretend to know a lot about God. They even speak badly about angels (verse 11). This is confirmed in the book of Jude verses 9-10. Angels are greater than people (Psalm 8: 5). Angels have more power and are stronger than false teachers. Angels would not accuse other angels who did not obey God. Angels understand more about authority than the false teachers did.

False teachers are likened to animals (verse 12) that have natural desires but no moral standards. Animals die. They can be caught and killed. False teachers will die like animals. Their bad life harms other people and harm will come to them (verse 13). It is like sowing and reaping (Galatians 6: 7-8). Living a bad moral life may seem enjoyable to start with, but the results are bad. Worse still, these false teachers were pretending that they were Christians by mixing with Christians at their special meals called love feasts. (Jude verse 12). They were always looking for women with whom to enjoy sex. They spoiled the love feasts by getting drunk, over eating and by attracting weak people to enjoy sex with them.

 **Discussion:**

1. Some people think that two men or two women being in a relationship is not wrong. They want to call this marriage. Is this wrong and if so why?
2. How can we avoid becoming full of pride and critical of authority like the false teacher? What should we do?
3. A new person has arrived in your church. Supposing this person was a false teacher, how would you know?
4. Imagine a free meal and a talk being offered by nice people. How would you know if this was a trap of a false teacher? What would you listen for if you decided to go along?

 **Prayer:** Help me to live a good life, to avoid error and to recognise false teaching where ever it appears.

 **For the next study read 2 Peter 2.15-22**

opposed God, so God punished them. They would suffer "hell", a terrible place of punishment. They used to live with God in His glory and light. Now they are in eternal fire far away from God (Matthew 25: 41).

2. **The flood.** God punished wicked people. Judgement came upon the ancient world in the days of Noah by the flood (Genesis 6-8). "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become and that every imagination and the thoughts of his heart were evil continually" (Genesis 6: 5). It was a rebellion in that they refused to acknowledge or worship God. The state of sin became intolerable. Noah, however, was a righteous man who found favour with God. He built a boat (an ark). God sent rain and floods and only Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and his family in the ark survived.

3. **Sodom and Gomorrah.** God probably caused an outburst of volcanic violence in an area where earthquakes are common. Burning sulphur fell on the houses so quickly that none except Lot's family escaped. It was a lesson for all time. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, was living in the city of Sodom unaware of the coming judgement. He did not like the violence, homosexuality and rape (Genesis 19) but he had got used to them. Sometimes Christians do not notice the evil things being done around them any more. They accept them. They are unaware of the judgement of God. Abraham stood away from the city and interceded for it before the Lord who appeared to him. (Genesis 18:16-33). God sent messengers to rescue Lot and his family. These three examples of God's judgement show the certainty of judgement on evil doers.

Deliverance

"The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials" (verse 9). This is a key verse for the believer. The two biblical examples given here are Noah and Lot. Both Noah and Lot were "righteous" because of personal faith in God. This was shown in their attitude toward what went on around them. Lot was "distressed by the filthy lives of ungodly men". Likewise, homosexuality, rape and all kinds of perversion should trouble the believer today. If it does, then "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation".

Discussion:

1. Why was the deception of false teachers in chapter 2, more serious than that of Ananias and Sapphira? (verse 1-2)
2. What main biblical teaching did the false teachers deny? (verse 1,2)
3. How do false teachers seek to take advantage of people (verse 3) and what will happen to them?
4. Discuss what we can learn from the three judgements (verses 4-6).
5. Has the Lord ever delivered you from a bad situation? Discuss.



Prayer. Please give me understanding to see clearly the difference between truth and error.

Study 5

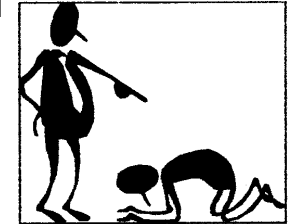
SUBMISSION



Read: 1 Peter 3: 1-7 .

This chapter begins and ends with submission. "Wives, be in submission to your husbands" (verse 1) and "angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him" (verse 22).

God's order in the heavens should be reflected by God's order in the home. "In the same way" (verse 1) believers are to submit to Government authorities, (2: 13-17) and slaves to masters. (2: 18-25). This is God's order.



Peter now writes to Christian wives who are told to be submissive to husbands for the orderly running of the home. She is not inferior or less important as a person. She has different tasks to him. Some women were married to husbands who had not yet believed. He tells them not to try and persuade them with many words and arguments, or impress them by new hair styles and expensive clothing. She should have a gentle, submissive spirit which does not insist that she is always right (verse 4). She should not argue or fight. Peter remembers Sarah who had great respect for her husband Abraham. Women that tend to dominate or lead, whether by personality or ability, should also find a way to submit. They may need to pray much. They should if possible allow their husbands to be the decision-makers.

In Peter's time, women were not highly respected by husbands so his exhortation to husbands was relevant. The wife is weaker physically, so he is to treat her gently, with respect and kindness. If unknowingly he does offend and upset her and she is hurt, he should quickly apologise. They are joint heirs together of God's grace. Christ died for her as well as him. In this way, prayer will not be hindered.

