

STUDIES IN I PETER

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- 1. HOPE Based on I Pet.1:1-12**

Peter writes to Christians who are suffering persecution, and they are soon to experience the full force of the wrath of Nero. He will lash out at them in fury. Does he therefore begin with tears of despair? Not at all. He begins with a triumphant doxology: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great

mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” Circumstances cannot crush his confidence in Christ. He refers to Christ 4 times in the first 3 verses. His hope is not in religion but in a person. His hope is not a dead clump of clay that will dissolve in the rains of persecution. It is a solid rock that will stand secure even in the flood of persecution. That is why he begins like a volcano as he erupts with a fiery flow of gratitude to God.

We can learn from Peter that if we begin with God and His grace rather than with the gutter and our gripes, we can face even hellish persecution with heavenly praise. The secret of a heavenly hope is to begin above the clouds where you know the sun is shining. Then you can come down and face the problems of life, but if you begin with the problems, you get bogged down and never see above the clouds. You cannot rise above them because of the weight of your trials, and hope begins to fade. Hope is like the mainspring of a watch. When it goes, the watch ceases to fulfill its purpose, and if hope is lost, so is the purpose and meaning of life. Hope is a necessity and not a luxury. We want to examine Peter’s message in these opening verses to see what the reasons are for having such hope, and what the results can be if we rely on those reasons.

I. THE REASONS FOR OUR HOPE. v. 2-3

Peter says we are to be ready at all times to give a reason for our hope. All of the reasons for our having hope are found in God and not in ourselves. It is God’s love that prompts; His grace that provides, and His power that perfects. The reason no great philosophy has satisfied the hearts of men is because they all begin with man and work up to God, but Scripture begins with God and works down to man. The only reason for having any hope at all is because of the salvation plan of God. The whole Godhead was active on our behalf even before we existed. According to His

foreknowledge He elected us to salvation. Jesus purchased our redemption on the cross, and the Holy Spirit applied that redemption and sanctifies us.

You may ask how you know you are one of the elect. All who come are the elect, for no one who comes shall be cast out. If one does not come they are condemned, and so not one of the elect. For those who do come, their hope is based on the fact that God has already accomplished all that is necessary for their salvation. When George Nixon Briggs was governor of Massachusetts he had 3 friends of his who visited the Holy Land. They climbed Golgatha, and they cut off a stick to use as a cane and brought it back to present to Governor Briggs. They said, “We wanted you to know that when we stood on Calvary we thought of you.” He assured them of gratitude, and then he added, “But I am still more thankful, gentleman, that there was another one who thought of me there.” He rested his hope on the finished work of Christ.

**The hands of Christ are very frail,
For they were broken by a nail,
But only they reach heaven at last
Whom those frail, broken hands, hold fast.**

We see in verse 3 that the strongest reason for our hope is in the resurrection. The cross without a living Savior could not produce a living hope. The resurrection is not a fanciful fiction or a fantastic fable, but it is the fundamental fact of the Gospel. It is the Rock on which our hope rests. Without it we would be like the heathen who have no hope. That is what Paul said in I Cor. 15, for he said that if Christ is not risen then our faith is in vain.

A king once planned a terrible torture of his enemy. He had the man arrested and put in a room with 9 windows on one side. The man thought this was not so bad, but at midnight he was

awaken with the blare of a trumpet, and he heard a crashing noise. In the morning he discovered only 8 windows. When the same thing happened the next night, and the next day there were only 7 windows, the terrifying truth stuck him. He was in a room with a moving wall operated by clock work. Each night it advanced one ninth of the way to the other wall. On the ninth day at midnight he would be crushed between the walls. This is a picture of those who have no hope. Paul describes the man who does not believe in the resurrection as being in just such a condition.

Peter knew this from his own experience. He made one last desperate attempt to rescue Jesus in Gethsemane, but Jesus rebuked him and surrendered. Peter's hope began to fade rapidly, and soon after he denied he ever knew Christ. After the crucifixion Peter tried to forget the whole thing and went back to fishing. His hopes had been shattered. But if you go to the book of Acts, you see this same Peter preaching to thousands on the day of Pentecost. You see him boldly going before the Sanhedrin and proclaiming that this same Jesus whom they crucified is alive. Every sermon he preached stressed the resurrection, for that was the basis for a lively hope. It was the fact and power of the resurrection that drove the early church to turn the world upside down. It is by faith in the resurrected Lord that we are born again into a lively hope. If we believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, that becomes the foundation for being saved and having a lively hope.

II. THE RESULTS OF OUR HOPE. v. 5-8

Hope is built on the past, but it looks forward to the future, and it influences the present. Hope enables us to face the future without fear, but to also experience the blessings of the future in the now and here. Hope reaches out into the age to come and brings back into the present the blessings of eternity. When a person comes home from work and smells the supper cooking they already begin

to experience some of the values of the meal to come. So those whose hope is in Christ already experience some of the blessings of the world to come. One of those blessings is the confidence that God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to stand. We rejoice even in trials, and praise Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

We are kept by the power of God through faith. Kept is a military word that means to be guarded. It is the word used when the governor of Damascus “Kept the city with a garrison.” Faith is the bugle that calls forth the troops to surround the fort. We see the paradox of hope and joy in the midst of heaviness and trials. We will be persecuted, but we are to rejoice and be glad for our reward in heaven. We will have tribulation, but we are to be of good cheer for Jesus has overcome the world. Paul says in II Cor. 6:10, “As sorrowful yet always rejoicing.” This is not double talk, but is the confidence and courage we can have because of our faith and hope in Christ.

We know that suffering is only for a season, but our salvation is forever. Our trials are only a parenthesis in the flow of life’s sentence. Persecution even unto death is only a colon for which you pause shortly, and then hasten on to continue the eloquent sentence of eternal life. Heaviness of heart will test the health of our hope. Persecution has always strengthened the hope of those whose faith is firmly fixed in Jesus Christ. Testing is good for us, for it drives away the superficial. When life is too easy it can lead us to put our hope in things. Luther said affliction was the best book in his library. God help us to beware of making comfort the goal of our life. A little heaviness may do us good, for it reveals to us what our hope really is. If we turn to Christ in our trials we will have hope and hope can turn our lamentations into laughter and our sorrows into songs. We can have happiness in the midst of heaviness when

we have hope of final victory in Christ.

