

1 Peter 1

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 04 August 2009 15:23

All of scripture is a happy hunting ground for scoffers and scorners. In 2005-6 two books were published that claimed to destroy the Christian message with 'secret' information never before made available... 'The Da Vinci Code' and 'Holy Blood, Holy Grail'. The latter was written some years ago but has been republished to coincide with its counterpart.

But, if you look at the 'evidence' given, it is crude and unsubstantiated! The writers are unbelievers whose scriptural scholarship is not even rudimentary. Reading the Bible like an ordinary book, and without any knowledge of Hebraisms, Greek turn of phrase, or any other aid to understanding theology (such as salvation), the writers tried to demolish faith. As a result, commentators have said the books are the most 'serious threat to Christianity ever'.

What nonsense! For myself, I cannot give these books more than a few moments time, they are so crude and foolish! If anything, they prove to me just how active Satan is today. Friends, the Bible is true. The two human books are false. Simple as that.

These things are sent to try us, and this can cause suffering of soul. In this letter to the Christians of what is now Turkey, Peter sends words of comfort. They have been scattered far and wide by Roman and other viciousness, and are now amongst strangers in a foreign land. They have been isolated by circumstances. But, God is in control and sees all. The earth is a small garden where His souls live, and He sees them all, individually and with compassion.

He sees our trials and tribulations and knows our hearts. And, where suffering exists, He brings balm and peace. If we don't know that peace, it is because we set up barriers to it!

The love and care shown in this letter is genuine and continues to this day. It is a letter from one who knew Jesus personally on this earth, and later through the Holy Spirit. His words are not written from lack of knowledge. They are based on the absolute truth of God, witnessed and enacted in real time.

In the first few sentences, Peter gives us enthralling theology that precisely and perfectly tells us about predestination and the special, elite status of all who are saved by grace. Many modernists try to play-down this elite status, but what else are people who are chosen

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personally by God to be His own? (We are elite by God's choice, not by our own worth!).

Humanly, a man who is selected to be a marine is personally chosen by those with knowledge to be part of what is acknowledged to be an elite force. We have no problem in saying that because it is true.

So, why pretend otherwise when it comes to Christians? Very few are chosen to this special status by God. We cannot claim superiority, because the choice is made for reasons we do not know, and we don't deserve it. But, special we are, and few attain to its ranks. That is why Peter's words only apply to Christians. Read, understand, and apply!

Verse 1

1.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,"

Like Paul, Peter introduces himself to the readers of his personal letter, the Christians mentioned in the first sentence. Peter (Petros, meaning small rock or stone, as opposed to the word used to describe Christ, Petra, meaning large rock or crag) is an 'apostle of Jesus Christ.'

He is an apostolos. In this instance the word refers to one who was actually with Jesus Christ as one of the 12 apostles chosen to accompany Him. The word means a delegate or messenger, who has been sent out with specific instructions. These orders are to be complied with by the apostle - in this case, Peter - and bear the authority of the One giving the instructions - Christ. In other texts the word can sometimes also mean a great Christian teacher, which is why certain men are mentioned in scripture as 'apostles' - men like Barnabas, Timothy and others.

The word also has other implications. For example, if the instructions are given by Jesus Christ, then whatever He says is of God and has absolute authority. This being so, the instructions bear the weight of commands for all who hear them. It is often thought that God's commands do not have authority over the unsaved, but this is a mistaken view. God is Lord of all, including fallen mankind. Therefore, His commands apply to all men, whether saved or not. Some have

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specific reference to the saved, but general commands apply to all men.

Thus, God's commands are absolute laws covering the entire world. They are not changed by God, and not changed by circumstance or by different cultural, political or moral settings.

Apostolos is rooted in apostello, which carries with it the meaning of one who is appointed to his task (in this case by God, through the Son). As a designated messenger he enjoys the freedom of God's authority and truth and is personally at liberty (from other men and the world) and yet is a part of the holy will. Hence apo – the origin of a cause/a part of a whole; and stello – 'to fit out for one's own use': both roots pointing to the divine owner of the apostle. 'Jesus Christ' is shown to be that owner.

You will note that the apostle (whether one of the 12 or others who followed later) is someone owned by God and is sent out by God/Jesus Christ, with specific commands, which are to be obeyed. In context, by those who are saved by grace. They have no option, but to obey, as commands are equal to fixed laws.

Also note that, by implication, the term 'apostle' cannot be applied to Roman Catholic popes. This is because they are unsaved by grace and cannot commune with God or be used as messengers. Instead, they are deluded by their own importance and traditional myths. The most basic qualification for an apostle is being chosen by God as a saved person. Popes are not saved and do not convey God's truth to the people, so they have no part in the apostolos.

If we accept the Biblical meaning of an apostle, we can see that only God/Jesus Christ can send out an apostolos. No man can pass-on the role by succession or heritage, much as an earthly king passes on his royal title to his son or to another. The very word means that God alone chooses who will be an apostle. Therefore, 'apostolic succession' is a fable invented by mere men, and has no authority or credence whatever.

Lastly, to be a genuine apostolos, a man has to be recognised by his spiritual gifts of preaching and teaching, and known to be 'great' in these aspects of his Christian life. Again, by definition, the term cannot apply to modern men who insist on calling themselves apostles. They are either 'great' preachers of the truth, or they are fakes. Undoubtedly, they are fakes who preach and teach heresy, because they are not shown to be 'great' by their faithfulness to the truth, or in the

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results of what they preach.

This letter was sent to 'strangers' in particular places. Who are these 'strangers', or *parepidemos*? In context it can possibly mean a Christian who lives on earth. But the more likely meaning is that of a foreigner in another land. That is, Christians (maybe ex-Judaisers) who moved to another country, living there as ex-patriots; a 'foreign resident' or *epidemeo*. This meaning is confirmed by the following word, 'scattered'; *diaspora*. This is a reference to those Jews and Christians who fled Palestine to live amongst heathen, and so were dispersed, *diaspeiro*. It is common to think of the diaspora as only affecting Jews, but it also affected Christians (who would have been converted Jews and those converted from other religions).