An Irish missionary, married to a Nigerian man, brought up their family in Nigeria. During their early years the husband had taken the children to pagan celebrations of "the water deities". This lady was submissive to her husband as far as was possible, but she did not approve of what the husband was doing. She could not stop him so prayed earnestly to God. Many years later when the children grew up and married, they moved to England. They became respected members of a local church along with their families. Before the end of his life the husband, who had remained in Nigeria also came back to God. The prayers of a godly wife prevailed on behalf of her children and her husband.

Be Caring

Read: 1 Peter 3: 8-17

Concluding this section on various classes of people, Peter exhorts the brethren to be of one mind and care for one another. They are to rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with those that weep (Romans 12: 15). The English word "Sympathy" is from the Greek word used here and refers to shared feeling in joys or sorrows. Society in Peter's day tended to be cold and hard hearted and it is often like that in many places today. Believers are to be different, caring and tender hearted.

Suffering for Doing Good

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult but with blessing" (verse 9). When people act badly toward one another it is natural to react badly in return. This is not what Jesus did (2: 23). We should respond gently with love. In verse 10, Peter introduces a quotation from Psalm 34. This, he says, is a reason for obeying verse 9 and receiving a blessing. In other words, we are to keep our lives right before God. If we do not react in the wrong way, God will hear our prayer and answer (verse 12). This verse mentions God's eyes. He sees those who do right. His ears are attentive to their prayers. His face is against those who do evil.

When people do good things they usually receive praise (2: 14). Christians should always do what is right even if they suffer for it (verse 14). The Greek words used imply a rare possibility. If it does happen that you suffer for righteousness then you will be blessed, spiritually prosperous. Those who are persecuted, as Jesus said in Matthew 5: 11-12, will have a great reward in heaven. So do not be fearful and upset. You should be ready to answer anyone who accuses you by giving them the reason for the "hope that you have" (verse 15). Conscience is the part of you that feels guilty when you

A Christian young man in Pakistan had a job and from his wages he went about doing good. He helped poor parents so their daughters could be married. He helped pastors with his own money. He also shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, he had a disagreement with his employer who was doing something very wrong. As a Christian he felt he could no longer work for this man, so he left his job. When he applied for other jobs he found no Muslim would employ him. Later, when the Muslims got angry at the Christians, he had to leave his home village to avoid being shot. He hid till things quietened down. After this he continued to do good things even when persecuted. Many times he prayed and God gave him what he needed.

repented as it is told in Acts 8: 12 and false teachers, too, can change.

An Example of a False Teacher

Jim Jones was born in 1931 in Indiana USA. He grew up as part of the Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ denomination. In the 1950s he started his own church known as the People's Temple. He preached that the world would soon end in a nuclear war. He claimed to be God. On December 30, 1973, Jim Jones was arrested for wanting sex with another man. This man was an undercover, male police officer. Even so, he told his congregation that he only had sex with women. In fact, several accounts exist that said Jones had homosexual relations with several members of the congregation. In the mid-1970s, people became suspicious that Jones abused children, and even adults who wanted to leave the congregation. He became afraid that the truth about him was known.



Entrance to Jonestown

So Jones moved the People's Temple to a city he built in Guyana, South America, which he called Jonestown.

By this time there were over one thousand members in his cult. Jones made them work hard as slaves to build up the city into his socialist promised land. When in Guyana he changed his teaching. He rejected the Bible because he thought it contradictory. Instead he used the Russian newspaper Pravda, which means "truth" and other works on which to base his theology. One doctrine created by this false teacher stated that if he and his congregation all died together they would move to another planet where they could live happily. So members began practicing killing themselves (mass suicide). Everyone pretended to drink poison and fall out of their chairs. News reached the USA and US Congressman Leo Ryan decided to go to Jonestown in November, 1978. When Ryan arrived there some followers decided that they wanted to leave with him. This angered other members and they shot them, and Ryan. They killed eight people and wounded eleven others. However, Jones knew that punishment would come quickly. They all decided to die by mass suicide as they had practised. Many of them put poison into a fruit drink to kill themselves. Those members who refused to drink were immediately injected with the poison or shot. Jones was himself shot in the head. 638 adults and 276 children died that November 18, 1978.

Demonstration

Read: 2 Peter 2: 4-9.

Peter now shows the certainty of judgement by giving three examples.

1. The angels that sinned (verse 4). Angels are powerful beings created by God, who are more closely associated with heaven. These angels rebelled against God (Jude verse 6) because of pride (Revelation 12: 7-9). They

Study 11

THE PROBLEMS OF FALSE TEACHING



Read: 2 Peter 2: 1-3.

Deception

In chapter 2 there is a sudden change. Peter goes from the positive and good in chapter 1, to the negative and bad in chapter 2. He has been talking about true prophets. Now he talks about false prophets and false teachers “among you”. These people undermine the foundations of faith that Peter has set out in chapter 1. False teachers deny the “sovereign Lord, who bought them”. True teachers frequently remember that they were bought by “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1: 19).

Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts Chapter 5, tried to deceive the disciples about the money they gave, but God revealed their lie to Peter. He told Ananias that he had not lied to man, but to God. Ananias collapsed and died in front of them all. When his wife was questioned similarly, she died also. Thus deception was quickly dealt with in the early Church and the people feared God.

Now, many years later, Peter is talking about deception in the wider, longer established Church. His concern is that it will prevent “growth in grace”. Just as Ananias and Sapphira were “among” the believers, similarly false teachers were also part of the Church. These teachers secretly introduced wrong teaching and tried to persuade others to follow them. What starts as a difference of opinion regarding Christ turned into wrong teaching. This would lead to a denial of Christ as Saviour and Lord (2: 1).

Denial

False teachers, who deny that Christ was God and make up stories, can be gifted speakers who can attract a large following of people. “Many will follow their shameful ways”. Immorality of all kinds is allowed. Verse 3 goes on to mention greed. These teachers wanted money. Their made-up stories were a way of getting it. As a result other people thought badly about Christians. We must be able to see the difference between the true and the false. Christian leaders must be honest about money (1 Timothy 1: 13; Titus 1: 7). Paul was honest about the money he collected for the Christians in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8: 20,21).

Destiny

False teachers who do not repent have one destiny—judgement from God. The delay in this final judgement is not because God is sleeping as they claimed (verse 3). It is because God is giving time for repentance. Simon the sorcerer

have done wrong. The believer must have a clear conscience (verse 16) and a good way of life. This will speak louder than the wrong accusations of the ungodly so that they will be ashamed. It is possible for us to suffer even when we do good. If God allows these things we must persevere as Job did. (James 5: 11, Job 1: 20-22).

In England, people are allowed to complain to the District Council if they think someone is making excessive noise especially with loud music late at night. Then the Council will investigate to see if the accusation can be proved. However, this can be misused.

Some years ago, a neighbour of ours accused us of breaking this law. We have a piano and I taught children to play the piano. He could hear our piano through the wall of his adjoining house, accused us of making excessive noise and wrote to the Council. He would angrily bang on the wall every time he heard our piano. He would not talk to us if he passed us in the street. However, after investigating, the Council told us that we were not breaking any law. By God’s grace we showed kindness to the man. I invited him into our home to see photos from my recent visit to Africa. We came to an agreement about the hours we should play the piano and even stopped playing the piano at weekends at his request. In the summer we mowed his front lawn. We also arranged for the outside of his house to be painted by a friend at a much lower price than the real cost. Some years later, this neighbour got angry again and started banging on our wall every time he heard the piano. We continue to pray for him and do not deliberately annoy him.



Discussion:

1. Can a domineering wife be a problem in the family and why?
2. If husbands take the lead in the family, at what point can a dominating husband go too far and make life unbearable?
3. What are the advantages of the extended family that cares? Give examples of selfishness in families that are to be avoided.
4. Can we suffer for doing good? How?
5. When someone is angry at us, how should we respond?
6. How should we share our “hope” with others (verse 15)?



Prayer: Help me, Lord, when I find submission difficult.



For the next study read 1 Peter 3: 18-22

Study 6

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

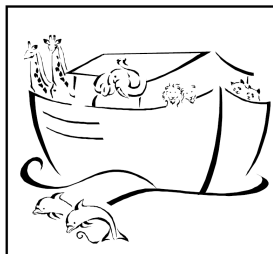
Read: 1 Peter 3: 18-22

Jesus' life is an example of doing good and yet suffering. Peter when speaking at Cornelius' house some 30 years before said: "He went about doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.... they killed Him by hanging Him on a tree" (Acts 10: 38,39). Now he adds the phrase "once for all". Hebrews 9 verse 28 says "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people". That includes you and me. My sins have been taken away because He suffered in my place. His suffering and death was for us – to bring us to God. Once we acknowledge this and repent, we have access to God the Father in prayer and to His unlimited favour.

Body, Soul and Spirit

Jesus in His earthly life had a body (Matthew 26: 26), a human soul (John 12: 27) and a human spirit (Luke 23: 46). His human spirit was energised by the Holy Spirit affecting every prayer, healing, miracle and the words He spoke. He lived His life without sin and at the end "through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9: 14). Yet when He died on the cross, the Father and the Holy Spirit left Him. This is foreseen in the Old Testament - Leviticus 5: 11 where the oil represents the Holy Spirit. This oil is not included in the flour of the sin offering. Jesus Himself became a sin offering. When sin's cost had been paid, the atonement was complete so that "he might bring us to God" (verse 18). Then after three days, God raised Jesus from the dead.