The proof of our hope is, do we continue to hope even in the fires of affliction. When Christ appears will we be standing steadfast and showing the world our confidence in Him, or will we be running like chicken little for fear that more of the sky will fall on us? Peter encourages us to consider our trials just a passing thing, and even if the whole sky should fall it could do no more than purify us if we stand fast. In verse 8 he says that our hope in Christ should produce in us such a joy that it cannot be expressed. The deepest and richest experiences of life cannot be expressed. If we attempt it, it comes out superficial. Someone said, "True joy is a solid, grave thing, which dwells more in the heart than in the face." We might add also, and on the lips. Sometimes silence is the most eloquent way to express our joy. This is especially so in times of trial. To try and express your joy in Christ when you are suffering affliction will almost always sound superficial.

Then Peter deals with our future inheritance. The hope for an incorruptible inheritance in heaven is a powerful factor in the Christian life. The Christians who have done most in history have been those who looked beyond history. Our hope in Christ gives us a wider perspective so that we see things with eternities values in view. C. S. Lewis said, "It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither." Animals can be content to live only in the present, but for man to be happy he must have three things: Something to do, something to love and something to look forward to. The third is lacking in the hearts of most people outside of Christ. There are men of strong disposition who by grit and sheer will power make it through the stormy sea of life without loss of hope, but when they reach the harbor of death their ship sinks anyway, and all was in vain. Prov. 11:7 says, "When the wicked

dies, his hope perishes.”

Workmen discovered a dungeon beneath an old castle in Scotland, and when they entered the dark and damp cell they saw scratched on the wall, “No hope, no hope.” This is never the cry of the Christian, for his hope is eternal, and it does not fade away even in a dungeon. Ever since Paul and Silas were in the dungeon there have been songs in the night coming from the tongues of those whose hope is in Jesus Christ. Our inheritance in Christ is both permanent and pure. The beauty of the earth fades away. The colored leaves that thrill the eye are soon faded and dry. They are soon only good for the fire, but we look for an inheritance where the beauty and delight never fades, and nothing can defile.

**There is no more pain or crying,
There is no more death or dying,
As for sorrow and for sighing,
These shall flee away.**

In verse 9 Peter tells of the ultimate end of our faith, which is the salvation of our soul. Faith and hope are the two rudders by which God guides our ship of grace down the river of His redeeming love to the sea of salvation. If anyone is not on that ship now, make haste to get aboard for the tickets are free, and all are welcome. The only request the Captain of our salvation makes is that you confess your sins, except His death on your behalf and commit your life to Him. In Him alone is there a hope that can take you through all of life’s trials with joy and assurance of eternal life.

PRACTICAL HOLINESS Based on I Peter 1:13-16

Peter is the Apostle of hope, and also the Apostle of holiness. In the first half of this chapter his theme was hope. Peter does not leave us perched on the high board of heavenly hope, however, but plunges us immediately into the pool of the practical. The biblical writers are almost always concerned with our present earthly life. What good is hope that does not result in holiness? What good is doctrine if it does not lead to duty? The Apostle Paul, after 11 chapters of doctrine begins the 12th chapter of Romans with these words: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-His good, pleasing and perfect will.” All of those 11 chapters of doctrine are worthless if it does not lead to a holy life. It is interesting to notice that Peter and Paul used the same method. They first give the basis for the Christian life and hope, and then they enter into the practical.

Peter begins verse 13 with wherefore, which is the same as Paul’s therefore. He is saying that since it is true that we have a great hope, and that we are sure of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fades not away, let us live now as if what is to be already is. Like Paul, he stresses two areas of our life that are to be affected by our hope.

I. THE MENTAL LIFE. v. 13-14

Thought is important in the Christian life, for Scripture says, “As a man thinks in his heart so is he.” We are what we think, and if we think poorly we will live poorly, and we will communicate our faith poorly. We are to be ready at all times to give a reason for the hope that is within us. This calls for thinking, and for a mind that is

exercised by wrestling with the Word of God. Our experience is all we need to save us, but experience needs to be expressed and explained to others if they are to be saved. We must learn to communicate our Christian experience in such a way that we convince rather than confuse.

Let us suppose that I have just returned from Africa and want to tell you of an exciting experience. When I was ready to get on the ship coming back to America one of the native dock workers laid down his load and said to me “kalunga baywana.” I was amazed and hardly knew what to say, but I replied, “Buto hata nosook.” The smile that came across his face revealed the truth of what he has said. I sailed back to America with the hope that many could hear of this experience. Does anyone know what that was all about? Of course not. What good is an exciting experience if it is not put in language that can be understood? What good is it to tell others of our experience in Christ if we do not speak to them in a language they can understand? The task of communicating the Gospel to our world in a language they can understand is one of the greatest challenges for the human mind. That is why we have so many new versions of the Bible, and that is why loving God with all of our mind is so essential.

In verse 13 he urges us to prepare our minds for action. Paul urged us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The mind is always the greatest battlefield in any age. The churches greatest enemies have always come from the realm of ideas. Swords, fire and lions never hindered the church from growing, but false ideas have. Heresies have kept millions out of the kingdom, and cults today are still doing that. Ideas are the great weapons of warfare, for ideas captivate the mind, and to reach the minds of men is a far greater objective than any other. Ronald Youngblood use to say, “The weapons of our warfare are words and we must wield them well.” This calls for dedicated minds.

Peter is saying that we must not be sloppy in our thinking. We are not to let our minds be tossed and tangled by the winds of the world's thinking. Loose thinking leads to loose living. A person who is slipshod in his thought life will stumble across the problems of life like a drunkard stumbles across the tracks in a freight train yard. The Christian needs to have a dedicated mind. Paul said, "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "True religion," Spurgeon said, "is not unreasonable; it is common sense set to heavenly music." Sanctification includes the head as well as the heart.

In verse 14 Peter contrasts the new life of obedience with the old life of ignorance. The Bible says that to live on a low level where you are being lead by your lust is not only evil but stupid. Sin and ignorance go together. Nothing shuts out the light of God's love like ignorance and indifference. Nicolas Ling said, "Ignorance is voluntary misfortune." This is true for Christians. If they choose not to grow in the knowledge of God by reading and studying His Word, they must constantly face the risk of being guided by their own desires rather than by the Spirit of God.