In particular Peter was writing to the brethren who fled to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Together, they would today form modern Turkey. At that time they were Roman provinces. It is possible that the same letter was duplicated and sent to each place separately. But it is just as likely that the same letter was sent from one place to another, and even that it was copied by local scribes before being sent on.

Pontus (Pontos, 'the sea'): It was a part of Asia Minor, and was bordered by the sea, Armenia, Cappadocia, Galatia and Paphlagonia. The different recipients, then, lived in large but neighbouring areas. Pontus was on the southern coast of the Black Sea.

Galatia ('land of the Galli, Gauls'): This was the central Roman province of Asia Minor. In the north was Bithynia and Paphlagonia. It was bordered by Pontus in the east. To the south was Cappadocia and Lycaonia. The west was bordered by Phrygia. Galatia was between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Cappadocia ('province of good horses'): Again a part of Asia Minor and under Roman rule. To the north was Pontus. To the east was Armenia Minor. To the south, Cilicia and Commagene. The west was bordered by Lycaonia and Galatia. It was between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, with its eastern side on top of Syria.

Asia (strictly, translates as 'orient'): This word is a loose reference to the whole area, more or less equating to the western part of modern day Turkey, facing Greece. It included Caria, Mysia, Phrygia and Lydia. Asia

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Bithynia ('a violent rushing'): Again, a Roman province in Asia Minor. Its boundary touched the Black Sea, Mysia, Galatia, Phrygia, Propontis and Paphlagonia.

All, or most, of these churches (gatherings of Christians) were probably founded by Paul during his various missionary journeys. Peter was writing from 'Babylon'. Some take this to be a figurative reference to Rome, but this is highly speculative - if the Jews and Christians were scattered all around Palestine, there is no reason to suppose that Peter was not in actual Babylon. The letter was especially written to help those who were suffering, possibly by their separation from their homeland, possibly because many lost relatives in the original violence causing them to scatter, and possibly because, as Christians, they lived in places hostile to their beliefs. In any event, Peter was fulfilling the task given to him by Christ (to feed the flock).

Verse 2

1.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

Scripture is resplendent with the fact of election, even in the Old Testament. Here, Peter reminds (because they would already have been well-taught by Paul et al) his readers that they are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."

From Augustine, and before, thinkers (particularly Roman Catholic) have tried to minimise or rationalise this statement. They cannot accept that God chooses some to heaven and most to hell. Because of the importance of getting this right, the study will sometimes be very detailed and hard-work! Please bear with it, because vital doctrinal statements are being made...and they are vital to Christian life and faith.

The people Peter is writing to, however, are 'elect', eklektos. The meaning of this word is precise: picked out (from amongst others; in this case by God), chosen. It also means to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, which is why Christians are referred to as the 'elect (or chosen) of God'. In the same way He calls the Messiah Himself 'elect'. The meaning includes the notion

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of being the 'best of its class' or pre-eminent.

The exclusivity of this action is found also in the root, eklegomai: to pick out for ones' self; to choose one out of many; one who is chosen by God (because He wished) to receive His favours and to be His own. Thus it refers to God's choice of Abraham and his descendants at first, and then Christians (through Christ by faith, making Christ, and not the individual, meritorious).

Taken back to another root, lego, it means that God calls us out by name. The choice of any man or woman is, then, personal and deliberate, and not brought about by anything done by the one receiving salvation, e.g. by 'choosing Christ'. Yes, God knows who will be saved, but this does not reduce 'foreknowledge' to mere advance knowledge!

Roman Catholicism accepts election, but not in the above sense. Rather, it believes (by adding philosophical thought) that God chose those who will be saved because He knew in advance who would obey Him. This does not make sense, and makes the whole process superfluous and theatrical! If God knew in advance, there would have been no need for Christ to die, or for any choice at all to be made. All he needed to do was ear-mark individuals before time began!

The major reason why Rome and many others do not wish to acknowledge election to salvation or to damnation, is that they believe in an Arminian gospel, which is no gospel! They hate the idea that men cannot somehow contribute to their own salvation, or that God is in total control of their eternal destiny.

Scripture puts it another way - that God chose those who would be saved, before time began, and yet ordained that preachers would preach the word of God. Through this the elect would ultimately be saved. Yes, God knew in advance who would be saved, but this did not deter Him from sending Jesus Christ as the Lamb to be sacrificed, nor did it stop Him from deliberately choosing individuals by name. To suggest that the majority are hell-bound simply because they remain unsaved is ridiculous, because this makes God weak and incapable of making His own choices. They are unsaved because God chose them to be vessels fit for destruction. Why or how is not our business.

This election is according to the 'foreknowledge of God'. Foreknowledge is prognosis: it

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certainly can mean to know in advance, but (to the chagrine of opposers) it also means forethought or to *arrange in advance*! This is far more than simply learning about what was going to happen and then tailoring events to suit (which is how Satan works his wondes). Indeed, the root of this word is proginosko, meaning not only to have knowledge beforehand, but also to *predestinate* or to elect/foreordain to salvation! There is therefore no escape from what Romanists and others dread - predestination that does not allow for man's choices.

This should be a matter of great assurance for us all, for if God chooses us and His choices are fixed, we can never, ever lose our salvation! Arminianists can never know this deep assurance, because, of necessity, if we choose our salvation, and we are weak, fickle beings, we can also lose our position in Christ! Thankfully, this is not the case and God ordains each one of us to salvation.

God the Father brings this into effect. How? "Through sanctification of the Spirit..." The word 'through', en, tells us that the action that follows is a fixed state, a state of rest, simply meaning, in this case, 'by'. That is 'Elect...by (the means of) ...sanctification'.

In scripture some words hide a depth of meaning not found in English. Thus, the word 'en' or 'through' is based on eis, which refers to an action already perfected in the past. In human terms, it means an action done before time began. But, as time does not exist in eternity, it's deepest meaning is that this sanctification took place in eternity and is ever present!

Also, en is based on ek. All these words are primary prepositions. This one is a reference to the origin of something, or the cause, e.g. 'out of', 'from', or 'by'. Therefore, if we put all this together...we are chosen by God, because He predestinated us to be saved. He did it 'through' sanctification. That is, our salvation is already fixed in eternity and arises out of sanctification as a pre-existing factor. This is very important, because it shows us that we cannot save ourselves and cannot in any way contribute towards our salvation.