When Jesus' body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27: 57-60) Jesus' soul and spirit went to the place of the departed dead. It is called in the Old Testament "Sheol" and sometimes in the New Testament "Hell". (verses 19,20, 2 Peter 2: 4). There He preached to spirits of people in prison who had disobeyed God. Long ago, in the days of Noah, God had sent a flood that washed away all the evil. People who had lived at the time of the flood were drowned. (Genesis 7: 21) The ark, the boat that God had told Noah to build, floated above the flood waters. Inside eight people lived - Noah and his wife plus his three sons and their wives, plus every kind of living creature. The waters of the flood are a picture of baptism (verse 21). They show the evil in a person's life being washed



True prophets did not make up their message. They did not decide what to say. True prophecy is a message from God given through men who moved in the power of God's Spirit. They declared God's message.

Discussion:

1. What sort of things do we need reminding of that will help us to live as Christians?
2. How do we know the transfiguration of Christ was a genuine encounter with God? List the positives.
3. An impulsive liar can make up wonderful stories telling of his dreams from God and miracles done through him. How can we tell the difference between him and a man whom God has spoken to? Who has a genuine testimony to how God is using him?
4. Discuss what you think the text means when it says "no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation" (verse 20).
5. God rescued the Apostle Peter from death as He rescued the Kosovon believers. However the apostle James was killed. (Acts 12:2, 11). Discuss why God rescues some but not others. Could reaching heaven first be better than life on earth?
6. Is it possible for us to flow under the anointing of God's Spirit to bring words from God into other people's lives (Acts 11: 28)? How do we start?



Prayer: Help me to read your Word with faith and expectancy that You will speak to me.



For the next study read 2 Peter 2.1-9

Hermon. It was 'holy' because God spoke there. They did not see God. They did see a great cloud which was full of bright light. Peter says that Jesus received honour and glory from God the Father. Anything that brings honour and glory to Jesus is unlikely to be a cleverly invented story.

Reliability



Read: 2 Peter 1: 19-21

When the glory of God surrounded Christ on the mountain, it confirmed who He really was. He was God and He was man without sin. He is the one who is the centre and fulfilment of Old Testament Scripture. Peter's experience on the holy mountain showed that the prophets were right. If the world is a dark place, where there is much sin, then the Scriptures are a light. Psalm 119: 105 says, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." So the readers should completely trust the Scriptures, "God's Word". The "morning star" is what we call Venus. It appears just before dawn. It shows that a new day is going to start. Jesus said "I am... the bright morning star" (Revelation 22: 16). When Jesus returns, He will fill Christians with His glory and His light. They will know Him and they will be like Him (1 John 3: 2). Until the day that Jesus returns people must use the "lamp" of the Scriptures. In verses 20-21 Peter explains why people could trust the prophets' message. Jeremiah 23: 16 says that the false prophets of the Old Testament spoke "from their own minds". Such a man appeared in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. His name was Hananiah (Jeremiah 28: 1). He taught the people that God would break the control of the Babylonians within two years. It was a welcome message but it was not true. It did not happen and the man died. Both Jeremiah, and the Word of God he had spoken, outlived Hananiah, and were proved to be right.

News reports said that when thousands of Kosovon's were being killed during the Serbian invasion of Kosovo in the 1998-9 war, of the 250 believers in the country at that time, not one lost his life. But it came close, particularly when a pastor called Faton, and the men who had been hiding with him, were found by Serbian paramilitary and put in front of a wall to be shot. At that moment the pastor declared to his troubled friends "Nothing bad is going to happen to us because God is with us." He had remembered the verse given to him by God that morning. "Though an army besiege me I will not fear" (Psalm 27: 3). Suddenly a large number of NATO planes flew very low overhead and everyone started to run, including the Serbians who dropped their guns. Faton and the men with him escaped to another village.

away. Through the death of Christ, sin is washed away. By the resurrection of Christ the believer is given new life — the power to live differently. Baptism in itself does not save a man or woman. Rather, it confirms that he or she has decided to follow Christ. He or she is prepared to die to their old life and live in Christ's resurrection life (Colossians 2: 13-14). The believer now has no guilt but a clear conscience toward God. (verse 21). He can rejoice in Christ's ascension to God's right hand in heaven where angels, authorities and powers are in submission to Him (Ephesians 1: 20,21). Jesus rose from the dead and was given a place of honour (verse 22). (See Philipians 2: 5-11).

Jo once had a mind full of fear until she cried out to God to help her. At the age of 19, Jo was homeless, vulnerable and unhappy. She listened to the wrong people and became a prostitute. Later on the streets of London she was controlled by an evil man who took all the money she earned. She was introduced to hard drugs and took them regularly.

One day this man was arrested and sent to prison. Jo was free to escape, but she was afraid. Then on 11th September 2001 as she saw on television the twin towers in New York destroyed she realized what she saw was evil. She also saw that the life she was leading was bad. She asked God for His help. Within four months she was free of the bondage of prostitution. She returned to her home town and later found work. Today, she is part of a church based team trying to help other women break free from a life of prostitution.



Jo's life has been changed.



