

1 Peter 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 04 August 2009 15:41

This chapter begins with 'Wherefore'. It means that whatever is said below has its foundation in what has already been said above. Being saved brings with it certain responsibilities and certain commands. This what the opening texts tell us.

I would repeat something said many times, that what *we* want is irrelevant. What matters is what *God* wants! Most people, including Christians, find such a statement very hard, if not impossible, to take. This suggests they are either badly taught, or badly in need of discipline.

Those who cannot accept this kind of truth will say that such commands are an iron fist, or like bonds. They say this because they have never submitted – as they must – to what God requires. They are still running their own lives as *they* want them to go. They are still 'praying' (falsely) for God to give them this or that, even when what they ask for is not in God's will. And their whole attitude toward God is humanistic, not spiritual.

To give everything over to God is not just a pipe dream, or something impossible. It is what God wants and demands. When we do not do it, we enter sin and lose out on the many benefits God wishes to give us.

Perhaps it is a good time to offer an outline of what salvation really is...

It is NOT an human being wishing to leave aside sin so that he can escape the penalty of hell. It is NOT a man choosing to be saved. It is NOT primarily for a man's own benefit.

What is it then? It is a part of an action known to God in eternity. He chose who would be saved in that eternity, and before the earth and the universe were made. He did it because He wished to. He chose because He wanted to for His own purposes; purposes not revealed to us. Once saved on this earth, His new creatures must act according to divine command. Obedience is part of the great plan.

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The benefits we are given as a result are not necessarily rewards; they are given as a sign of His approval and love. None of these things are warranted or earned. We must obey because we are creatures...we are not equal to God or deserving in our own right. Whilst men benefit from salvation, such benefits are not the reason for salvation. We are not really told what the reason is. We can only accept that God chose us and strive to act as He wishes us to act.

All of this is why we should look upon 'Christians' who *demand* all kinds of benefits and gifts from God, with suspicion. Humility will drive us to seek favour not because we deserve it, but because we wish to serve God and love Him and not incur His wrath with our many sins! Do not elevate yourself above your station...we are all creatures to be used or discarded by His will. We cannot make demands in our own right, for we have no inherent rights. We may only ask for what God wishes to give to us, and no more. And that in all humility, for in ourselves we deserve nothing but death and then hell. All our benefits are in Christ!

The above notes are meant to be hard and unyielding, because they are written for the sake of stiff-necked people...including myself! We are so stupid at times, and so sinful! We fail many times to see our real position before God and assume that all is well. We continue in our ways, some of them wrong, and hope for the best.

Sadly, a huge number of Christians refuse to knuckle down to obedience. Many, too, think they can survive on a bit of God and a bit of men. They plan their own lives, and so long as everything is going alright, they think it must be part of God's will. Oh dear! Sometimes their very success or lack of problems is a sign that their lives are way off the mark! We should never go looking for problems, but if we get none at all, we can be sure that our lives are spiritually ineffective! And, though we may enjoy what we have, that same enjoyment serves to darken our spiritual insight.

Thus we are unable to see that the earthly things we enjoy so much are impeding God's free movement in our lives. In a very real sense, then, we come to rest upon earthly successes and living and never come to experience the real benefits given by God! Christians who rely on their own strengths and on their own supposed successes and earthly enjoyments are almost spiritually blind. They cannot see that they are accepting things that are far less fruitful and far less beneficial. They are ignoring God's commands and, instead, enjoy earthly things as though those things are capable of sustaining them. But, when trouble finally comes, they are shocked and unable to cope, because they know nothing of God's help in their lives.

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Do you pray daily and often? Do you read your Bible? Do you meet with fellow Believers rather than with unsaved people? Do you enjoy pure activities? Do you tell others of Christ when you meet with them? These are spiritual things. When we do them we benefit.

Another very important doctrinal teaching is found strongly in these texts – predestination. Arminianists hate this teaching, yet there is no reason to do so. It could be that they cannot accept that men and women can be lost and not be able to reverse their condition. Yet, they do this all the time of their own accord.

It could be that they hate the idea of God designating people to hell even before they are born. In this case, they are attributing to God human characteristics, and imposing their own human emotions on God. They fail to see that God is all-powerful and Almighty. He can do whatever he likes with us, because we are mere creatures. Predestination stands firm, whether we like it or not!

But what of it? In practical terms, we know that people are heading for hell by the sheer evil of their actions. Folk are more ready to accept they have been predestinated to hell because they are so obviously evil. So, why feel worse when others, who seem to be 'nice', are also heading for hell? It can only be personal involvement or personal lack of faith in God's word. They go to hell because that is how God determined it. Does it matter if their sinfulness is 'small' (and probably unseen by others) or 'great' and obvious? Do you forget that everyone who is ever born is hell-bound unless they are saved in eternity? This is because everyone, without exception, is born in sin. Only Christ was different, because His human parents did not have a stake in procreating Him.

Verses 1 – 3

1.

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3.

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If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

“Wherefore”, *oun*; therefore, or, as a consequence. As a consequence of your salvation, you must ensure the following... that we “desire the sincere milk of the word.” We are told that to have this desire is a sign that we are indeed saved, “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

Because of our salvation we must ‘lay aside’, *apotithemi*, or cast away certain behaviours and thoughts. Peter goes on to give us examples, and not a final list. They include the following:

Malice, kakia: ill-will in our hearts and minds leading to maliciousness toward others. That is, a desire to wish, or to do, others harm. It is also interpreted as wickedness, depravity, and the blatant breaking of laws without shame. This can be viewed in two ways – of the saved and the unsaved.

Today, homosexuals break God’s laws without shame, and act in an evil way. But Christians, too, can act maliciously. Indeed, many Christians think evil in their hearts toward others and do so very successfully! This is because they learn to smile whilst harbouring sin against others. Christians are prone to keep smiling so as not to appear uncharitable! By doing this they never speak the truth to their fellows and become hypocrites, harming their own souls. *Malice* includes not telling others what we really think, for without the truth we are living a lie and will become bitter toward our fellows. Is this right? Of course not!