Hence, Arminianism and all its variants are heretical and wrong. This is not just a difference of opinion, but a difference of fact – predestination is fact; Arminianism (the ability to choose our own salvation after our birth) is myth. Or, more pertinently, it is a false Gospel.

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What is this 'sanctification'? Sanctification is *hagiasmos*. It means 'holiness' or 'purification', from the root, *hagiazo*. This has several meanings, such as to be separated from earthly sinful things and to dedicate to God; to consecrate to God; to be cleansed from the guilt of sin; internal purification by renewal of the soul. And this action makes the person a 'most holy thing' or a saint, *hagios*.

The phrase is "sanctification of the Spirit". Does this mean that the Holy Spirit must be purified? Of course not. The word 'of', in this context, means 'by'. So, our purification is effected by the Holy Spirit. Again, this is important, for it means we cannot, in any way, purify ourselves. Purification emits from, and is performed by, the Holy Spirit. It is our task to be obedient, but this obedience does not itself bring about salvation, or have any part in it.

Attempts at purification by zealots are meaningless, whether it is frenzied men whipping their own bodies to expiate their sin, or charismatics and others praying themselves into holiness, or doing constant good works! None of it does anything! Holiness, like everything else that is good, is given as a free gift by God because He wishes to give it. Yes, He demands that we also act in an holy way and live lives of purity – but these do not themselves 'earn' us holiness. Nor does prayer, reading scripture, doing good, etc. These are all aspects of holy lives and obedience, not contributors to salvation.

We have a hint of this in the account of creation. There, in Genesis 1, we find that the light existed even before the sun and moon were made! In scientific and human terms light cannot exist without something to make that light. But there was nothing in creation to make it. Instead, God made light shine by His word alone, by supernatural means and by His boundless power and authority. Likewise with salvation. It is brought to our lives without a single human activity or element. It exists only by God's word and will.

Regularly I hear of men and women who 'burn out' in their churches because they are compelled to constantly attend meetings and do works. These are the demands of fellow men, not God! They are shackles of imprisonment, not the freedom in Christ we are all promised. If these things were worthy enough to save us or to make us holy, why, then, did Christ die? If we could do it ourselves, if only we tried hard enough, why should God send His Son to be sacrificed? It would all be a farce.

The holiness and purification that is sanctification, is, then, a product of the Holy Spirit alone. The *pneuma* of God. This is the open secret rediscovered by the Reformers. It is what they died

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for. Today, we throw it all away by allowing heretics to change the terms of salvation.

What does this sanctification lead to? “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The word ‘unto’ another primary preposition, eis, in this case means ‘(leads) towards’...obedience...

Once more, this preposition includes the idea of eternal choice by God. That is, the obedience following sanctification is, like sanctification, an act of God, a free gift. We cannot be obedient, then, unless God gifts us to be so. Obedience, hupakoe, is compliance with, or submission to, God’s requirements. It also means to hear the knock at the door and then going to listen to the Person Who is there talking; it is to listen to a command. For us this is strange, but it is part of God’s will – that He gives us salvation completely freely, yet He also demands that we be obedient as a saved people.

The tiny word ‘and’ has a powerful meaning, too. It is kai, in this text meaning ‘even’ or ‘indeed’ or ‘likewise’ and has ‘cumulative force’. Thus we can write the words as ‘even (to) the sprinkling of Christ’s blood.’ One bit of information builds upon another with potent effect.

‘Sprinkling’, rhantismos, is figurative for purification; ‘cleansed by sprinkling’, in this case of Christ’s shed blood, haima. We can now paraphrase verse 2 thus: ‘Chosen by the deliberate predestination of God the Father, and brought into effect by the saving power of Christ’s shed blood, which cleanses us.’

It is worth repeating that in this scheme of things there is no room whatever for human choices, or human agreements. Even if a man agrees with these statements, he cannot thereby save himself. He can hear the Gospel and agree with it; he can repent after feeling the crushing weight of his own sin on his soul; he can be forgiven by the Lord and start to live a new consecrated life. But, at no time in this activity can he say that he has chosen God or chosen to be saved! It is all, from start to finish, of God, a free gift. There is no good in a man beforehand that can contribute towards his salvation (as Romanists believe and teach).

Peter then closes this brief introduction with a blessing. “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” Grace, charis, is another indication that even the blessing is of God alone. Peter is seeking God’s favour for his readers, bringing many spiritual delights in its wake. Such as

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peace, eirene – peace between people as well as the peace of Christ in their hearts, which follows from faith in salvation. Not only that, but Peter asks that God will multiply, plethuno, increase bountifully, these blessings. Why should Christians ask for blessings and only expect a dribble? When God gives a blessing it is always bountiful.

Verses 3 - 5

1.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

2.

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

3.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The blessings given by God are founded on *His own* state of Blessedness. An evil master cannot give good to his servants. But a good God can give good to the souls He has saved. The good things we receive from God are part of

His

goodness and exist because

His

person is good. Jesus Christ gives nothing but good to those who belong to Him, and because He is the Son of God the Father, and has performed all that is necessary and demanded by the Father, He is loved. This love passes on to us, through Christ.

Peter says that the Father is to be ‘blessed’, eulogetos - praised. He is to be praised because He is God. No other reason is needed. But, when we look at what God has done for us, praise is worthy and even demanded. How else can men and women thank God for giving them salvation? Sadly, many Christians today treat this lightly. After the initial salvation, when they show intense interest in what has happened and read their Bibles, etc., they grow colder and

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there comes a time when their Christianity is worn like an old coat! Their reading lessens, as do their prayers, and they no longer seek the fellowship of fellow Christians or Christian activities. The things of God become academic and tired, as dry as dust. In this way they go back almost to their former days, if not worse.

They look upon this earth as if it were forever, and look upon their successes as their own; their jobs become their gods; money takes precedence; unsaved men and women become their friends; things that constitute 'Christian' are side-lined and even treated with embarrassment; open sins in themselves and others are just watched and left to grow; Sundays become another day, to be used for recreation and not for the worship of God...we all know this happens because we see it in those around us as well as in ourselves.

Peter was aware of this and so he writes to help these Christians (many of whom were Jews) to live where they are, amongst pagans and scoffers. How? By telling them home truths about God, Christ and their faith.