Discussion:

1. What do we have to do to benefit from Christ's sufferings?
2. Peter suggests that Christ made a universal declaration of victory over sin and death. How can this help us?
3. What does baptism teach us?
4. When should a person be baptised?



Prayer: Thank You Lord, for dying on the cross so that my sins could be washed away. I ask You to forgive my wrong doing and wash away my sins now.



For the next study read 1 Peter 4.

Study 7

SUFFERING IN GOD'S WILL

Read: 1 Peter 4: 1-6

Peter speaks of Christ's sufferings in chapter 3: 18-22. Now in chapter 4 he says "Christ suffered in His body, so prepare yourselves to think the same way as Christ did" (4: 1 NIRV). Believers should be of the same mind as Christ when unjust suffering cannot be avoided. When the time came for Him to die, He did not fight back but submitted Himself to the Father's will. Persecution which was formerly directed against Jesus is now directed against His followers (John 15: 20), those living in obedience to God. But "he who has suffered in his body is done with sin". Sinful practices that once seemed important are now insignificant when life is in danger. Suffering advances the progress of sanctification.

Andrew White, known as the vicar of Baghdad, who has seen destruction, brokenness and tragedy in Iraq writes: "Often in the space of one day we experience the devastation of death and loss being followed by the glory of resurrection, darkness being obliterated by light." At the funeral procession after an explosion killing 58 people in a nearby church, a photo was taken showing a cloud of glory surrounding the funeral procession. It was God's presence and glory in the midst of tragedy.



The believer with a new mind-set wants to live by the will of God rather

than for evil human desires (verse 2). He is no longer engaging in sin, but his mind is set on doing the will of God whatever the cost. He has said "No" to sinful pleasure. Peter includes in these pleasures (verse 3) drinking too much alcohol, wrong sex and devotion to people or things other than God (idolatry). Those who do these things think it strange that the believer does not join in (verse 4) and because of it they speak badly of him. These people will have to give account to God (verse 5). Believers, however, are blessed now and have the promise of heaven for eternity. The non-believer may enjoy his self indulgent life style now ignoring any future accountability to God. However, he will find himself accountable to God as the non-believers did who have died already (verse 6). These people had the good news preached to them in their lifetime. They rejected it and will be judged.

Study 10

REMEMBER

Read: 2 Peter 1: 12-15

The word "remember" appears in three different ways here, "Remind" (verse 12), "refresh your memory" (verse 13) and "remember" (verse 15). Peter writes to those who are firmly established in the truth. They, too, need reminders. He intends to make a written record. This record will continue after his death and it is with us to this day, preserved in Scripture. Jesus, after his resurrection, by the shores of Galilee (John 21: 18,19) spoke of Peter living to old age before being executed. Approximately 37 years since that time have passed, and Peter could have been around 70 years of age. He knows that quite soon he will face death which could be sudden and violent. Tradition says he died by crucifixion.

Reality

Read: 2 Peter 1: 16-18

Peter remembers the day that Jesus led the disciples up a mountain and was changed before them (Matthew 17: 1-13, Mark 9: 1-10, Luke 9: 28-36). The false teachers said that this did not happen. They said that Peter and the apostles made up these clever stories. Peter denied this. He told them that Jesus' face had shone like the sun. His clothes became as bright as light. It was the glory of God resting upon Him. Peter remembered this clearly 30 or more years after the event. James and John were with Peter on the mountain and together they heard a voice saying, "This is my Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased." This mountain was either Mount Tabor or Mount

A professor in Nigeria started discussions about Christ. Soon he was teaching that Christ was **not** the only way to reach God. He gained disciples and became head of a new denomination with questionable theology. Peter warns that such heresies bring destruction on those who teach and those who follow. In the Niger delta, "witch children" can be found homeless and walking the streets as a result of violence or abuse. Such children struggle when begging food because of the belief they have evil powers that will bring disease upon the people. So they are not wanted. Some churches who appear to be profiting from this problem are bringing their denomination into disrepute. When I visited the Niger delta area with a team from England, we came across a "witch child". The team loved this boy, fed and clothed him and afterward took him to a safe place where he would be cared for, before they returned to England.

positive just as recognising a false bank note relies on knowing the qualities of a genuine bank note. The faith we have been taught by the apostles is enough. We should not add extra rules and strange teaching from the false sects that Peter mentions later. Corruption in the world caused by evil desires is avoided by having a different source to draw from. That is "the divine nature" which is received by claiming precious promises given by God (verse 4) The fruit of the Spirit relates to the divine nature. The root and the fruit go together. Drinking dirty water will make a man sick. Pure clean water will revive and contribute to his health and well being.