The hope of Christ coming is to motivate us to watch. Grace came at the cross, and it continues through the ages and culminates at the second coming. We serve Him with all we are, not because that will save us, but because of His mercy and grace. At our best we are unworthy, but when He comes again He will complete our salvation by grace and will deliver us from the bondage of the flesh and give us new bodies. By His grace we will enter into eternal fellowship with the King of Kings. When Jesus came the first time He brought His spiritual kingdom into the world, and by entering it our souls are saved. When He comes again with power and great might the material realm will also be redeemed, and our bodies will be made incorruptible. It is because of this hope that we want our

whole mental nature dedicated to the task of fulfilling His will. The second area of our life that Peter says is to be affected by our hope is-

II. THE MORAL LIFE. v. 15-16

The Bible always has a balance in its teaching in order to keep men from getting one sided. When it stresses faith, it also stresses that faith without works is dead. When it stresses the right doctrine, it also stresses the importance of duty. Peter had just stressed the mental life, but lest anyone think that all Christianity is, is thinking right, he immediately stresses the mental life. He exhorts, "Be ye holy." No where are we exhorted with the words be ye omnipotent, or be ye omniscient, for we cannot be these things, but the fact that we are commanded to be holy means that it is possible for us to be such. God does not ask of us what is not possible, but He not only commands, but demands holiness.

Heb. 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." That is saying that holiness is not for a hand full of great saints, but it is for all who hope to receive the grace of Christ. J. B. Chapman said of a certain man, "Like many people, he seemed to think that religion is a good thing as an insurance against future judgment, but that getting too much of it is like over paying the premiums on a life insurance policy." We need to make it clear that Peter was not teaching sinless perfection. If this was the case, we would not need to hope for more grace to be brought at the coming of Christ. John said, "If we say we have no sin we lie and do not the truth." But as A. J. Gordon has said, "If the doctrine of sinless perfection is a heresy, the doctrine of contention with sinful imperfection is a greater heresy.

We need to examine the word holy. In the Old Testament it means separated unto God. Vessels in the temple were holy because

they were set apart for service to God. In the New Testament the word takes on the meaning of awe. Something holy is not only set apart, but it is awe inspiring. The English word comes from the root halig, which means whole or complete, and from which we get the words holiness and health. Health we apply to the physical, and holiness to the spiritual. When the body is whole and complete we say it is healthy. When the soul is whole and complete we say it is holy. If the body is right with the laws of nature, we say it is healthy. We do not mean it is free from all germs, or that it cannot get sick, but we mean that sickness is an outsider that may invade and strike a blow, but on the whole health reigns.

In the realm of the spiritual for a man to be holy does not mean he is without sin, but it does mean that sin rarely defeats him. To be holy is to be basically righteous. It is to be guided by the will of Christ. As God acts always out of righteousness, so the motivation of the believer is to be from the righteousness of Christ that dwells within. The Bible teaches that we can be all that God wants us to be at any point in our life. We will not be perfect, but we can be completely dedicated. We cannot reach perfection, but we dare not aim any lower than perfection.

Peter says that our method is to imitate Christ as our example. He is the model and pattern of our perfection. We will never be like Him completely until He comes, but if we do not imitate Him now we may never see Him. A butterfly cannot follow the eagle and soar to the mountain heights, but he can fly. The minnow cannot follow the shark as he dives the ocean depths, but he can swim. The Christian cannot follow the Lord in the perfection of his mental and moral life, but he can commit his thought and conduct to be guided by the Holy Spirit. A Christian can be as holy as God expects him to be. We need to let these two exhortations be guiding rules in our lives as we roll up our sleeves and get busy using our bodies and minds in practical holiness.

3. EVERLASTING EDUCATION Based on I Peter 1:13-25

Abraham Lincoln did not like a lot of things about Christians and the church, but there are few great men in history who loved the Bible more than this great leader of our land. In Fisk University Library in Nashville, Tenn. is a copy of a Bible presented to Lincoln with this inscription: "To Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, the Friend of Universal Freedom, from the Loyal Colored People of Baltimore, 4th of July, 1864."

When this Bible was presented to Lincoln he responded, "In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book.... All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my most sincere thanks for the elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present." Lincoln was so immersed in the Bible that his speeches were illustration of biblical language. He was 10 years old when the first family Bible was purchased, but before that he read the Bible in school where that was the only book they had to read. As president he used biblical language and ideas constantly, and once he gave a lecture on the Bible sponsored by the Bible Society of Springfield.

Lincoln was greatly disturbed by preachers who used the Bible to support their own political agenda, such as justifying slavery. He had to be a student of the Word of God to fight against the abuse of it. The Bible became the key source of power that first founded our nation of freedom, and then restored it to freedom again. If you take the Bible out of the history of our nation, you will have no

heritage to be proud of, for we would be a nation of tyranny and bondage like so many nations of the world. All that we treasure as Americans is due to the impact of the Bible on our leaders of the past.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of our most brilliant and dynamic presidents, and he said, "Almost every man who has by his life's work added to the sum of human achievement of which the race is proud, of which our people are proud; almost every such man has based his life-work largely upon the teachings of the Bible."

Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II said, "Nearly all of the great men of our country have been well versed in the teachings of the Bible." All of the presidents of our nation were students of the Bible, for one was not considered educated who did not know the Bible.

William E. Gladstone, the great statesman and intellectual giant of England said, "I have known 95 great men of the world in my time, and of these 87 were followers of the Bible." We could go on to quote many of those great men about their love for the Bible, but these are sufficient to establish the fact that the Bible was a powerful influence in the history of the Western world and of our nation. No one can question our biblical heritage, but now we must face the facts that the Bible is no longer the highest authority in our land. It still sells like hot cakes, but apparently it is read as infrequently as hot cakes as well, which is not at all. Studies of Christian youth entering college reveal that they know little about the Bible. They know more about movie stars and cartoon characters than they do about Bible characters.