We must also cast away all *guile, dolos*. That is, deceit or subtle, crafty evil. From the root *dello*, it carries with it the idea of setting out a decoy, a fake pretending to be real. Many Christians fall into this trap, by outwardly pretending to accept a situation or teaching but inwardly opposing it. But, this creates a tension within and the soul is affected badly. Far better to say what you have to say and accept the consequences. Yes, as lovingly as you can, but, nevertheless, truthfully.

Others set out to deceive by deliberately teaching lies. This does not necessarily mean they know their beliefs or teachings are lies, but the sum total is the same, because lies are lies. Today, charismatic teachers and leaders are prime examples, and the successful Alpha

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course. Roman Catholicism is much older but in the same category, as are all other cults. Reformed Christians do not escape this – for many teach lies or heresies; others teach traditions that cannot be supported by scripture.

Next, Peter warns against hypocrisies, hupokrisis. These several warnings are about connected kinds of sins. Hypocrisy is to ‘act like a stage player’, an actor. From hupokrinomai, meaning to play a part or to impersonate someone, to pretend. Remember, Peter is not talking to the unsaved but to Believers! The problem of hypocrisy within the churches is rife. Many do not truly believe, but pretend they do, for fear of being thought backsliders. Others pretend just to maintain friendships. This does not include the countless numbers in churches who are not saved at all, but pretend to be, as if their pretence will keep them from the doors of hell!

To be an hypocrite is not necessarily a crime or a sin against anyone else; very often it is against one’s self. Again, I refer to the famed ‘evangelical smile’, the standard hypocritical tool used by so many. There are all kinds of hypocrisies, as this plural word signifies.

Then we have envies, phthonos. This is to want what is not yours, to want what others have, and includes the inward desires. And then there are “evil speakings”, katalalia. That is, backbiting and even defamation. Sadly, many who call themselves ‘Christian’ do this under the guise of ‘speaking the truth in love’...usually through clenched jaw and forced smile!!

These sins are quite sophisticated. Peter advises to be more like newborn babes who seek milk to enable them to grow. ‘Newborn’ means just born, helpless and totally reliant on the mother. Christians must be like that; totally reliant on God for everything. As we grow into adults we inevitably think we can go it alone. We apply for jobs, earn money, buy cars and goods and houses, work overtime, take holidays, have children...you name it and we all think we get them by our own efforts. We do not stop to think that the only reason we get things is because God allows us to live in the first place! He gives us strength to work and act, He gives us any measure of health we have, He gives us children, and so on. Nothing we have ever comes solely from our own efforts.

When we are reliant, God then gives us milk. This word, gala, does not just mean sustenance, it is a metaphor for those easier to understand truths of God. Peter is here talking about basic Bible understanding, not deeper truths or theological thinking. It is the kind of truths we all come across when we are saved and soon after. The problem is that huge numbers of Christians remain stuck at this stage of weaning! They do not wish to know more, especially when it

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means upsetting traditional beliefs and popular myths in the churches.

Many of them end up in charismatic churches (believe it or not, Roman Catholics tend to be far more advanced in their ability to think theologically). And all will bleat "All you need is love!" They will come out with pathetic statements like "I don't study too much, I leave that to the pastor." And so on. They are still taking milk!

A baby kept on milk for too long (usually with mothers who are too protective and keep weaning them) is most likely to have future health problems, because milk only contains nutrients for the first months. After nine or twelve months the nutrients are less and not suitable anyway. So the child can drink as much as he likes, but his body will be deficient in nutrients needed for the next stage of growth. Christians who remain on 'love' and easy truths are weakening themselves. They cannot tolerate deeper truths of God and so are susceptible to all kinds of lies and deceptions, and to the pull of the world.

The milk, or initial introduction to Christian doctrine, must be 'sincere', adolos. Without guile, honest, pure, unadulterated. In my own ministry I am called to teach what scripture says, without addition or personal opinion pretending to be Bible truths. That is why I do not spiritualise texts and insert meanings the texts cannot support. Let God speak Himself! Once we add our own ideas, it is adulterated milk! It is impure and does harm. Small impurities have a cumulative effect and finally poisons the Believer. Do not allow even minor bad teaching affect you. Discard it immediately. Do not listen to it, because it will simply add to the next minor error, until the whole weight of combined minor errors crashes down upon your soul.

Be simple in character, not so secretive that others find it hard to talk with you. Do not harbour twisted or complex thoughts about God. If you can't explain it in ordinary words, then shut up. Very often, preachers use complex ideas to cover up a superficial or erroneous teaching. The whole point of teaching others is that they learn and understand. To throw out technical and complex ideas is to confuse them, not build them up! If you are a preacher or teacher, they will probably think you must be superior by using complexity, but in truth you are only being a fool, and misguiding those you should be feeding. You are making them think only you have the answers, and this gives you power. Forget it! Come back to basics and remember who you are, a servant of God and the churches.

Having said all that, Peter adds a proviso. No man can understand even simpler truths if he is unsaved, or, if he is stubborn enough to resist God's demands. Often, arrogant unsaved men try

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to argue with Christians about God's truths. But, they are far too ignorant to be able to do so properly. Only a saved man can think in a Christ-like way and understand what God says.

It only takes a taste, *geuomai*, to allow us to enter the 'learning curve' of Christ. Once we experience the initial movement of God in our lives, we hunger after milk. Then, very quickly, this is not enough and we start to hunger after meat. If a man claims to be a Christian and yet does not display this hunger for more advanced things of God, then his Christianity is left in doubt. Each man must learn as far as God takes him, no matter what his intelligence is.

Do not read all this with dismay and cry out that you do not know God's blessings, or you wonder if you will ever know them. If you are saved by grace, God promises to give you blessings. If we keep sinning those blessings will seem far away. If we sin without repentance, God may suspend some of them. But blessings we *will* get. If you are a Believer but you feel far away, then just give in! Stop fighting God. Rest in Him and let him give to you what you desire. You are not seeing blessings because, simply, you are looking the other way, toward yourself and your sins! Satan is making you feel despair, not God!