The Supply


The word "add" in verse 5 is best translated "supply". With the knowledge of God as the source, there can be an on-going supply of help. As we "make every effort", more and more fruit of the Spirit will be seen in our lives (Galatians 5: 22,23). From the root of faith, there is a supply of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. This orderly growth is as natural as a plant pushing its way through the soil to appear at the right time. Yet they are all to be cultivated together. The full flower is love which blossoms in the believer's life and character. So the benefits of fruit bearing are clear (verses 10-12):

- ◆ It convinces the believer of his calling from God through the Gospel
- ◆ It is the evidence of a changed life that everyone can see
- ◆ It benefits others
- ◆ There is no possibility of falling from faith
- ◆ It has benefits beyond this life. (verse 11)

The alternative is to be "ineffective" and "unproductive". In other words, full of head knowledge, but without a changed life. Such a person can't see (verse 9, Matthew 13: 15; 1 John 2: 11) and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from past sins.

Discussion:

1. What were Peter's main reasons for writing this letter?
2. Why does Peter call himself a servant and an apostle?
3. You have just lost a lot of money. Someone has deceived you. You feel angry and hurt. How can you control yourself and find God's help (verse 4)?
4. Describe the seven additions to faith that Peter encourages here.
5. What can be the result of pursuing these additions to faith?

 **Prayer:** Forgive me Lord, when self interest only dominates and my life is ineffective and unfruitful.

 **For the next study read 2 Peter 1.12-25**

Only those who believe and accept Christ's death and resurrection on their behalf now will go to heaven. In other words, it is better to accept Christ now and if need be suffer for it, than to be a non believer and face hell.

Clear Thinking

 **Read: 1 Peter 4: 7-11.**

In verse 7 Peter declares that time is near when all things will end. He says: "Be clear minded and self controlled, so that you can pray". Before we take action, we need to have a clear mind. We need to know what we are about to do and its result. God will give wisdom if we ask Him (James 1: 5). We should be calm, and able to pray. The believer, whose mind is crowded with fears and worries is not at rest and often unable to pray.

Love Covers Many Sins

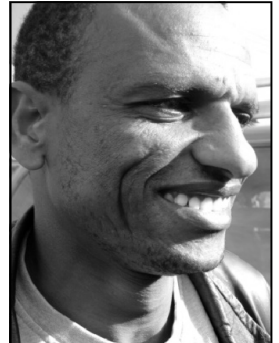
Believers should have a deep love for one another (Greek word "agape") because love covers many sins (verse 8). Love does not publish the failings of another for all to see, but hides them. The word "hospitality" in verse 9 in the Greek is used about the practice of inviting strangers into their homes. We should welcome others into our home without complaining. In times of persecution people sometimes do not have the necessities of life and need hospitality. We should serve each other with the gifts God has given us. Peter mentions speaking gifts (testifying, teaching or preaching) and practical gifts which means any kind of service, even making a cup of tea! We should show ourselves reliable and enthusiastic (Romans 12: 6-8). This glorifies God so that He is praised (verse 11).

What to Remember in Suffering

 **Read: 1 Peter 4: 12-19**

Like a precious metal in a furnace these Christians were going through painful trials. They were suffering for righteousness sake. Around the time Peter wrote this letter Christians suffered about ten violent persecutions because Christianity was seen as a threat to the Roman Empire. It could cost a lot to be a Christian. Peter encourages them to remember:

- ◆ Not to think of the trial as something strange but accept it.



When this Muslim background believer was poisoned in prison and thrown out as dead, a Christian brother gave him hospitality and cared for him till he recovered. He is now a bold witness to Jesus.


- ◆ To remember that the suffering God's allows will be followed by "glory".
- ◆ That if insulted because of the Name of Christ, you are blessed.
- ◆ Christians know it is wrong to murder and steal. It is also wrong to "make trouble in other people's lives".
- ◆ When suffering as a Christian not to be ashamed. Peter had once been ashamed when Jesus was persecuted and the cock crowed. But he is not now.

Where Judgement Begins

The judgement (verse 17) starts with the "family of God" and extends to those who "do not obey the gospel of God". For believers this judgement would be disciplinary because it would help to purify their lives. The words "if it is hard" in verse 18 can be translated "with difficulty". They were being saved with difficulty in the sense that it was necessary for God to purify the lives of believers by severe means. By comparison he asks what will become of the ungodly? There is no purifying purpose in their lives. They reject the offer of righteousness. The word "commit" in verse 19 is a banking term meaning "to give in charge as a deposit." The believer is to commit himself to God as to a faithful creator. He is to keep doing good.

Discussion:

1. How should the Christian prepare himself for suffering?
2. What is the difference between pleasure and sinful pleasure?
3. A Christian is invited out to a late night drinking party with his friends. He asks your advice: Would you tell him to go or not?
4. When a person's mind is crowded with fears and worries it can be difficult to pray. What should such a person do? (1 Peter 5: 7)
5. In what way can love for one another be expressed?
6. Discuss the things that the believer should remember if he has to suffer for Christ's sake.
7. How can we avoid suffering for our faults, especially in the work place?
8. If the believer suffers as a Christian, what should be his attitude?
9. How can trials be the means of purifying the life of the believer?