In many Christian homes the best place to hide money is in the family Bible, for nobody is ever going to look there. A Catholic author I read complained that only one priest in a hundred has ever read the Bible from cover to cover, and the result is that most

Catholics do not take Bible reading seriously. Protestants and Catholics alike have taken for granted that we are a Christian nation, and they have assumed it would stay that way regardless the place we give the Bible in our education. Now we are reaping what we have sown, and that is a post-Christian era where leaders and people alike are ignorant of the Bible.

No people can be great who neglect the best that God has given to man, and no year is going to be great in which the Bible does not play a major role in our lives. To encourage you to make Bible reading apart of your life we want to look at the two characteristics of the Word of God that Peter stressed in verse 23, where he writes of the living and enduring Word of God.

I. THE LIVING WORD.

Life only comes from life. For a long time man thought life could come from non-life by means of spontaneous generation. That theory was destroyed by facts, and man learned that life can only come from the living. This is true in the spiritual realm as well. If you want abundant life, you will not get it from the world of dead materialism. Jesus came to give us life abundant, and we get that life from the Living Word of God. Peter says it is like a seed planted in us, and then it bursts forth from the soil like a plant or flower, and we are born anew. By means of the truth of the Bible we come to know Jesus as our Savior. We may read the Gospel, or we may hear it, but it has only one source, and that is the Bible. The Bible is alive because the Spirit of God who inspired it uses its life-giving truths to inspire those who read and hear it to give them new life.

Robert Ingersall, the great skeptic, urged General Lew Wallace to write a book exposing the follies of Christianity. Wallace began by studying the Bible. What he discovered was that the Bible was alive. The truth of God got into his mind and changed his heart and

life. He wrote a book alright, but instead of it being one of criticism, it was the classic on the beauty and power of the life of Christ. He wrote the book Ben Hur. The Bible gave him life and through him it was channeled to many others.

All of Christian history is the history of the Living Power of the Word of God. A Bible distributor in Sicily was held up and the bandit ordered him to build a fire and burn all of his Bibles. He asked if he could read a part of each one before he threw it in the fire. The request was granted, and so from the first he read the 23rd Psalm. The bandit said that that was a good book and so that one he could save. He then read the parable of the Good Samaritan out of the next one, and the bandit liked that too, and spared it from the flames. From the next one he read the Sermon on the Mount, and from the next he read I Cor. 13, and in each case the bandit felt it was worth saving. He also heard the Gospel and realized he was worth saving and that Jesus died so he could be spared from the fire of judgment. He repented and trusted Jesus as his Savior. He went on to become a minister of the Gospel to others.

History is filled with stories like this that reveal the living power of the Bible to transform lives. Every saved person on the planet is a child of God because of the power of God's Word. There can be no salvation unless the truth of the Bible is read or heard, and then accepted. The Bible is the Living Word that gives us life in Christ. It is the source of our nourishment that enables us to grow. The milk of the Word helps us get the basics so we have a solid foundation. But there is the meat of the Word that is for mature living. The Bible has much that is hard to understand because it is designed to be a challenge to the most brilliant and mature believers. It is to be the source of life for all of life, and so it has to have food for the newborn and also for the believer of ripe old age, who has spent a lifetime studying it. You never get so wise that the Bible is no longer a feast of new and exciting meals for the soul.

Like all living things the Bible changes with the times and the circumstances. You can study the same book a few years after you thought you had studied it thoroughly and it will speak new truths and give you new insights that fit who you have become. You don't ever pass up the Bible, for it stays with you because it is alive. As you change and mature the Bible becomes more relevant to the issues you face now that you never even thought of before. If you think you can read the Bible and say you are done with it, you do not know the potential of the Bible. You are never done, for it is a living and life-giving power. You can no more get done needing it than you can get done needing food.

You would think a person was very neurotic if you said, "have a ham sandwich," and they said, "No thanks. I had one last year." It is just as foolish to not read Hebrews again because you read it last year. Your body needs food repeatedly, and so does your mind and soul. We need to feed them on the Living Word that never gets old or obsolete. It stays fresh and relevant to whatever stage of life you have reached. A converted African cannibal was reading his Bible when a European traveler passed by and said to him, "That book is out of date in my country." The African responded, "If it was out of date here, you would have been my supper." The greatest proof of the relevance and power of the Bible is that it goes on changing lives all over the world.

An unknown author sums up the value of the Bible like this: "This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell

disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasures."

II. THE LASTING WORD.

The Bible is the living and enduring Word of God. Most living things don't last. They wither and pass away like flowers, but Peter says in verse 25 that the word of the Lord stands forever. The Bible will be a part of eternity, for it is God's Word, and God's Word never dies. It is alive with eternal life. Jesus said in Luke 21:23, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." In Isaiah 40:8 we read, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God stands forever." To know the Bible is to be getting an education that is eternal.

William Lyon Phelps, who was once professor and orator of Yale University, and director of the Hall of Fame in New York City, said, "Everyone who has a thorough knowledge of the Bible may truly be called educated. I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible." He said that only one of Pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower had a college education, but they were nevertheless an educated people because they knew their Bible. This great educator concludes, "No group of people can be rightly described as uneducated who read and know their Bible.

Henry Van Dyke, who was once professor of English at Princeton said, "No other book in the world has had such a strange vitality, such an out going power of influence and inspiration. No man is poor or desolate who has this treasure for his own." There are thousands of great educators who would say amen to these quotes. There is much education that will become obsolete in a few

years, and most all will pass away in time, but to know the Bible is to be educated for eternity, for it will never pass away. When you know the Bible you are always up to date on all that matters. To know the mind of Christ is to have ultimate wisdom.

In 1951 at the meeting of the United Bible Societies, Dr. Gilbert Darling of the American Bible Society told of how special measures had been taken to preserve various translations of the Bible in case of an all out atomic warfare. Copies of all important editions of the Bible were placed in specially made vaults in Colorado, New Hampshire, and New York City. If every book in the world would go up in flames, the Word of God would still be preserved. Satan knows the Bible is the greatest obstacle to his power in people's lives, and that is why the history of Bible translation is a history of fire against fire. When John Wycliff gave the common people the Bible in their language he was so hated that after he was buried for 30 years his bones were dug up and burned, and then thrown into the river Avon. John Hus was burned at the stake because he translated the Bible into the Bohemian language. William Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English.