He says that God wants to bless them for no other reason than He wishes to do so. They do not, as sinful human beings, deserve God's blessings, but blessings are showered on them anyway, because of their status in Jesus Christ. That is, they are blessed because they belong to Christ and have been saved by Him.

These holy favours are solely the result of God's "abundant mercy" or *polus eleos*. That is, God's mercy or good-will toward those who are afflicted, firstly through salvation and later through a desire to help them. This help is not merely aimed at earthly respite - it is part of their journey to heaven.

Tell me - do you truly believe in heaven? I ask myself this question, because most of us tend to live our lives mouthing this belief, but living it out as unbelievers! Many Christians are paper believers, with no real intention of practising what they believe. When troubles (or earthly successes) come along, they abandon faith and cling to earthly answers and desires. Hence our many fears, anxieties and running to earthly sources for help.

In His mercy, God has led us into an "abundant hope". The term used is 'begotten', *anagennao* - a reference to being "born again". It means that our hopes and expectations in this world are

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not based on what the world can offer, but only on a supernatural rebirth, giving us supernatural hopes and expectations! No man or woman who is unsaved can possibly understand this truth. Not one! The 'us', *hemas*, in the phrase refers only to Believers saved by grace. As I said earlier, to be a Christian is to be a member of an elite, because we are chosen individually by God despite our hell-bound natural states.

The word 'again' is also *anagennao*. Born again for what reason? To have a "lively hope". Hope, *elpis*, is an expectation of good, not only of eternal heavenly joy, but also of help on this earth. This is not just invented or something we make-up in our heads. It is real and "lively", *zao*.

It refers to enjoying 'real life', both on earth and in heaven. It also refers to the power of God that runs through our souls like living water, giving power and authority; this power gives us vigour we never knew before, and is always fresh and effective, never failing. It is what makes a person truly alive! If you do not really understand this, or you think it is something you have never known, then beware. Beware because you are either not saved at all, or your spiritual life has sunk to rock bottom.

If, then, you do not know this in your own life, seek it now. Repent of those sins that cause you to cling instead to this earth and its offerings. One day it will be burnt to nothing by God's judgement, and then you will stand before Almighty God, Who will search your soul. As we have said many times before, you will still enter heaven – but you have missed out on so many holy blessings and the opportunities to tell others, by your words and life, of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

One day (possibly soon) your health and wealth will evaporate; all that you think is dear to you will be gone; your age will increase, if you are spared; and the strength you think you had will be there no more. Everything of this earth is to be consumed. So what is its real worth? It has none at all compared to the worth of living as you ought in the name of Jesus Christ! Think about it. Those who truly live in God's name know a life you will never know, unless you join them. Do it by repenting and seeking to do only what Christ wants you to do. You will not be popular with your earthly fellows, but you will know God's grace and mercy and blessings, given in abundance.

A "lively hope" is possible because Christ died on the cross for you and rose again. As Paul tells us, if He did not rise again His death would have been for nothing. Christ rose again, alive, to be with His Father. This same hope is given to us, if we are elect. Note again - it is a hope based

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NOT on our human worth, but on the worth of Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross and in giving Himself new life. Without that we would have no hope. Why is this wonderful news? Because if the hope relied on our own abilities and powers, we would quickly lose hope! We fail and sin so many times we would not have any hope at all. But, as our hope rests completely in Christ, and Christ is holy and He cannot fail, we are safe eternally.

His resurrection gives us the same destiny – we will die and then rise again to heaven, alive, well, and filled with praise and joy. This is our “inheritance incorruptible”. Our ‘inheritance’, kleronomia, is what God gives us as our possession, a share in eternal salvation. We can rely on it because it is ‘incorruptible’, aphthartos - cannot decay or perish and is immortal. What we receive, then, is eternal, because Christ and His sacrifice are eternal.

This unwarranted reward given by God is undefiled, amiantos: unsoiled and free from what is ‘deformed’, human sin. It cannot fade away, amarantos, because it is ‘perennial’ or forever. This has been made possible by God reserving it for us - tereo - personally and carefully guarding it for us for eternity. And it is safe, because it is guarded and kept in heaven, where sin, Satan and destruction cannot enter.

Those who believe and are saved are “kept by the power of God”. That is, by Him alone and not by our own strength or devices and actions. This power, dunamis, is power God has within Himself. It is part of His Godhood, enabling Him to do what mere men cannot do, unless He gives them the gift to do so. With us, any power is delegated. With God, it is part of His character. The power that gives us salvation and peace are given “through faith unto salvation”.

The word ‘through’, dia, tells us that faith is the channel through which the help and gifts are given. We cannot obtain salvation or God’s benefits by any other means. ‘Faith’, pistis, is a conviction that we are saved by God through Jesus Christ. We are not talking about a mere human acknowledgement of the facts, but of a soul-shaking, fundamental belief in what Christ has done for us. Because it is fundamental, it shapes our everyday existence, thoughts and actions. It must be repeated: scripture says salvation is given to us as a free gift by God, through faith, which is also given by God. His power alone keeps us!

This God-given faith leads to our salvation, soteria; deliverance from evil and its penalty leading to safety in Christ. It is vital to note from what has been said earlier, that all of this is given by God through Jesus Christ, and is not available to anyone other than those who are elect. We cannot earn it, think it, or get it by intellectual acceptance or desire. We can cry tears and enter

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into depression – but nothing will give us salvation if we are not elect.

This truth and actuality is ready, hetoimos, or prepared in advance, and will be 'revealed', apokalupto, finally disclosed in all its glory, in the last time. That is, eschatos – at the end of time when the earth is removed, which is the right time, kairos. No man on earth can predict anything about it, because knowledge of it is hidden completely until the end of time.

Verses 6 - 9

1.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

2.

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

3.

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

4.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Peter says that his readers rejoice greatly in these truths, for they experience their reality every day. Do we rejoice in the truths of God? In the fact of our salvation? In the fact that it was God Who chose us to salvation, even though we are guilty of sin?