 **Prayer:** Help me to avoid suffering for my faults but suffer only for Your Name.

 **For the next study read 1 Peter 5.**

Study 9

REFRESHING THE MIND

2 Peter Introduction

In Peter's first and second letter he is doing what Jesus told him to do, which was "Feed My sheep". He did this by considering two problems:

1. Persecution
2. False teaching

This book was written toward the end of Peter's life possibly between AD65 and AD68 after which he was martyred during the reign of Nero. Peter refers to this as his second letter (2 Peter 3: 1-2). Here in 2 Peter 1: 12-13 he states his purpose:

refresh the minds of believers (1:12)

repeat the message stated in his first epistle (3: 1)

reinforce the message of the Prophets, Apostles and the Lord Jesus (3: 2,15)

revive their spiritual life (1:13, 3:1)

record these truths so they would live on beyond Peter's lifetime (1:15).

Good Bible teaching will do all these things. It will refresh, repeat, reinforce, revive and record. Such teaching will live on beyond the days of the teacher.

Greetings

Read: 2 Peter 1: 1—11

Peter calls himself a "servant and apostle"(1:1). The Greek word for a servant or slave is "doulos". He completely belongs to his owner and has no freedom to leave but he serves his master gladly. An apostle (Greek "apostolos") is one sent from someone else. The Greek "apo" means "off" and "stello" to send. So Peter is one sent by God like an ambassador to another country. He is writing to the same people referred to in his first letter. He refers to them as those with equal standing with himself in receiving the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ. To the words grace and peace in his greeting (1: 2) he adds "knowledge". Positive information about God is food for the soul and will lead to growth in grace. This is Peter's main goal in this book (3: 18).

The Source

"Everything we need for life and godliness" (Verse 3) is available through our knowledge of God. His divine power makes it possible. The focus is on the

to the disciples mending their nets. They are preparing the nets for future useful service. This speaks of God repairing our lives. It is also used in Ephesians 4: 12. The main idea is that of adjustment, the putting of parts into right relationship and connection with one another. The promise is to make us strong, firm and steadfast. The word "firm" speaks of a strong base to which is added the word "strengthen". So the believer becomes established so that no adversity will shake his or her faith. Peter gives all the glory to God for this by exclaiming "to Him be the power for ever and ever! Amen."


Postscript

Read: 1 Peter 5: 12–14

Peter now mentions Silas as a faithful brother to whom he probably dictated the letter and who was going to deliver it. Babylon probably refers to the literal Babylon, a town on the Euphrates River (verse 13) that was once a great city. Peter may have travelled there at some time as he knows a lady there or the "she" could also be referring to the Church in Babylon. Some say that the Christians in Rome used it as a secret name for that City. Whether it refers to Babylon or Rome, we can see how far his ministry has reached. Mark is also mentioned here with warmth of affection. Kiss of love refers to the custom in the early Church when they welcomed each other with a kiss. The final blessing in this epistle is "peace" (verse 14), just as he had begun with peace (1: 2).

Discussion:

1. What right attitudes should a pastor have in caring for his church? (verses 1–3)
2. Can we experience "the glory of God" today? How?
3. Money making is usually the objective in business but it should not be the main motive of a church leader. Why? How can the business man and the church leader help one another in a church situation?
4. How can we humble ourselves before God? (verse 6)
5. A friend says, "I didn't sleep last night because I was worrying..." What should we do to help someone with fears and worries? (verse 7)
6. In what ways can the devil be "like a roaring lion"? What should we do? (verses 8,9). Discuss.
7. What does God promise us in verse 10 and what difficulties are mentioned?
8. What did Silas most likely do to help Peter? (verse 12)
9. How does Peter end his letter? (verses 12-14)

 **Prayer:** Lord, I cast my worries and cares on to you. Thank you that you care for me.

For the next study read 2 Peter 1: 1-11

Study 8

GLORY

Read: 1 Peter 5: 1-4

Peter now addresses the elders of the churches. He does not take for himself any higher position than an ordinary elder in the church (verse 1). A church elder is not necessarily an old person, but must be a wise, mature Christian. In 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9 there is a list of the qualities an elder must have. He may be young or he may be old. Peter is a personal witness to Christ's sufferings and a participator in the glory that shall be revealed. The word "glory" was used to describe honour, wealth and power similar to that of Solomon in the Old Testament. Here it is God's presence coming down from heaven to earth. Jesus showed God's glory when He turned water to wine (John 2: 11) and when His clothes became as white as light on the mountain. (Matthew 17: 2, 2 Peter 1: 17).

At Pentecost the sound of rushing wind and the fire appearing on each person was the revelation of the glory of God. Peter himself had experienced this glory when people were miraculously healed as he walked along and his shadow passed over them (Acts 5: 14–16).