Once people got the Word of God in their own language they were no longer in the dark and in bondage to the forces of evil. They were liberated by the light of the Gospel. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Once you are free to know the will of God you can never be content with less than liberty in Christ. That is why the Bible is so hated by those who want to keep people in the dark and in bondage. Bible education sets them free forever. The reason we are so blessed with a free nation is because the founders of our nation were men who were educated in the Bible.

George Washington said, "Above all, the pure and benign light of Revelation has had a meliorating influence on mankind, and

increase the blessings of society. It is impossible to rightly govern the world without the Bible." Thomas Jefferson, who authored the Declaration of Independence, and who was one of the greatest men America has ever produced, said, "I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, and better fathers and better husbands...The Bible makes the best people in the world." We have to prove this to ourselves by giving the Bible a place of priority in our lives. There can be no higher goal for the coming year than that of giving a greater portion of our time to knowing the Living and Lasting Word of God. May God help us all commit ourselves to being busy getting an Everlasting Education.

4. THE FEARS OF THE FAITHFUL Based on I Pet. 1:17

It was on Oct. 30, 1938 at 8 P. M. when about 6 million people across the United States were listening to the radio. Orson Wells on The Mercury Theatre Of The Air presented the War Of The Worlds. Dance music was suddenly interrupted with a flash news story. "A series of gas explosions has just been noted on the planet Mars," said the announcer. He went on to report that a meteor had landed near Princeton, New Jersey, killing 1500 persons. In a few minutes the announcer came back to correct the report. It was not a meteor but a metal cylinder from which poured Martian creatures with death rays to attack the earth.

In spite of the fact that two announcements were made that it was only a fictitious story, many people were so gripped by fear that they did not hear these announcements. Twenty families on a single block in Newark, New Jersey rushed from their homes to escape what they thought was a gas raid. Their faces were covered with towels and handkerchiefs. In Mount Vernon, New York an invalid was so frightened by the invasion that he left his wheel chair and drove

away in his car. Thousands were on the phone saying farewell to loved ones. Psychologists have used this event as a classic case history of the power of fear.

It is also a classic study of how poorly people pay attention. Those who listened did not get disturbed, but those who did not listen went into a panic stage. It was all unnecessary if people would have just listened. It is important to take action when danger is present, and fear is good as a motivation. We need to fear danger, but it is tragic to fear it when it is not real. Joyce Landorf in *The Fragrance of Beauty* says that fear is one of the most destructive forces in the life of a woman, and it robs her of her beauty. She quotes,

**Where worry is a mouse,
A small scampering thing with sharp tiny feet,
That scurries over our souls-
Fear is a roaring lion,
With huge paws, extended claws and teeth
That slash us into strips.**

In other words, fear is an emotion to fear. It is like the Devil himself, and it is a roaring lion going about seeking whom it may devour. This is not to say with Roosevelt, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." The world is full of things that we need to fear. There are dangers everywhere just as there was in the day of David when he cried out in Ps. 55:4-5, "My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death assailed. Fear and trembling have beset me, horror has overwhelmed me." Unfortunately nobody had yet come up with the comforting statement that we have nothing to fear but fear itself. So poor David had to have fear, and as you read the lives of great people of God all through history you discover they had plenty of fears. It is folly to say to anyone that there is no need to fear, for fear is real and legitimate in many circumstances. But it is also true that it is often not necessary and often even folly to fear.

An ancient legend of the Orient tells of a man who met the Cholera and said to the plague, "Where are you going?" It responded, "I am going to Bagdad to kill 20,000." Some time later he met the plague again and cried out, "You vagabond! You killed 90,000." "No, no," said the Cholera, "I killed 20,000, fear killed all the rest." Trouble has slain its thousands, but fear has slain its tens of thousands. Earnest M. Ligon in The Psychology Of Christian Personality says, "...fear is the most disintegrating of all the enemies of personality. Worry, anxiety, terror, inferiority complexes, pessimism, greed, and the like are all varieties of this one great evil." He says fear is involved in every complex, and it is the basic cause of all repressions.

Fear can produce the very thing that is feared. If you fear you will get sick, that can lead to getting sick. If you fear you will fail the test that fear can make you fail it. The fear of failure is the biggest cause for failure. It is an inside partner with the external forces that seek your defeat. The evil that you fear gets an advantage over you when you are full of fear. It has won half the battle by capturing your heart and mind. That is why in sports the opponent does all he can to make you fear losing, for if he can get you full of fear he has a partner inside you that is helping him win.

From the cradle to the grave man is plagued with fear. Babies are born with two fears. They have a fear of loud noises and a fear of falling. Drop a tray of bottles in a hospital nursery and all of the babies will burst into bitter crying. All other fears, other than these two, are taught. They are not natural. A fear of animals is not natural. It has to be learned. Tests have shown that a baby will pet a tiger and try to chew a rabbit's ear. But as a child grows it learns a multitude of fears. Some are real, but many are false. There are hardly enough words to list all of the things that people learn to fear. The list of phobias is very long, and some people are even afraid of being afraid. Fear can be the greatest hindrance to a fruitful life.

That is why it is strange when Peter says in verse 17 that we are to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. This sounds like a contradiction of all I have said. Fear is one of our greatest enemies and yet we are told to fear. This apparent contradiction runs all through the Bible.

The Bible says that perfect love casts out fear, and that God does not give us a spirit of fear. Dozens of times we are told not to fear. On the other hand, we are told to fear the Lord. In at least 24 verses we are commanded to fear God, and many verses describe the blessings of fearing God. We want to look at these two sides of fear in order to better understand the Bible and our emotional life. First of all lets look at-

I. THE EVILS OF FEAR.

The fear that the Bible disapproves of might better be called anxiety. When Jesus said that we are to take no thought for the morrow, it is better understood if we say do not be anxious about the future. To fear the future is foolish said Jesus. Worry won't help you any more than it will cause you to grow an inch. The unknown is the great cause for fear, but this is the very fear that we do not need to have, for this is the fear that leads to all kinds of abnormal behavior. True fear is emotional agitation because of specific danger. Anxiety is emotional agitation with no recognizable cause. It is one thing to be afraid if you are standing on the edge of a cliff, but it is another to be anxious about falling off a cliff when you are at home in your living room. The first has a definite cause, but the second is an emotion that is totally subjective. The first is real, but the second is imaginary, and it is this last kind of fear that is a curse. It is this kind of fear that creates a man like the one who hid three hundred thousand dollars in his house and starved to death.