Verses 4 & 5

1.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

2.

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

The word 'To', *pros*, can mean what it says. But it can also have the meaning of 'to the advantage of'. This is the meaning in this context. We come to Christ for an advantage. Everything He does for us is to our advantage. The word 'coming', *proserchomai*, does not refer to the simply act of arriving somewhere. Yes, it means to 'come to', but it also means to draw near to, approach, or to assent to. This has an oblique reference to a purpose, a deliberate choice of Christians to seek God through Christ. Only 'lively stones', those elected to be saved, can thus approach Christ.

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Christ is here called a “living stone”. The word in this text is not the familiar one of Christ as the rock. It is lithos, meaning a building stone; it also means, metaphorically, Christ. It can also mean a stumblingblock, as indeed Christ is to all who reject Him. We know in this text that it means Christ as a building block, because that is what it says.

Unlike a block of stone, Christ is alive, zao. Thus, the permanent nature of Christ is alive and responsive. He has true life and is blessed. The word also includes the idea of being living water, and having this power within Himself, making Him efficacious.

Peter says what we already know, that Christ was ‘disallowed of men’, apodokimazo. He was rejected and repudiated by those destined to be unsaved. Of course, no rejection of truth by mere men can actually get rid of it! Truth remains no matter what men say about it.

Men, being sinners, and of finite mind and intellectual power, cannot hope to stand alongside God. They are just creatures! If God has chosen something, no man can make it unworthy by his rejection of it. Christ was chosen by God to save mankind. That many of these rejected Christ is irrelevant to the truth. God elected Him to His task and role. Men, in their stupidity and sin rejected Him. But so what? It makes no difference whatever to the truth. Because of His obedience to the role and task, Christ is precious, entimos: held in honour and prized by God. Do *you* prize Christ and hold Him dear?

You should, because you share in Christ’s ‘aliveness’ by being “lively stones” yourselves. Though using the same word, lithos, in this text it means ‘small stones’; that is smaller building stones. It has this meaning because, in comparison, we are lesser beings. But, we do have the same life, zao (though not the inherent ability to have self-generated power). Thus, Christ is the corner-stone and we are the stones in between; those who form the walls of the Church. We are the “spiritual house”. Spiritual, pneumatikos, meaning filled and governed by the Holy Spirit. You may not feel it at times, but this is what you are! It also means you have a rational spirit. Unsaved people are not rational in the truest sense, and so they reject God.

We are a spiritual ‘house’, oikos: of the house or family of God, the Church. The ‘spiritual house’, then, refers not to a building but to the whole body of Believers, from the time of Adam to the Last Day. This idea is far too extreme and loose for men, who insist on buildings, denominations, traditions and other crutches of pretence to faith.

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We are also an “holy priesthood”. Holy, or *hagios*, is used sometimes of God and sometimes of Christians. It means saint, or ‘holy thing’. We are holy things even if we fail at times and sin. This is because we are holy in Christ, not in ourselves. We are an ‘holy priesthood’, *hierateuma*; we hold the office of priests. Because our status is in Christ and is spiritual, our priesthood is the same. Like priests of old we are engaged in sacred duties, *hierateuo*. And as priests we are *hierous* – purified by Christ’s blood, and, having close communion with God, serve Him.

The old priesthood is banished by Christ. Now, we do not have to go through priests or pastors to get to God, for we already have this privileged link within, made possible by the salvation given to us by God, through Christ. As an holy priesthood, each Christian, individually, is a priest in his own right. That is, we can all approach God ourselves, without having to go through an intermediary, whether this is a clerical priest, a pastor, or Roman ‘saints’, the popes, or Mary. The existence of an earthly priesthood is an heresy, for it denies and rejects the holy priesthood of Believers.

Because each of us is a priest, each of us can offer spiritual sacrifices to God. In this case a sacrifice is anything we kill, e.g. sins, unholy desires, etc. Because these are in God’s will he will accept them, *euprosdektos*. But not because we offer them. They are accepted by God only because they are “by Jesus Christ” ...’by’, *dia*, being the channel of the act, the One through Whom everything is possible.

It means that even when we do what is right and offer everything to God, we can only do so because Christ enables us to do it. And whatever we offer to God has first been prompted by Christ and is made acceptable *because* it is through Him.

Verses 6 - 8

1.

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

2.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

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3.

And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

Christians, then, constitute the living building of Christ's Church. We are the small stones, whereas Christ is the chief stone, the One Who determines the placement and use of every other stone. As Peter reminds his readers, and us, it is written in scripture that God “lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious.”

To ‘lay’, *tithemi*, is to fix in place, to establish, to ordain. Now we know that with God everything is already known and already determined. It has to be this way, or God would not be God. He MUST know everything and He MUST ordain everything. The alternative is to have a false god who cannot know in advance and cannot determine what he requires, making him less than a god and therefore useless to mankind, like Zeus! The corner stone, then, was known to God in eternity, there never being a time (‘time’ is a wrong word to use but it is difficult not to use human references) when Christ as corner stone was not known. Nor was there ever a time when it was not ordained or predestinated by God. Both foreknowledge and foredetermination (predestination) go hand in hand.

Sion (‘a parched place’), or Zion, has three main meanings. It can refer to the hill upon which the city of Jerusalem is built; it can refer to the city itself; it can refer to the dwelling place of God. The dwelling place of God is heaven, and the Holy Spirit resides in Christians. Thus, Sion can also mean the spiritual place where God is – The Church (the body of Christ, not Rome!)

In Revelation we see that The Church has its foundation in heaven, with its chief corner stone being Christ, and the chief foundation stones being the twelve Apostles. The chief corner stone determines the construct of the entire building, the Church. Without the chief stone, the walls will not be true and will fall or be inferior.