Money Making

The elders here are encouraged to be "shepherds" of God's people. The well known Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd". Jesus Himself said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep". John 10: 14. Jesus was prepared to give His life for His sheep. Elders should willingly care for God's people as a shepherd cares for sheep. If one sheep gets lost, he goes and finds it and brings it to safety (Luke 15,5). He should not expect special payment for this. Sometimes the pastor's need for money or his greed for money, leads to trouble. In certain parts of Africa where there is little employment, young men will often choose to become preachers. Their preaching attracts followers so they hire a hall. Then they tell the people to give money to pay for their living. Sometimes denominational churches offer a further attraction such as the opportunity for visits to USA or the UK. Pastors should not be profiting from the flock of God with frequent collections at every meeting so they get a good living out of the congregation when many of its members struggle to survive. They should not be domineering and bossy (verse 3), but to be examples by their life style to the flock. Pastors and leaders who are wrongly motivated should repent and ask God to make them "not greedy for money but eager to serve" (verse 2).

A Crown of Glory

Pastors are accountable to God. Jesus is referred to here as "the chief shepherd" who will reward faithfulness with an "unfading crown of glory" (verse 4). The word "crown" refers to a circle of oak or ivy leaves and flowers and put on the head or around the neck. This was commonly done in Greece for winners of athletic games. This was where the Olympic Games began. However, this crown would soon wither and fade. The reward of Jesus is unfading. Paul says his crown of rejoicing at the coming of the Lord Jesus is those people who have become believers through his ministry (Philippians 4:1).

Humility



Read: 1 Peter 5: 5-7

The call in verse 5 tells of the need for humility. Young people and young Christians should submit to those who are older. In Britain today a culture of lack of respect to parents and teachers has developed. This is not good. Peter in the Gospels did not want Jesus to wash his feet (John 13: 8). Although he at first said "no", he did later allow Jesus to wash his feet. Now he writes with understanding. We are to "clothe" ourselves with humility toward one another. The need for submission is seen throughout this letter. (See 1 Peter 2: 13, 2:18,3: 1). Here he applies it to church leaders. They must remind themselves frequently that they too were once sinners, saved only by the death of Jesus. Any success in their ministry they owe completely to Him and His blessing. We are all to respect other people's viewpoints by at least listening to them with interest. We are to humble ourselves before God, (verse 6). God was probably using suffering and persecution to humble them. Suffering can make us hard and critical, blaming others for our problems. Believers should react in a God honouring way to suffering by humbling themselves. Then God can trust that believer with a high place of privilege and honour in service. This has happened to some believers in Ethiopia who suffered imprisonment and death threats under communism, and are now church leaders. They are helping many Moslems come to faith and to be baptised.

No Worries

Humbling ourselves before God comes before telling God about the things that worry us. These worries are to be cast on God in prayer (verse 7). Many years earlier Peter had slept between two soldiers to whom he was chained (Acts 12: 6). He was clearly not worrying about his trial and probable execution the next day. The word "cast" means "having deposited with". When we deposit money in the bank it is the bank's responsibility to take care of it. We trust the bank. Similarly, we can trust God, who is more reliable than any bank. The words "He cares for you" could be translated "you are His concern" (Psalm 55: 22).

Watch and Pray



Read: 1 Peter 5: 8-11

In verse 8 we are exhorted to be awake and watchful, not like Peter in Gethsemane, (Matthew 26: 36-46) when he fell asleep and was not ready for Judas' betrayal of Jesus. It says of Judas that Satan had entered into him (John 13: 27). It seems as if "the devil was prowling around" and found Judas. He was a thief with a love of money and ready to betray Jesus. So the devil entered into him. If an apostle of Jesus could open his life to the devil, then it is possible a Christian leader could do the same. We should be careful about the love of money. Judas, an apostle of Jesus, was a thief (John 12: 6). We should never betray Jesus by supporting those who deny Jesus and the life He represents. If we do, then Satan has a right to oppress and sometimes drive us to do terrible things we would not naturally allow. The "diabolos" or devil (Satan) was waiting to get Judas and "he entered into him" (John 13: 27). Judas went out to commit that terrible act of betraying Jesus. The word "diabolos" was used in classical Greek to mean to slander or accuse. A "roaring lion" uses his vocal chords to frighten his prey. It speaks of domination and a fierce hunger.



Resist the Devil

The Christian is to stand firm against the devil and to resist him (verse 9). He is not to give in to doing wrong. If a Christian is oppressed he should ask good Christian leaders to pray for him. Jesus stood firm. He was not forced into sin when arrested and tried. He still had to suffer. Jesus wanted fellowship with those disciples closest to Him before He suffered, but they fell asleep. For us there is a precious fellowship with others going through similar opposition from the devil. We are not on our own. We stand against the devil and we resist him in Jesus' name so that oppression lifts and peace floods back into our lives.

The God of all Grace

What a beautiful statement is made in verse 10: "The God of all grace...will himself restore you". God shows favour toward us so that even with our imperfections and short comings, He promises to restore us. He offers to us "eternal glory". God calls us into salvation that He may get "glory" for Himself. We who believe are to dwell in that glory, that is the light of His blessing and presence for ever (Romans 8: 18). For now we must "suffer a little while". Sometimes "a little while" seems a long time to us. We do not like suffering and wonder when it will end. After suffering He will "restore" you (verse 10). The Greek word "katartisei" translated "restore" is used in Mark 1: 19 referring