Normal fears of germs cause us to wash our hands before we

eat, but it is this abnormal anxiety that causes people to wash a hundred times a day until their hands are so chapped they have to go to a doctor. It is this kind of fear that fills our hospital beds with neurotic patients. Christian people are not exempt from such fears. It is this kind of fear that the Bible rejects, for it is all based on ignorance, lack of faith, an inadequate conception of God. Luther was one who lived in fear until he discovered the Bible remedy for fear, which is faith. He was following a procession of the mass one day in the town of Eisleben when suddenly he was overcome by the thought that the wine that was carried was really Jesus Christ, and he later wrote of this experience and said, "A cold sweat covered my body, and I believed myself dying of terror." This is an example of the false fear of God based on ignorance. Only when Luther came to know God as his Father through Jesus Christ could he escape his fear that nearly drove him mad.

When ever a Christian does not fully trust in God as his heavenly Father he is in danger of suffering from guilt feelings. These can be repressed and come out in all sorts of foolish fears. For example, there was a young woman with a strange phobia from age 7 to 20 this girl had a fear of running water. She couldn't stand to hear her bath water run, and it was only after a violent struggle and much screaming that her mother succeeded in getting her clean. At school the drinking fountain was just outside of her room. If children made too much noise drinking she would be frightened, and once she even fainted. Why would this be? She knew there was no danger, but she couldn't help herself. There was no reason for it, and no one could explain it. She needed professional help to discover the reason.

When she was 7 her mother and an aunt were with her on a picnic. It was getting late and the mother had to go. She begged her mother to stay and the mother allowed her to stay if she would remain close by her aunt. She soon broke that promise and ran off alone. When

the aunt found her she was lying by a small stream wedged among some rocks. She was screaming and crying in terror for the waterfall was pouring down over her head. She was rescued but was in great distress about what her mother would do because of her disobedience. The aunt promised not to tell, and the next day she left for a distant city. The girl was left with no one to confide in, and so she repressed her sense of guilt, and it came out in the form of fear of running water. She could have been spared all of this if she had confessed her disobedience and taken her punishment.

This same thing happens in the lives of Christians who do not confess their guilt but try to repress it. They can lose all of the joy of their salvation, and it can lead them to have many fears. Perfect love cast out fear, but imperfect love that does not confess opens the door to a host of fears. The Christian should never be in a state of guilt, for they should always confess their sins to God and claim His promise to forgive and cleanse. Next lets look at-

II. THE VALUES OF FEAR.

In a world filled with fears the Christian has a weapon to destroy them. All men long for such a weapon.

**The thing that numbs the heart is this,
That men cannot devise
Some scheme of life to banish fear
That lurks in most men's eyes.**

Men cannot devise such a scheme, but God has revealed one to us. We fight fire with fire, and we fight false fear with true fear. Just as humility is the way to exalted life, so the fear of God is the way to security and freedom from fear. The biblical concept of positive fear is very close to faith, and it goes together with love. Duet. 10:12 fear, love and obedience are the three things God

requires of people. It is this superior fear that drives out false fears. It was the fear of God that gave the martyrs the courage to face death without fear. This is the fear that is the other side of coin of faith. Dr. William S. Sadler said, "The only known cure for fear is faith."

Positive fear is basic to our health and security. Healthy fears make us more efficient, and they give us more energy just when we need it most. Fear is the glue that holds society together. How would you like to have a druggist who had no fear of giving you the wrong medicine? What if he was so completely carefree that he had no fear of what the authorities could do if he poisoned people? Who wants a surgeon with no fear? We want all professionals to be fearful of failure so that they do there very best to succeed. Someone said, "Fearlessness is wedded to recklessness." We want professionals not to be reckless, but to fear making mistakes so that they are cautious and effective.

John Southernland Bonnell is an outstanding Christian leader in the realm of psychology. He tells of an experience in Britain during World War II. The Germans had flown over and dropped land mines on parachutes. In the morning one of them was discovered hanging from a steel girder swaying in the breeze. A demolition squad was called and a young officer ordered a 30-foot ladder to be put up and everyone to be cleared from the area. He climbed up and examined the cylinder closely to see if it had an inner fuse that would explode a few seconds after the outer one was removed. He carefully took a wrench and removed the fuse and then lowered the mine. One of the men came up and said, "How do you do that without being afraid?" He said, "You are wrong. Every time I am called to do this I am afraid, but I master my fear, for if I tremble while I remove the fuse that moment could be my last." He told of how his mother taught him the 23rd Psalm about fearing no evil as he walked through the valley of the shadow of death. He said,

"I believe God is with me and nothing else matters."

Bonnell said, "Courage is not the absence of fear but the mastery of it." The brave man is not a man without fear, but one who has his fear under control. The boys who play chicken on the highway do not exhibit bravery, but rather folly. To be free from all fear is to be abnormal as those who are afraid of everything, and it is even more dangerous. The proper use of the emotion of fear is to be controlled by the committed mind, which is the mind of Christ. His mind is to guide our mind to an honest evaluation of our fears. Where ignorance thrives fear reigns, but where knowledge increases fears depart. When we have a full understanding of God's Fatherhood we can be set free from our foolish and false fears. Some poet has written-

**My Father God! That gracious sound
Dispels my guilty fear;
Not all the harmony of heaven
Could so delight my ear.**

The child of the king can sit on his father's knee even when all the nobility of the land are excluded from his court. We must take the fatherhood of God seriously if we are to be free from false and foolish fears. But again, we see balance in Scripture. We must see God also as an impartial judge and one who must carry out discipline in guiding his children. The fear of the Lord is based on his righteousness and justice. He judges his own children according to their works, and the word here refers to a continuous judging and not a judgment at the end of history. Then non-Christian is storing up the wrath of God for the end, but Christians receive discipline all through life in order to teach them.

The fear of the Lord is a respect and reverence that makes the Christian want to avoid offending God by disobedience. A person

who does not fear God can sin with boldness, but the more committed a person is to God the more he trembles at the thought of disobedience. This is especially so when he considers the price God paid for his redemption. The knowledge of the great value of our redemption compels us to be cautious. It is just like our attitude is different when we are carrying a fruit jar from when we carry an expensive piece of china. We are far more cautious with the china, and so we need to be far more cautious when we realize we carry the reputation of God, which is judged by our character and conduct.