The people Peter wrote to were evidently suffering 'manifold temptations'. 'Manifold', poikilos, means 'various sorts'. Not necessarily many sorts affecting the same individuals. More likely, between them they encountered all kinds. No doubt, being amongst pagans was a major

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temptation (to go back to old ways or to newer godless ways), as was the danger of capitulating to angry opposition or threats.

Temptation, *peirasmos*, has a wealth of possible meanings. Most Christians understand it to mean a trial, a testing of their obedience, or faith, or morals, etc. As you know, temptation itself is not sin. Its purpose is to try to *get* us to sin. Sometimes, temptations can literally hit into us with great and sudden force, and in the resultant turmoil and bewilderment we may submit. But, the faithful Christian will quickly recover and repent. Notice that Jesus was tempted sorely by Satan, but He did not falter, even once. As Jesus is pure and without sinful desires, it stands to reason that this sort of temptation had an external source.

Most temptations, however (see James) are aimed at our inward desires. How? Satan and his servants observe us carefully to find our weak spots. Then, they arrange temptations to entice those desires...often very successfully.

There are times when God sends adversity upon a believer, to test his or her character, to strengthen it. The prime example of this kind is Job, when Satan sought God's permission to lure Job. This is *peira* – to endure an experience that leads to learning about one's faith.

Another kind is worse – when men rebel against Him, thus putting His love and mercy to the test. This might be in the form of seeking Him to reveal Himself or His power...a very dangerous activity on the part of mortals! This is more *peirazo* – an attempt to see what God can do, and can be sought by men maliciously.

At rarer times, men might tempt God to show them this or that portion of His will, with His approval. This is when God leads a man to seek His powerful intervention, not so much to prove He exists, but in order that the man's faith might endure and be made stronger. However, this appears to be a rare situation.

These are linked to the idea of *peran* – to pierce right through. A severe temptation can do just this; like a hot needle pushing relentlessly through the body until it comes out the other side, leaving a lasting impression.

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Peter was aware that these scattered Christians knew all about a wide variety of temptations. What tempted one man would not tempt another, because each has his own strengths, weaknesses and even secret desires. Men like to think their secret is their own; they forget that God knows everything about them, including sordid secrets. Satan, too, comes to know, simply by observing. Peter tells them that these things happen for just a short time, even though the experiences are intense or painful.

The words 'if need be' suggest the idea that such temptations were presently necessary, or might be necessary (possibly in order to strengthen their faith). This is indicated in verse 7. Their temptations, when overcome, would be a trial of their faith, proving their honour and holiness. We are shown that faith is more precious than anything else on earth.

Our faith is more precious than gold, because even gold will one day rot. Because of this, when faith is tested to the limit (and God will never go beyond what is our limit) and we are found to stand firm, the result to our soul is above any earthly wealth and gold. This kind of spiritual power strengthens the believer and also praises and honours Jesus Christ, adding to the already limitless praises already due to Him, when He appears again.

Though living at the same time as Peter, these Christians had never seen Christ in the flesh. Thus, they were just like us – having faith in Christ though we have not seen Christ in human form either. This faith is based on love, *agapao*, for the Saviour Who died for us. We have not seen Him yet we believe (another gift from God alone), *pisteuo*. That is, having heard the Gospel we think it is true and are fully persuaded. Therefore, we live by God's commands and not as we once did. This phrase "though now ye see him not" is an oblique reference to our heavenly hope, because it is *arti* – not to see at this present time, meaning that we *will* at some future time.

Because we have this utter trust, we "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." We rejoice, *agalliao*, or exult in what we have! We experience a gladness, *chara*, that transcends circumstances and woes. Such is its depth we cannot even understand or know what it truly is, *aneklaletos*, because it is not divulged, *eklaleo*, not even in our minds in any human sense, *laleo*. This is another proof of God's election – He gives us this incomprehensible joy that lifts us up even when we are unable to understand what it is. Yet, it fills us with glory or praise.

When all this has been done, they will receive the 'end' of their faith. The word 'receive', *komizo*, means to obtain a promised blessing or to get something back that belongs to them. in this

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case, the “end of your faith”. End, telos, (in this text) means eternal and something that brings an end or completion. It is also the end to which everything else relates; an aim or purpose. So, what is the purpose of this faith? It is the “salvation of your souls”.

This is where careful theology must be given. This phrase does not mean that Christians cannot be sure of their salvation until the end days. Bear in mind that salvation is spoken of in several different ways in scripture. In New Testament terms, it mainly refers to three separate but related meanings – salvation from sin and to Christ; salvation that is worked out on this earth and reflects election in our lives, and ‘final’ salvation, when we enter heaven. It is this latter ‘salvation’ we see in this text.

The meaning of this ‘salvation’, soteria, is determined, as usual, by context. This salvation refers to the crowning glory of our earthly salvation. It does not refer to that point in our personal history when we passed from hell-bound sinner to heaven-bound child of God. That point in history was only a sign that God had enacted what He had already determined in eternity. Nothing could change that. Rather, salvation in this text refers to the final safety from Satan and earthly enemies; and to the everlasting enjoyment to be known in heaven.

Our bodies are not part of this salvation, because they are corrupt and must die. We will be given new bodies to enter heaven. That is why this salvation is of our ‘souls’, psuche. Many suggest that human beings are ‘three-fold, because God is a trinity.’ This, however, is false logic. We are not mini-incarnations of God! That we are a trinity is only a theory. Though some claim it, it is not found in scripture. Rather, we find that the words ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ are often used as equal. Indeed, this occurs in virtually 50% of all usages. That is, spirit=soul and soul=spirit! That would make us bipartite, not a trinity. It does not, however, matter. The essential meaning is that the part of us that is eternal - our spirit/soul - has been saved and will enter heaven.

Verses 9 - 12

1.

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

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2.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

3.

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

This same salvation was spoken of by the old testament prophets and the patriarchs. It is what they, also, desired and lived by. They ‘enquired’ after it, ekzeteo; investigated it, scrutinized it, wanted it for themselves. They ‘searched diligently’ (one word), exereunao; examined God and His word to discover when the Messiah would come, such was their love of God and desire for salvation.