We are told that Christ was chosen, predestinated, to be the chief corner stone, or the Head of the Church, which is the meaning here. Thus, all claims by Roman Catholicism to being founded on Peter are false and bad theology. Christ was elect, *eklektos*, chosen by God. At no

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time, then, could Christ fail in His work, words, or duty. At no time could He have failed to be the Saviour. All things planned by God MUST come to pass, perfectly and in every detail, or He would not be God.

Christ's position in eternity and in the world's history is, then, unique. Only He can provide a passage for human beings to God and to heaven. The passage is not earned, except by Christ Who gave His life to pay for the sins of men. Because of His uniqueness, and because He is God, He is 'precious', entimos; dear, more honourable and prized. As the only route to heaven, Christ is indeed precious and separate from all who make false claims. There is no other way to reach heaven, except through Jesus Christ, as instructed in scripture. ALL religions, whether Christianised or not, that do not accept this and follow it, are useless to mankind and a dishonour to God, Whose path for men is plain.

Christ, then, is the only way to God and salvation. Thus, all who "believeth on him shall not be confounded." To believe, pisteuo, is to be fully persuaded that what God says is true and applies to you; because of this, we are convinced and have confidence in the Saviour and God; this includes an intellectual assent to what God says and does; it includes what we call 'faith' or trust in God, that causes us to follow Him and do whatever He says. (There is much more to this when we look at the root of the word).

The above is the prerequisite to peace with God. When we have this belief we are not 'confounded', kataishuno; ashamed by calling Christ our own; will not dishonour His name. We will stand firm in the face of our enemies. What if we fail to do so? This happens time and again because we are frail human beings. But God knows this! That is why He instituted the remedy – repentance. When we repent of our failures and sins He puts us back where we ought to be, and forgets the transgression.

When we trust God completely we will also, like Him, see Christ as precious and worthy of all honour, and will do our utmost to show this in our lives. Peter then introduces a seemingly strange statement – that even if we do not believe, Christ remains the corner stone and the only way to heaven! This is a basic philosophical truth, too – that truth remains the truth whether or not we accept or believe it! So, be untrusting if you wish; refuse belief in Christ if you want to. But it makes no difference...except to yourself as an unsaved person who will therefore enter hell. To be 'disobedient', apeitheo, is to 'believe not', and not to comply with the requirements of belief. Even Christians can come into this category at some time, but for a season only.

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Unbelievers, however, are worse off, for they cannot remedy their failure to believe with repentance, or by any other means, e.g. 'genuineness' or 'love toward mankind'. Even so, Christ is still the "head of the corner" and there is nothing unbelievers can do about it. As we know, they rave on and scream abuse, but so what? They cannot alter their hell-bound fate and cannot stop you enjoying communion with Christ!

For those who believe, Christ is precious and the salvation He gives enables us to enter heaven, loved by God. But for everyone else (the majority, whether they belong to a cult, the occult, or nothing at all), Christ is a stumblingblock, proskomma. Many Christians misrepresent this stumblingblock, saying it becomes a stumblingblock if people refuse to believe. But, this is an Arminian concept, and not how it is portrayed in scripture. Rather, it is shown to be a stone deliberately placed in the path of unbelievers so that they will inevitably kick against it and fall.

It is, then, a kind of reminder to the unbeliever that he is a sinful fool who cannot escape his end. The truth of this is found in the habit of many who are met by the Gospel – they rage and mumble and enter into even more sin. They do this because they are unable by their very nature to avoid sin, or to love Christ, unless He firstly regenerates them. The 'stone', lithos, referred to in this text is a metaphor for Christ.

In other words, unbelievers stumble because they kick against Christ and hate and reject Him. It does not matter how 'nicely' a person rejects Christ, whether quietly or in rage; it still amounts to hatred of Christ that will be rewarded with hell. We either love Christ (and the proof is that we obey Him) or we hate and reject Him. We are either for or against Him.

Peter expands on his instruction by saying Christ is the "rock of offence". The rock, petra, refers to Christ as firm and strong. The offence, skandalon, is a trap or snare taking someone into further sin. It also refers to Christ, Whose purposes and life were so opposite to those of the Jewish religious leaders, He posed a threat to their authority. Very clearly, then, Christ is a threat to the inner peace of all men, for He challenges them to their very sinful core. In an effort to escape His gaze, they stumble and fall, and usually project their own sinfulness onto others, like a smoke-screen.

That all this is a reference to men and women who reject the Gospel is also very clear, for they are said to "stumble at the word". To put it another way, people who reject Christ and the Gospel 'stumble at the word'; they continue in their sin because they cannot stand the Gospel and what it means. In a useless, contrived, effort to prove their freedom, they manacle

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themselves to Satan and enter more deeply into their sin, unable to resist the devil! They do this because they are 'disobedient' or unsaved sinners.

Then comes the most frightening part, the section even Christians often refuse to accept: "whereunto they were also appointed." If you do not accept that God predestinates many to hell, then read that again! It tells us that unbelievers who refuse to accept Christ have been appointed to be that way!

The word, again, is *tithemi*, to fix and establish, to ordain for one's own purposes. These people are predestinated to hell. It cannot be more plain. Many Christians (if that is what they truly are) dishonour God by rejecting predestination. They erect a barrier against it, often in the shape of Arminianism. Thus they teach heresy and are subject to God's wrath, Who has made the way to heaven very obvious.

(At the least end of the spectrum, those who believe or use Arminian theology because they know of no other way, are dishonouring God and misleading 'seekers'. At the 'hard' end, where people believe Arminianism after much study, and preach an Arminian Gospel with fervour...these people's own salvation should be held in doubt, for they are preaching a 'gospel that is no gospel', and will come under the wrath of God. Arminianism is not just an 'alternative' – it is heresy and falsity. Many modern programs come into this category, the most famed currently being the Alpha course).

Verses 9 & 10

1.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

2.

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

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Our whole fate rests on only one thing – God’s unwarranted mercy. Peter describes what we are in these two verses. So, anyone who wishes to thwart this description is defying the Lord.