The fear of the Lord is to compel us to search the Word, which shall endure forever. We cannot have an adequate adult Christian life on a child's understanding. A little boy struggled through the story of the Three Little Pigs, then he said, "Dad, this is the greatest book ever written." If that is still his attitude as an adult, it is pathetic. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, for it drives us to search His Word, to flee from sin, and to overcome all other fears by faith in Him. We need to commit our mental, moral and emotional life to God through Christ and live in reverent fear.

One of the things that we should fear is the lack of honest expression of our feelings to those we love. Cecil Osborne, an outstanding Christian counselor had a friend who told him this experience: He and his wife had been married for 16 years and every year they had driven some 800 miles to spend the holidays with her parents. He had no desire to drive 1600 miles on possible icy roads, but it seemed to mean so much to her that he endure it year after year. Finally on the way home for the 16th time he said, "Honey, I know how much this visit to your parents means to you, but to be honest I am getting to resent it a little. I wonder if we could settle for just every other year?"

She responded, "You mean you've been doing this all these years for me? Good grief, I've hated it! But you seemed to derive so much

enjoyment that I went along with it. I thought you got a real kick out of it." He confessed that he faked it, and they both sat in silence for miles considering how much easier life would be if they were just honest about how they really felt. They feared to hurt each other with the truth, but they should have feared hurting each other with the lie of their faked enjoyment. The point is that some sort of fear is good, but we need to use fear in the right way. The bottom line is we should fear to do anything that does not allow us to be who we really are. The ones we love may wish we were not exactly the way we are, but they can better deal with reality than with the unknown.

The reverent fear that Peter deals with is the fear of respecting God too much to fake it. It is being fully honest before God in expressing how we really feel. It may be that we ought not to feel as we do, but being honest about it helps us deal with it and if it is wrong, it makes it possible for God to forgive it, for we are confessing it as we share it. When we fear to be dishonest with God we will develop an intimacy with Him that will make prayer more meaningful, and it will make us have a better self image, for we will be fully who we really are before God. This is healthy fear, and the kind of fear that make us faithful to our Lord.

5. THE ETERNAL WORD Based on I Peter 1:15-25

Did you know that the Mary Magdalene was the mother of Jesus? And that the New Testament book that records Paul's conversion is Psalms? And that the last book of the Bible is evolution? And that the first murderer in the Bible was Pilate? And that Isaiah was the son of Solomon? These are some of the answers given to a Bible knowledge test which was given to 357 incoming freshman at a Christian college. Out of 25 fairly easy questions the average number correct was 8. 75 who had been Sunday School teachers got 11 right. All but 22 were members of a church, and

they had been in Sunday School since childhood, and yet they hardly knew anything about the Bible.

Apparently we are becoming a nation of Bible dusters rather than Bible diggers. The American people buy Bibles like hot cakes, but apparently they read them like they read hot cakes also, which is not at all. We can hardly blame the Supreme Court for the fact that the Bible is taken out of our schools, for even one atheist woman with enough conviction to fight as more influence than millions of Bible dusters who don't know Paul from Adam. Masses of professing Christians know more about Paul Bunyan, Bugs Bunny, Lassie, and Yogie Bear than they know about the Word of God. With such a weak possession on the value and power of the Bible it is no wonder that the forces of unbelief can gain such ground.

When the Bible is no longer our ultimate authority then only weakness can follow. The strength of the past came from Bible educated people. Theodore Roosevelt said, "Almost every man who has by his life-work added to the sum of human achievement of which the race is proud, of which our people are proud; almost every such man has based his life-work largely upon the teachings of the Bible." William Gladstone, the great statesman and intellectual giant of England said, "I have known ninety-five great men of the world in my time, and of these eighty-seven were followers of the Bible." Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Nearly all of the great men of our country have been well versed in the teachings of the Bible."

Why then are men so foolish to neglect it and reject it? It is because of the devil's deception that says men do not need God. Men are deceived into thinking that the Bible is old fashion. People in earlier times of ignorance needed the Bible, but modern man has grown beyond that need. God challenges this folly, and He says through Peter that we are not to look to man's glory, for it is gone in no time and withers away like a flower, but His Word endures

forever. The Bible is still our absolute authority for two reasons that Peter gives us in verse 23. It is because the Word is-

I. A LIVING WORD.

It takes life to give life, and the Bible is a living and life giving power, for as Peter says, they were born again by this Word. All through history men have been discovering new life through the Bible. Robert Ingersoll, the skeptic, urged General Lew Wallace to write a book exposing the falsehood of Christianity. General Wallace began to study the Bible in order to write such a book, but he discovered that the Bible did not just lay there, for it was alive, and it got a hold of his heart and changed his life. He wrote, instead of his book of criticism, the classic about the beauty and the divinity of the life of Christ called Ben Hur.

History is filled with amazing examples of the power of the Bible on the lives of people. A colporteur distributing Bibles in Sicily was traveling at night when he was held up. The bandit ordered him to build a fire and burn all his Bibles. He asked if he could read a part of each one before he threw them in, and his request was granted. From the first he read the 23rd Psalm, and the bandit said, "That is a good book, we will save it." The second he read the parable of the Good Samaritan; the third from the Sermon on the Mount; the fourth I Cor. 13, and in each case the bandit said, "Save that one." It turned out that none were burned, and he took them with him, and the transforming power of the Word worked in the life of this bandit, and he became a minister of the Gospel.

John said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." It is through the Bible that we come to know Christ, and through Him to know the Father, and so it is the book of eternal life. It is no good that 85 million people go to church in America if only a handful of them

ever read the life giving Word of God. If the Bible is not read, the church will be dead no matter how many activities they have. The Bible is a Living Word, not only because it gives life, but also because it sustains life. One of the best proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is the way it will inspire you if you read it.