These same men of old taught that the Messiah would come to save His people, the grace they would receive freely. They prophesied of this wonderful thing, Isaiah and David being prime examples. In this case to prophesy, propheteuo, is used in the sense of foretelling. They told of future events and activities, when the Christ would come in bodily form and seek out His own. They were able to do this by the Spirit of Christ, Who communed with them. thus, Christ told them about His coming and that He would suffer and die, but that “glory...should follow” in the form of resurrection and ascension to heaven, giving full hope to all who were His.

These prophets received the messages and passed them on to others, and this same message was now being reported to the Christians of Peter’s day. The apostles and prophets who taught them, were giving them the same messages given to the men of old, verifying and fulfilling their words. The same Holy Ghost filled them and prompted them to speak of things even the angels were not party to. The angels in heaven were not delegated to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This task was allotted to mere men!

Verses 13 - 16

1.

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to

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be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

2.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

3.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

4.

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Because of all this, says Peter, you should “gird up the loins of your mind.” To “gird up”, anazonnumi, is to be prepared. Travellers and workers would strap up their garments with a belt, to stop them falling down or getting in the way. In ‘planes, hand luggage is put inside overhead lockers for safety. In cars, we put on safety belts. As Christians we need to similarly keep ourselves safe from spiritual harm. We must gird up the loins of our minds!

Another feature of this girdle or belt, zone, was that it was hollow, an object to carry money in. it was therefore to do with security as well. Our Hebrew and Egyptian ancestors thought the loins were the centre of regenerative power, for obvious reasons. Peter asked his readers to gird the loins of their minds. What did he mean?

The mind, dianoia, comprised of thinking, understanding, feeling, desires, etc. In other words, anything that went on in the head. Note also (see above argument re spirit/soul) that the word equates mind with spirit. Peter, then, is saying that we should be very careful with how we think and feel. We must guard our minds by thinking in an holy and pure way, and by rejecting what is bad for us, including sin. We also do it by shunning temptation and anyone who would bring down our spirituality.

To gird the loins was to prepare for action! Christians must always be ready for battle by girding

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their minds, their centre of strength and mental power. I am currently reading the true story of a man who led guerrilla warfare on the island of Crete in the 1940's. He refers to an elderly Cretian farmer, who had the agility of a goat, broad shoulders and a steady, strong step on mountain sides. He also had a grim determination to fight the German occupiers of his land. His body was honed by years of hard labour in the mountains, in all weathers. He was ready for even harder work because he was already made firm and supple by his occupation. This is how we should be as Christians!

As Christians we are not called to sit on a couch all day talking endlessly about abstract things. we are to 'work-out' mentally and spiritually, so that whatever happens we will be ready. We do this by knowing our doctrine, and knowing what we will do in this or that situation. We will discuss Bible matters with each other, and introduce them to our neighbours in practical and easy to understand ways. We will be ready to give a good answer to mockers and scorners, and stand firm when waves come to try and knock us down. When we are ready and strong, we will have girded up our minds!

As part of this general attitude and state we must be 'sober', nepho. That is, be calm and collected. We must be circumspect and temperate. For Peter to say these things was something, for he was one of the 'sons of thunder' until Christ spoke to him again after His resurrection! As a former 'angry young man' he knew what it was to be intemperate, so he could warn others not to follow his earlier ways.

Are you spiritually calm and collected? You can only be this way if you know your doctrine and live your life as one who is saved. If you are double-minded or ignorant of your scriptures, you will never be calm and collected, because you can be so easily swayed by fools, heretics and fakes.

We must hope to the end for that promise of salvation ending in our entering heaven. To hope, elpizo, is to have joy within that we have a secure future with God. Because we have this sure hope we will be confident in any circumstance and so trust God in everything. The grace we will receive is talked of in the future tense ("that is to be") and will be given to us at the "revelation of Jesus Christ." This does not mean He will only be revealed to us at the end. The 'revelation', apokalupsis, in this text refers to the time at the end of the world when Christ will again appear in the skies, in all His glory ('manifestation' or 'appearance'). Thus, it also bears the notion of Christ being 'hidden from view' until that time.

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As an aside, this means charismatic and Roman Catholic claims to 'see Christ' in their room, or in a cave, or anywhere else, are all false. Christ will remain hidden from human gaze until He returns to remove the universe and take us up to be with Himself. This is contained in the meaning of the root word, *krupō* (removed several times from *apokalupsis*). It means to deliberately conceal something so that it cannot be made known; to hide.

Peter says that this is consistent with our status as a new creature (verse 14). To live in this hope and with carefully guarded lives is a sign of our new life as "obedient children". Many hate this kind of talk, but it is how we relate to God! We are not minor gods equal to God the Creator. We are third-level beings who must obey our Creator or die! (First there is God, then there are angels, then there are human beings. Fourth-level beings are animals).

We must be 'obedient children'. Disobedient children are wild and dangerous to others and to themselves. To be called children of God is a privilege, because we are made to be royal persons. A child, *teknon*, is a member of his parents' household and enjoy all that this means, including receiving our portion of the will. We are the loved family of our Father. This is why we should be obedient, *hupakoe*; compliant and submissive to His will, as given in His word. This is why Christ said that proof we love Him is the doing of His will. Christians who consistently refuse submission are displaying sin, and may legitimately be refused the title of brother or sister by fellow Believers. Failure is common to us all, but continual disobedience is another thing entirely.

As believers we must never 'fashion' ourselves according to our former lives, *suschematizo* – to align our mind and character with another pattern. That 'other pattern' is a life of sin. Even if we do not do those evils everyone thinks are sinful, we would still be sinners, because we would not be following God's prompting and ways.

If we do so, we show 'ignorance', *agnoia*; moral blindness and lack of knowledge. Such ignorance is rife throughout the churches today. Much of it is caused by bad pastors who teach heresy and weak or diluted gospels. It is caused by an error in thinking, a mistake (*agnoeo*) rather than a deliberate choice to oppose God. Nevertheless, it opposes God anyway. Avoid it! It is the opposite of *noeo* - to perceive properly and to understand, and to ponder upon things. Without a doubt many Christians today display *agnoia*. Based on *nous*, or 'mind', this kind of error is a product of thinking rather than of spirit. This must be so, for the spirit is brought alive by God, and loves what is pure and good, whereas the mind is part of the body, tainted and liable to sin. Hence - gird the loins of your mind!