We are a “chosen generation”, ‘chosen’ being eklektos, and ‘generation’ being genos. This means we are of the same ‘stock’ as all who are elected. We are the offspring of Christ; together we are an aggregate (The Church). The root, ginomai, says that we ‘appeared in history’ or came into existence; in context, by the word or command of God.

We are also a “royal priesthood”. Priesthood, hierateuma, refers to both individuals as priests and the whole order of priests. In context, The Church. The root, hierateuo, tells us that this office enables us to perform the function of priesthood. But we are not just ordinary priests, we are ‘royal’, basileios, priests...kingly, regal. We are the children of the King of kings, so we are princes of the palace, ourselves royal by rebirth. Thus we have direct access to our Father, the King.

As priests, then, we replace the old order of priests (which was abolished by Christ) and are elected by God our Father to be princely priests. Priests were the intermediaries between men and God. Now their role and purposes have been replaced by everyone who is saved, each Christian assumes the right to call upon God as an individual at any time. Thus all clerical hierarchies are redundant; all churches with priests are perpetuating a redundant role; no saved man or woman should take heed of the demands or role of ecclesiastical priests. This goes all the way to the top: archbishops and popes are of no consequence and must be rejected as false priests.

Peter takes the description farther: we are an “holy nation”. There is no such thing as a whole earthly nation that is holy or wholly accepted by God. So, what does this mean? Nation, ethnos, refers to many people of the same genus or family; it can also apply to Christians who are gentiles. It is not, then, talking about all people in the world or a whole earthly nation. It is qualified by the word ‘holy’, hagios: most holy thing, or saint. This can only apply to Christians.

Allied to this, we are a “peculiar people”. Peculiar, peripoiesis, means a possession, property belonging to one’s self, or ‘an obtaining’. From the root peripoieomai, meaning to reserve or keep safe, to purchase for one’s self, going back to another root meaning to be the cause of, to ordain to be one’s possession. This applies to the ‘people’, laos, in the text, a group of the same stock, i.e. Christians. We belong, then, to Someone who bought us and Who owns us, God. He did not buy everyone, only those who are elect.

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Because we are all of the things Peter speaks of, we are to praise God. Why? Because He “called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” What better reason do we need to praise God? He saves our souls and destines us to heaven! The Holy Spirit lives within and guides us every moment of our saved lives!

The ‘darkness’, skotos, is spiritual blindness. Such people are ignorant of spiritual truths. It also includes the misery to be known by those in ignorance and darkness when they enter hell, and even whilst on this earth. Many on earth today are spiritually ignorant and yet claim to belong to God. Homosexual ‘Christians’, Romanists and ecumenists are good examples today, as are unsaved members of countless cults and other denominations. If they are unsaved, though they speak of God and even try to live by His word, they are lost and will enter hell. Some, whose lives are outrageously sinful on this earth, already are tinged by hell and show it in the way they live. If they are unsaved and commit overt sin, they are doomed anyway unless Christ saves and they come to know Him. We know who these forlorn creatures are.

Peter says that we were once in this awful position, of being alive on earth but dead to God and bound for hell. Then, Christ saved us and we were at once transported “into his marvellous light.” It is marvellous, thaumastos; wonderful and beyond any attempt by human beings to understand it. Interestingly, it is something amazing and yet linked with terror. The terror is the black fate of all who reject the Gospel and the fear we all should have of Almighty God if we transgress without repentance.

This marvellous state we find ourselves in is the ‘light’, phos. That is, the pure and holy truth given by God, together with divinely given knowledge and understanding. Anyone can read scripture and study theology. But only genuine Christians can understand the spiritual facts and experience spiritual truths in their lives. The light is always depicted as opposite to darkness, because light comes from God and darkness is the realm of Satan.

In the past we were nobodies! We were not considered to be God’s people when we were still dead in our sins. Now, because of Christ’s sacrifice, those who are elect are the people of God! At one time we did not have God’s mercy, but now we do. This is another clear indication of the total separation between saved and unsaved. The difference is that the saved are shown mercy, eleo; compassion that helps the wretched. God helps all people in all the world, simply by allowing them to live and to enjoy what God gives generally to the world... the sun, food, shelter, etc. But, His salvation is only given to a few, those who are elect. To these He gives unbounded glory and blessings.

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Verses 11 & 12

1.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

2.

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Peter, though he has not met most of his readers, nevertheless speaks to them as his “dearly beloved”. This is how we should all speak to our Christian brethren. Sadly, some Christians find this hard to do, especially if they think you are wrong, or if you do not believe as they do. Then comes harshness and hidden agendas, spite and backstabbing. Let us all follow this example and love our fellow Believers! In my ministry I receive letters of spite and hatred. What does this tell us about the spiritual state of the writers?

This word ‘beloved’, *agapetos*, is one of the many parallel words for ‘love’ and refers to the object of love: esteemed, worthy of love, even ‘favourite’. Do you esteem your fellow Believers? Really? To be perfectly blunt I know that many of my brethren would prefer it if my name was just a distant memory! How can this be?

Peter calls upon these people, those who are “strangers and pilgrims” in far off Turkey, to live as they ought. They are strangers, *paroikos*, believers who live in a foreign land and who have no rights as citizens. It also means they have no earthly place to lay their heads, just like Jesus, but are just travelling through this world to reach heaven. This is why he also calls them pilgrims, *parepidemos*. This can mean being a stranger in a foreign land, but also means heaven is now our natural destination and home. This explains why we are often dismayed by what earthly life doles out to us.

There is a specific reason for Peter’s encouragement. Because these Christians are amongst total strangers, most of whom are heathen, he does not want them to fail publicly before them.

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To do so is a tragedy for witness. He requests that they abstain from, or refrain from, doing certain things. He does not speak of specifics, but warns in a general way. They must refrain from indulging in “fleshly lusts”. Flesh is sarkikos, carnal. It is to give-in to whatever our sinful human minds desire, rather than to live in holiness.