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If we do not, we will live according to our 'former lusts'. Former, *proteron*, is a reference to our fallen state. That former state enjoyed (because it could not escape) 'lust', *epithumia* -cravings after sinful things, what is forbidden by God. Look at modern cravings after drugs, sexual depravity, violence...all things that are hateful and destructive of mind and body. Why should any Christian want to resort back to these awful things? Christians who are weak, are weak because they do not bother to learn the things of God. The farther away from the path they roam, the deeper into the forest of sin they go. In this way temptation to sin and one-off sins lead to a craving to do more and seek more of the same.

We are to shun our former lives, those who live that way (former friends who thereby sin), and anything that is unholy. Why? Because Christ is holy and we should be the same (verse 15). We must be holy in "all manner of conversation", *anastrophe* – conduct, behaviour, words. Everything about us should appear, and be, holy. It does not mean we go about talking in unbroken streams of Bible verses, as some do. We must live and talk as saved men and women, unphased by evil and not shackled to sin. Thus we will walk in liberty and joy, very different from those around us. Some will avoid us completely, but others will respect us, if not come to us for help. Why should they come to us if we are just like them?

After all, He has "called you", *kaleo*. That is, he has called us by name, personally, to salvation! In the human sense, what if a man risked his own life, then died, saving you from a raging fire? Would you just ignore his family or his memory? I do not think so! Jesus Christ did not have to die for you, but He did. He died not just to save you in this life, but so that you could enter heaven for eternity...which is just a little more superior to being saved from a fire on this earth! The alternative is to suffer everlasting hell. There is no comparison. Show appreciation for your salvation by living holy lives! (I also speak to myself).

As Peter reminds his readers, this command is found in scripture...to be holy because God is holy. *All* men and women must live good and sinless lives, *whether or not* they are saved by grace. Their sins only compound their guilt. Therefore, we should expect human goodness and adherence to morality, etc., even from the unsaved. By rejecting this basic need for goodness, many today have become evil to the core, and this rejection brings disaster and filth upon the whole earth. We must, by contrast, be as beacons on a hill, bright and holy, shining truth into corners of evil where these people prefer to live.

"Be ye holy; for I am holy" is a monumental statement. We could paraphrase it like this: "You must be holy saints because I am The Holy One." The words "I am" are profound; *eimi* – to exist. The word on its own 'I' (*ego*) is a primary pronoun of the first person (emphatic). The whole meaning is 'I exist because I exist', or 'I am the self-existing One'. Only God can make

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such a statement of self-existence! He was not created, but has always been.

So, God is telling us to follow His example. He knows we cannot be exactly the same, because then we would be as Himself, gods. He knows we fail and cannot be totally free of sin whilst we are alive on this earth. Nevertheless, He commands that we are holy just as He is holy. If we read the rest of scripture this means we are to strive constantly to shun sin and embrace purity. Only then can we say we are complying, as far as we are able in our human bodies, to God's command.

Verses 17 - 21

1.

“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

2.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

3.

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

4.

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

5.

Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

As travellers between time and eternity, we are to live on this earth with a sense of holy fear

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(verse 17). We must “call on the Father” though preceded by the word “if”, *ei*, this does not mean it is just an option we can ignore. It is just a recognition that though it is a command and a duty, as human beings we can often reject, or fail, to call upon the Father, to our detriment.

To “call”, *epikaleomai*, is to cry out to God; to invoke Him as a helper, a witness, or a judge; it also means to appeal to God, using His name before starting a prayer. So, this phrase refers to Christians who pray to God for any of the reasons given above. The text tells us that God is not a respecter of persons. That is, he is *aprosopoleptos* – impartial. He does not care what we come from or what race we are; He just wants to know what we are right now – saved or unsaved. Other than that, He cares not who we are (or how special or worthy we think we are). he will judge each of us by what we are and what we do.

God, then, judges - *krino* - according to what we do and think. This judgement picks out one from another, yet another form of election. We are judged to be right or wrong by our thoughts, words and actions. Our ‘work’, *ergon*, is anything that takes up our time and effort. Note that this includes what is in our mind. So, even if fellow humans only see us doing good, God can see our minds and hearts, and will know if one complements the other, or if we are hypocrites. Woe betide us if the latter!

“Pass the time”... ‘pass’, *anastrepho*, is a reference to our conduct whilst we are on this earth. ‘Time’, *chronos*, means any length of time from short to long. It does not matter how long we are Christians for – once we are saved we must act accordingly. ‘Sojourning’ is symbolic for our lives on earth. We must be “in fear”, *phobos*. Many Christians try to mislead on this word. They say that it does not mean ‘fear’ but only respect or reverence. It is certainly true that we must reverence God and respect Him...but this is not the meaning of this word in this context!

There are two possible meanings. One is for a woman to have reverence for her husband. But, this is not translated as the Bride (Church) and the Bridegroom (Christ). it speaks of human wives and husbands. Therefore, the second meaning applies – dread, terror.

Surely, saved men and women need not find God to be One Who fills us with dread and quaking fear? Do not be misled – because that is *exactly* what it means! Its root word, *phobomai*, underlines this fact – ‘to be put in fear’. We will get the meaning if we look again at the full interpretation, which can be paraphrased thus: ‘On this earth, before praying to God for help, bear in mind what you think, do and say, for He will judge you according to what He sees in you. Therefore, live your lives in fear if you cannot live up to holiness.’

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Can you now see what it means in context? By an hypocrite and you had *better* fear God, for He will see right through your pretence! Remember that God has allowed us the mechanism of escape from this divine wrath – repentance. When we repent we are freed of guilt and God will never bring that sin up again, nor will He remember it (that is, bring it up as a subject requiring judgement). If we live our daily lives always heeding the need to be holy, and we repent when we have sinned, then we are complying with His will. And need not fear Him.

Peter goes on to remind us that we were not saved or bought with earthly objects such as money or gold (which rot away, being created objects), nor because we listened to “tradition from your fathers.” That is, teachings based on human thought and theories, handed down - patroparadotos - like myths. These are called “vain”, mataios – useless, having no truth or authority. They are fruitless, maten, and even manipulative.