Because these desires are generated humanly, they are automatically sinful, based on depravity (even if fellow humans think they are ‘good’). They are, then, ‘lusts’, epithumia: deep cravings for what is forbidden. Such lusts are hardly controlled and tend to turn the sinner into a slave to his desires. But, they are forbidden by God and by the desire to be holy. Again, we recognise who these people are.

Because they are sinful they “war against the soul”. The word ‘war’, strateuomai, interprets: ‘to fight’, or for a commander to lead soldiers to war. It has an active sense, because this war is constant. Christians know of this war more than anyone else, for Satan (the commander) strives to destroy Christians and their witness. He sends us a continuous stream of sins to consider! And each one is capable of ruining our earthly standing before men, and our peace of mind. The whole aim of sin is to ruin us.

As Christians we must always be careful, “Having our conversation honest among the Gentiles”. Our conversation, of course, is our overall manner of life and our holy character. Our behaviour in the eyes of others must be exemplary. It must be honest, kalos: excellent, eminent; it must surpass what everyone else does. That is why, when employed, I strive always to do more and better, not to gain status but to be a good example. It is to have a character that is good, kind and truthful. It is to be the best we can be in our work, play and beliefs. It is to be morally good and upright. We must be especially upright when we are with gentiles, ethnos – pagans and those others who do not worship God. Thus, even if they hate us, they will be unable to fault our moral standing and life.

Peter knows that pagans/unbelievers will always try to bring charges against Christians. Therefore, Christians must live open and truthful lives. In return, unbelievers will call us evildoers, kakopoios: those who do evil. That is why, in the past six months, homosexuals have attempted to destroy me with a variety of legal mechanisms no less than five times! But, they failed, because my life is open and transparent.

Nowadays we are ‘evil’ if we speak against grievous sins such as homosexuality. Or if we insist that only God is true, and not the false gods of world religions. But we must stand firm and

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Speak honestly and truly.

We must ignore the charges and show by our good works that we are honest and moral. These good works, *ergon*, are *kalos*, good and genuine. This covers everything we think, say and do. And they have to be genuine, not contrived so that we *appear* to be genuine. The only way we can do this is if we believe and live what scripture says. Then, when all is said and done we will stand holy and pure before all men. Remember that God does not recognise as holy or good any works that He himself has not given us to do, even if they are counted to be 'good' by fellow human beings.

The 'day of visitation' *can* refer to investigations made by local bishops. But in this context it refers to the day when God will judge us all. It can also refer to the examination by others, whether civil officers, the king, or governors. In other words, we must always be true, honest, without stain, living by the law as far as we are able.

Verses 13 - 16

1.

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

2.

Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

3.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

4.

As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

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This teaching is very hard to accept, let alone accomplish. I say this in a time of growing hostility toward God's word, and a deliberate dismantling of godly laws. There is sometimes a period when laws and regulations are so evil they cannot be upheld or obeyed by godly men. For the Christian the utmost must be done to comply within one's conscience and God's laws.

In normal circumstances all Christians must obey the law of the land. We must 'submit' to 'every ordinance'. To submit is *hupotasso*; to obey or be subject to. The word has two main meanings. One is to arrange troops in a military fashion under a commander. The other is to voluntarily 'give in', to cooperate, or to carry a burden.

So, we must accept 'every ordinance'. The word 'every' contains a clause...*pas* is to obey 'all' things...but as in other examples in scripture, 'all' does not mean literally 'all'. Rather, it means 'a wide variety of'. Thus, we are to 'generally obey every law', ordinance – *ktisis*; institutional requirement. Therefore, this does not just refer to laws, but also to societal rules. If we go back to the root, *ktizo*, we see that it is founded on the idea of what founds a city or state, things that keep a place good for all of society. (Which sets a challenge to most of us today, whether to work with, or against, the ruling elite!).

We must obey these laws and institutions for the Lord's sake. The title 'Lord' here is *kurios*, meaning Lord of everything, master of the universe. Why should we accept what is not that satisfactory? We must do it to show everyone that we live peaceably and without doing harm, so that we don't let God down in the eyes of strangers. This applies if the rule-maker is the king, or a lesser governor, hegemon... any kind of ruler.

These, we are told, were appointed by God to punish evildoers and to praise those who do good. So this includes magistrates and judges, as well as those who give out civic and regal awards. Obviously, there are times when these people do not deal in a godly way. What then? It seems reasonable to suggest that we must live with laws and rulers so long as they do not continuously and cruelly derogate God or His word, or prevent us from obeying God. In those instances we have no option but to refuse to obey. In extreme cases, as history shows, this can even lead at times to civil unrest, if not war. But, even so, every effort must be made to come to an amicable solution.

By generally obeying, then, we show others that we are peace-loving and God-fearing. We must do this because it is what God has decreed (verse 15). It may well be that many of the things we obey are unjust or unfair, but this is because those who make the law and insist on it can

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often be ignorant and foolish.

As part of this activity Christians must act as “free”, eleutheros: freeborn, not a slave (except to Christ), freed from Mosaic law. This is our ‘freedom in Christ’, meaning that we are no longer tied to the yoke of Mosaic sacrifices, etc., but are now able to act according to conscience. But – and this is emphasised – we must never use this freedom from Mosaic law and consequent punishment, to act licentiously, eleutheria. That is, just because we are free in Christ, we may not act as though we can do anything we wish. With true liberty comes responsibility. Sadly today, many in society want all the freedom without the responsibility.

Christians can sometimes have a lovely smile, but hide a darker, more sinister plot in their hearts. This deception is used to act maliciously, kakia: with evil intent and a desire to injure someone. This is very easy to do! We must avoid it at all costs. We all fail, though. This, however, is not what Peter is referring to – occasional lapse into sin. He is talking more about those whose heart’s desire is always to be malicious, who are not ashamed to break the law or to be evil toward others constantly. As ‘servants of God’ we are not free to do evil to others as we wish, but we are to obey the Lord in all things.

Nor are we free to join hands with those who are evil. In everyday circumstances we are to be sociable and good to others; we are to join with them in everyday things, whether or not they are saved. That is, in the world but not of it. We may not join with them in order to effect a spiritual end, because they have no part in spiritual life. They are dead in their sins. But we may try to persuade disobedient Christians to do what is right, without joining with anything sinful they might think or do. At the same time, of course, we must declare to them what is sinful in their lives, that our words may either be to their betterment in Christ, or a stumblingblock.

Verses 17 - 20

1.

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

2.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

3.

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For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

4.

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

Here we have what appears to be an odd command – to “honour all men”. Does this mean what it says? Yes, it does. But, does it literally mean ‘all’ men, no matter who they are or what they are like? No, it does not.

The word ‘all’ is again *pas*. And, again, whilst it can, in other contexts, refer to everybody, in this case it cannot. It bears the meaning of ‘all of a particular group’, e.g. Christians. The word ‘honour’, *timao*, is the same in both cases in this verse, but has a different interpretation.

In the first case, we must ‘honour’ men, meaning to value them simply because they exist and are fellow creatures. But, we are to ‘honour’ the ‘king’ (also refers to anyone in high authority, *basileus* – leader of a country, or its king/queen) by literally holding that person in honour because of their position. But there is another reason: God says we must do so because it is He Who places them in office.

In the UK for example, Queen Victoria attempted, in the setting of her own era, to do what was best for the people. This also showed itself in widespread missionary activity. But today, the Queen has allowed Rome free access to our shores, and the current Prime Minister has done far, far worse, including opening this country up to sodomite influences. Yet, though it might gall us all, we have to ‘honour’ the man because of his ruling position, for him as a fellow creature. As the writer of this study I admit to finding this very hard to do! But it must be done. I cannot, and will not, honour the huge variety of sinful actions he has initiated, because this would honour the evil path down which he is leading us.

We are given two other commandments in this verse, both acceptable. We are to ‘love’ the brotherhood. Note that Peter did not say ‘love all men and the brotherhood’. This is because the brethren are separate. Love, *agapao*, means to welcome them, to be fond of them, to entertain

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them, to be pleased with them. We cannot offer this response to 'all' men, but it is required of us toward fellow Christians. The 'brotherhood', adelphotes, refers to a 'family of brothers'...the royal family of Believers.

It stands to reason that no man can become a local church member unless he is firstly one of the brethren. Thus, certain people are automatically excluded – the unsaved, including all who practice open evil. That they are excluded is found in the root of 'brotherhood', adelphos, meaning to have the same ancestor, or brethren in Christ. There are other meanings for this word, but they do not apply in this context, for Peter is clearly talking about fellow believers.

Do Christians truly love each other? Not always. Love those who are the same in thought, yes. Love those of the same denomination, yes. Love those who you think are 'off the mark', or who raise the dust (even legitimately)? No. This is to our shame.

Above all we must "fear God". Indeed, if we do not fear God we are unlikely to love our brethren. God in this context is theos, the supreme deity, the Trinity. It can also refer to each Person in the Godhead separately. It can also mean human magistrates or judges, but not in this text.

We have come across this 'fear' before – phobeo. And as before, it means to be terrified. But only if we disobey. Otherwise the meaning is to obey reverentially. Thus, God must be supreme in our minds and hearts, loved because of His gift to us, but feared if we disobey.

Then comes another very difficult command to follow – to be subject to our employers, even if they are sinful. I think this applies because they pay us our wages and we must obey their demands as far as work is concerned. We may not sin if they demand it. Originally, this term 'servant', oiketes, referred to one who is 'owned' by someone and who lives in the same house. Today it refers to an employer who pays an employee to work.

For myself, I have always done far more work than my contract allowed, without being asked. I did this because I wished to comply with this command, but also as a matter of personal satisfaction and a way of showing the employer that my ethic was pure and helpful. Though this ethic did not, in the end, provide better thought of me, is beside the point. The important fact is that I did my best, and far more, and this must glorify God. None of this makes me superior – it

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is just how a Christian ought to work! However, there comes a point of departure when the employer acts sinfully and expects you to join him in the sinful action.

We must obey or know fear, phobos; dread or terror if we disobey. Today, this applies if we ruin our contract by sinfulness or neglect of proper duty. We are to obey our 'masters' or employers, not just when they are good and gentle toward us, but also when they are 'froward', skolios; crooked, wicked, perverse, unfair, surly. Obviously, if we know an employer is like this we would be best to avoid his employ. But, if we cannot, or do not know of his ways, we must work to the best of our ability. His sinfulness is his own affair, and God will judge him, not us.

In my own situation, though one of my employers was wicked and followed a perverse path, I continued to show respect and worked very hard indeed. As I said, though this did not bring me any benefits in the end, I was able to leave my employ in the knowledge that I had done nothing wrong, and had done far more than was requested of me. That employer will never know peace of mind or the gifts of God in his life, but he will be judged.

To continue in this kind of employment, being continually harassed or even bullied though we are blaemless, is to be told by God that we are "thankworthy". It might surprise readers to know that this word is charis – meaning grace, favour. It also means to have God's good-will. It is the same word meaning a spiritual gift leading to a spiritual frae of mind. To suffer under a bad employer, then, is to be given a special gift by God, to endure. We must be worthy of this gift as far as we are able. There may be a time when we must depart, either voluntarily or by force, but until that time we must work hard and show respect.

This is because we must work with 'conscience', suneidesis. That is, we must show we know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad, and that we act upon this knowledge daily. This must not just be superficial but internally accepted by us, suneido. It is because of our consciousness of good and purity toward God that we "endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

To endure, hupothero, is to bear up patiently under immense stress. In at least one instance, for a very short period, I know I failed in this and succumbed to stress. But it is not the way of Believers! To give way is to submit to Satan's plan and will, for he wishes us to fail and to become morose and negative. We cannot, though, bear up in our own strength. We need the Holy Spirit to hold us in His hand! All men and women have their breaking point, and when we take our eye off the mark we will instantly fall. I know this to be true, personally.