Look to your present local church – do you receive genuine teaching, or is it traditional? It may even be a mixture of both, which is probably worse, because it does not enable you to distinguish fact from fiction. If what you receive is not fully truth, then leave it alone and get out, or you will be judged by God. This censure also applies to what we do in our lives, including church activities. Therefore, charismatics should beware, because they are taught badly. If they were taught well, they would not be charismatics!

No, we are not bought with earthly things, not even church teachings, but by the “precious blood of Christ”. You might say that blood is blood, so what makes the blood of Christ ‘precious’. His blood was unique. No-one in the world, before or since, had His kind of blood. He was fully-Man yet fully-God.

Therefore, His body was perfect, including the blood running through His veins. That was important, because only a perfect lamb could be sacrificed. Christ was now the Lamb of God, and He could only be the Lamb because He was perfect, even down to the make-up of His blood. His blood was ‘precious’, timeos, of great price, deserving honour. It was also the price due, the time, for the sins of men; the penalty, tino, for those sins.

Christ (the Messiah) was the spotless lamb of God. He was perfect, even as a man. No other man was perfect (except for Adam in his pre-Fall state) and so no other man could be the sacrifice. As we have seen, the shedding of His blood (and therefore the killing of His human

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life) was the penalty for our sins, the tino. And, because God is not partial, He *had* to sacrifice His only Son...one human being for all others.

In verse 20 we find that though Christ did not appear on this earth until the time of the Apostles, His work was elected or predestinated in eternity. 'Verily', men...of a certain truth, He was "foreordained", *proginosko*, before the world was made (*pro*, before). He was then brought into this world as a baby "in these last times". *Eschatos* – meaning the last episode in a series of events. This 'lastness' also refers to last in terms of time. Does this mean Christ came in the 'last days'? Are we now, presently in the end of those last days? I do not think so, given the fairly specific signs we can expect, as shown to us in Revelation. It seems that Christ, then, came at the start of the lead-up to the last days. Also, this text tells us that no others were to follow Him as prophets. That makes all later prophets false – including Mohammed.

It is by and through Jesus Christ that we believe in God. it was God Who raised Christ from the dead on the third day. That is, Christ raised Himself by His own supernatural power, though humanly dead. For all those sceptics, the word 'dead', *nekros*, really does mean 'dead'! it can mean devoid of spiritual life, when used metaphorically. But, in this text, the word is used literally and refers to a *nekus*, a corpse. It would be impossible for Christ to be spiritually lifeless, because it would mean He was no longer God. Just a momentary break in His spiritual life would render Him completely without God-hood.

He rose again and in this way the Father gave Him glory (praise and honour). And this was done so that we could have faith and hope in God. The word 'God', *theos*, does not just refer to His title. It also tells us that He was the One true divinity as well as to the things of God, and what He says. And, for those who hate it – it refers to the 'Godhead' – The Trinity. In all this we can place our trust and expectations of glory and heaven. Without the resurrection and ascension we would be unable to have this hope and trust. And, this hope in God supersedes any trust we often have for human beings and earthly things.

Verses 22 - 25

1.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

2.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth

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and abideth for ever.

3.

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

4.

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

Peter appears to recognise a quality in these Christians – that they loved each other. He is now telling them to love each other even more, with pure motives. They must do this because they have purified their souls; cleansed their heart and mind. How did they do this? By “obeying the truth through the Spirit”. You will notice two important elements in this: Firstly, obedience to truth, and secondly, the Spirit as the means of obedience.

We cannot obey God, or believe and act upon the truth, unless the Spirit gives us the ability and gift to do so. This is yet another argument against Arminianism, which supposes we can come to an intellectual acceptance of truth and let this lead us to salvation or to holiness. It is not how it works, as this text proves!

The ‘truth’, *aletheia*, is objective; it is reality, a fact; it refers to what God says about man and about Himself; these are facts man can come to know without supernatural assistance, through reason; it is opposition to lies and to heresy. It also includes subjective acknowledgement of God’s truth, as something leading to personal excellence, losing arrogance, deceit and pretence.

You might ask how many men today reject God’s truth, saying it is not truth at all, but only opinion; they say that reason causes them to throw out any notion of God and Christian morality, etc. Why is this? Is it because God’s truth is not really ‘truth’ at all, but is an invention of the mind? No, God is true, as is His word! What we are seeing is men’s minds being driven to self-destruction by Satan. We are seeing men arrogantly declaring their own meagre thoughts

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to be above those of God; they are refusing to acknowledge the very existence of God! They do this against all logic and reason, but they try to reverse reason by calling Christians stupid names! They cannot follow true logic or true reason, because they totally cast out inclusion of the supernatural from their thinking.

But what else can they do? They cannot accept the genuine truth because they are dead in their sins. Their father is the devil, and they cannot get away from obeying his demands. They are, in New Testament terms, ignorant heathen. They cannot offer 'unfeigned love' - genuine and open love for the brethren. Rather, they hate them. We are now in an age when Christians are being hated and loathed, because they represent restraint, morality and truth.

The reason we can love with a genuine heart is that we are "born again", *anagennao*: born afresh, our minds changed according to the new life given by Jesus Christ, a life now driven by love to do the will of God. This new birth does not have earthly origins, but comes from heaven, untainted by sin. It is this sinless origin *in Christ* that God sees when He looks upon us. It is His own Son's loveliness that warrants His love toward us, not anything within us, or anything we do, for we are born in sin. Our worth is only in Christ, not in ourselves. Only He is incorruptible.

This 'seed' is incorruptible "by the word of God". Do not confuse this 'word' with Christ Himself. This 'word', *logos*, refers to what God says and commands and not to Christ's person. Christ is 'The Word' and He ensures God's word comes to fruition in our hearts, minds and lives. And, like Christ, God's word is eternal – which it has to be. Because the seed or source of our salvation is eternal, so is our existence.

Our human bodies are, like grass, already withering. Anything we think is humanly wonderful and makes us great is the same. But God's word lasts forever and has eternal power. The same word, with all its power led to our salvation, which will also be forever. The word started its work on us (that is, those of us who are saved) when we first heard the Gospel. This is why we must, in turn, preach the same Gospel to others, that they might also hear the word of God. Then, those who are elect will be saved, the predestinated promise is made good in their lives at the exact moment determined by God.

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{loadposition btm_address}