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'Grief', *lupe*, is sorrow or pain, also annoyance and affliction. It can leave us with very heavy hearts. Note that we can be loyal to the lord and yet have heavy hearts. All the Apostles knew this grief, yet they carried on. At times they failed, as Paul admits, but yet they repented and carried on. The problem in the Christian life is not so much that we fail, but if we do not quickly repent and get back onto the right path. So, sinful failure is not the point; the important factor is how we respond to our failure. Do we repent and carry on, or do we remain stuck in a rut of self and sin?

In this context Peter is talking about suffering grief put upon us by others. We must endure by repenting of failure and continuing in holiness. We must endure, even when we are 'suffering wrongfully'. *Pascho* means to experience something grievous and be in a bad plight. It can also refer to being sick continually. But the main thrust in this phrase is to suffer wrongfully. That is, to be made a scapegoat by others for something we have not done, or to be punished unjustly, or to be attacked without mercy for no reason found in ourselves. Wrongfully, *adikos*, then, means to be treated unjustly, without reason, undeserved.

As one with personal experience of this kind of attack over a long period I can honestly state that it is extremely hard at times to remain true to conscience. To be constantly attacked is to be like a man tied to a stake and kicked with steel capped boots and slashed with knives. When it is constant it is like being made to stay alive when being mercilessly abused. And, unless one has experienced the same kind of thing consistently, he or she has no real idea what it is like. For this reason, onlookers should be careful in their criticism, if they see the attacked person suddenly or slowly giving-in to their pain or abuse in some way.

They might make a mistake along the way, because they are under continual attack. Instead of pointing a finger, pray for that person. Support him or her in their affliction, for it is your duty and should be your love! I say this from the heart. When a man's mind is fit to burst and attacks are raging, it is difficult at times to stay on an even keel. If that man makes a mistake or two, do not hit him (like his attacker does) but love him and offer up prayer for his well-being and help. Criticism in those circumstances is out of place and even sinful, for it allows Satan to relish more attacks, because he has managed to get another Christian to be critical.

Peter asks us – why should we glory if we are attacked for something we have genuinely done wrong and we pretend to suffer gladly? It would be a farce, a sin in itself! No man should be praised for staying calm and collected when he is attacked for some sin he has committed. The only suffering acceptable to God and to others, is suffering that comes when we have done

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nothing wrong and we are innocent.

Verses 21 - 25

1.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

2.

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

3.

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

4.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

5.

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

We must suffer with great patience because that is exactly what Christ did for us. Are we better than Christ? Of course not, so we should not expect greater favours than He received. Indeed, we are “called” to suffer in this way. Called is kaleo, chosen or elected by name. Once more we come across this fact of predestination! It is often said that a Christian who does not suffer because of his faith is suspect. The unsaved might like us for a short time, but there comes a time when they will hate us, simply for being Christians.

Christ suffered and died for us, and so we must follow in the same way. It is part of our Christian

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heritage. Christ is our 'example', hupogrammos; someone we must copy. To actually chase after suffering is false and stupid. To do or say things deliberately to attract suffering is false. When we suffer without cause, it is to our credit in Christ to suffer graciously. We might fail along the way, but repentance puts us back on course again!

This does not mean Christians are doormats. The only Christians who say we must sit willingly under attack are Christians who have never known attack! It is one thing to put up with evil when it hits us hard, but it is rank stupidity to put ourselves deliberately into the firing line. If we can avoid it, all the better. If we cannot, then we must put up with it with grace. In this we will be just like Christ, who did not sin in return for attacks, nor was "guile found in His mouth". Guile, dolos, is deceit or pretence. Thus, we must always be true and open, without a shred of pretence. Our faith and response must be genuine, not something we put on for the gaze of our peers, who may then praise us!

When Christ was reviled, He did not return in kind. To be reviled, loidoreo, is to be reproached, abused continually. As God He could easily have brought destruction upon his accusers and abusers. But He did not. Instead, he knew they were to be judged by the Father, and so He leaves this to the Father. Without the true purity of Christ we will sometimes fail in this. Do not despair! Repent and carry on!

Christ did not threaten those who attacked Him. Nor should we. It might be tempting to hit out hard under another guise, but it is best to leave it. Vengeance belongs to the Lord! Besides, though it might seem good at the time, to take vengeance leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. Do not be tempted to lash out. But, if you submit under pressure, repent quickly and carry on. Like Christ, let us rather commit ourselves to "him that judgeth righteously". We must rely on God for vengeance, the penalty due to those who attack God's children. We do this because everything God does is righteous, including His penalty for sin.

This is what Christ did, as is openly declared in scripture. Our sins caused His suffering, yet He put up with them when turned against Him in vicious ferocity. Our sins, the very ones that placed Him on the cross, gave Him untold misery and darkness of soul, but it was essential so that we whose sins did this thing, could be saved and enter heaven. In other words, we were saved by His very suffering.

Charismatics take this to mean that the violence put upon Christ heals our illnesses. It is true that He can heal us physically, but this is not what it means in context. Indeed, the context is so

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clear. The 'stripes' refer to his molops, or blood that was spilled in the process of His suffering. The blood of Christ (and generally) is always representative of life. Therefore, in this text, also, it means life-giving blood that effects salvation. Healed, iaomai, means to cure or heal, to make whole, to free from error and sins and thus have salvation. This confirms the true meaning which is, frankly, very clear to all who believe truly.

We need to keep our eye on Christ and follow Him, because we were once like sheep, following other sheep! Being unable to see the truth and act on our own initiative (because we were led by our father the devil) we lived sinfully (went astray). But now, as saved people, we have returned to the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls". The Shepherd, poimen, is our pastor Jesus Christ, the One Who presides over our churches and hearts. And He is our Bishop, episkopos, the One Who sees that we act rightly.

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