Watts Dunton tells the tale of an Italian girl reading the Bible. A skeptic said, "Don't waste your time reading that." She said, "But it is inspired." He laughed and said, "How do you know that?" She responded, "How do you know that the sun is in the sky?" He said, "I can see it and feel it." She replied, "So when I read the Bible I see the wisdom of God and feel the warmth of His radiant and redeeming love." To know the Bible is to have a life-giving, and life-sustaining power within that will give victory over the trials and temptations of life. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, and faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

One night during World War I General Edward Allenby sat in his tent studying a map of Palestine. He was making plans on how to capture a village that was in the hands of the enemy, the Turks. He had to find a weak point, but nothing would come to him. The name of the town was Mickmash, and he thought he had heard of that name before, but he didn't know where. He laid on his cot until after midnight. Suddenly it came to him that he had read it in the Bible. He quickly got up, found his Bible, and began to search. He found it in I Sam. 13-14. He got his map out and worked all night, and in the morning he unfolded his plan to his officers. He read the description of the land to them from the Bible. They said it would be a miracle if it worked, but in less than 12 hours it had worked, and the allied troops had taken the village. That description in the Bible over 3000 years old gave guidance into victory. So it is in every realm of life, which is a form of warfare, if you know the Bible you can be victorious.

**Though the cover is worn,
And the pages are torn,
 And though places bear traces of tears,
Yet more precious than gold
Is this book worn and old,
 That can shatter and scatter my fears.**

**This old Book is my guide,
'Tis a friend by my side.
 It will lighten and brighten my way;
And each promise I find
Soothes and gladdens the mind,
 As I read it and heed it each day.**

**To this book I will cling,
Of its worth I will sing,
 Though great losses and crosses be mine;
For I cannot despair,
Though surrounded by care,
 While possessing this blessing divine.**

II. A LASTING WORD.

Peter says it abides forever. In Luke 21:23 we read, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." Many passages express what Isa. 40:8 says, "The Word of our God shall stand forever." To know the Bible is to have knowledge that eternal. The Bible, like Jesus, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. To know it is to be educated for eternity as well as time. But you might ask, why are there so many different translations? It is because language is constantly changing. The Hebrew and Greek that the Bible was written in do not change, but our language, and the languages of the world, are changing all the time. We need to keep bringing the Word of God into the language of the day, and so

there are constantly new translations.

God has always wanted His Word in the language of the people. John Wycliff was so hated for giving the people the Bible in their language that he was dug up 30 years after he was buried, and his bones were burned, and his ashes thrown into the River Avon. John Hus was burned at the stake for making a translation of the Bible in Bohemian. William Tyndale was also burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. Many have died in getting the Bible to the people, and many enemies have fought against it happening, but nothing has been able to stop the Word of God getting to the masses.

In 1951, at a meeting of the United Bible Societies, Mr. Gilbert Darling of the American Bible Society told of how measures had been taken to preserve various translations of the Bible in case of atomic war. Copies of all important editions have been deposited in specially made vaults in Colorado and New Hampshire, and one is New York City. If every book in the world were destroyed the Word of God would be preserved. With or without man's efforts, God's Word will never pass away. But what good is the Eternal Word if we do not read and study it now for our absolute guide. May God help us to become students of this Living and Lasting Word.

STEPS TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY Based on I Peter 2:1-10

There is one calling that every Christian has without exception, and that is the calling to maturity. We are born into the household of God as babes in Christ, but we are not to remain infants. We are to grow up into the fullness of the stature of Christ. The speed with which we achieve this goal is not determined by our age, but by our understanding of and obedience to the Word of God. We make a

mistake if we think we must grow slow and waste half of our life before we get down to business. Some years back it was announced that St. Paul's Cathedral in London was moving down Fleet Street at the rate of one inch every hundred years, and someone remarked that the church ought to be moving faster than that. They were right, for the church was not made to be creeping along at a snail's pace.

Jesus did not build His church to be nursery of His kingdom. He did not give His Word to be used as a pacifier. He built His church to be the army of God, and He gave His Word to be the Sword of the Spirit that through the church He might penetrate the very gates of hell with the good news of salvation. Jesus wants people of maturity, and we dishonor His cause by thinking it is good to move in slow motion. A pastor in Chicago related a story of how a man in Wednesday night prayer meeting prayed each time, "Lord, take away the cobwebs." Every week he would say the same prayer, and finally one of the men who followed him in prayer prayed, "Lord, never mind the cobwebs, kill the spider." That is what God wants. He wants people to get to the heart of the matter and not beat around the bush. The world desperately needs Christians who will get out of the toy department and get into the accounting department, and start counting the cost of wasting their lives on the superficial. Life is serious, and it is big business. It calls for all the maturity our feeble minds can manage. Peter indicates that there are three essential steps to Christian maturity that all of us must take.

I. A SPECIAL DESIRE FOR THE WORD OF GOD.

Diets play a major role in our society, but it has always been important in the Christian life. Your diet determines your destiny, and also the shape of your character and life. Without food your body will starve and become physically weak. Without truth your

mind will starve and become mentally weak. Without God's Word your soul will starve and become spiritually weak. God has given His children a manna to sustain them as they pass through this worldly wilderness of spiritual waste land. No Christian can be mature if he does not nourish his soul with the milk and meat of God's Word. A healthy Christian will have an appetite for it. His soul will get hunger pains if he does not feed on it.

Notice that Peter calls the Word pure spiritual milk. There is milk in other books also, but it is not always pure, for men have many ideas that they want the Scripture to support, and so they twist the Word to fit their system of thinking. We are to have mouths of our mind that drink in the milk of God's pure message if we are to grow in maturity. God's Word is to be the basis on which we evaluate all the words of men. Peter says if you have tasted that the Lord is good you will desire more. If I say ground crempter and mashed guillite it does not stimulate any desire in you. But if I say prime rib and mashed potatoes it does stimulate desire. It is because we have all tasted these things and know they are good, and so we desire to have more. So it is with spiritual things. Only when a person gets a taste of the goodness of God will they desire to feed on His Word. The psalmist says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

Quite often you will see women in the supermarket offering samples of different kinds of food. The philosophy behind this is that once people get a taste of a product and find that it is good, they will want more. This is good philosophy, and it works. It is nothing new, however, for Peter says this philosophy is a key to Christian maturity. Our tastes change over time. When I was young I never cared for salad, but now I consider it a favorite part of the meal. Books that once held no interest are now my favorites. Parts of the Bible that I once thought were boring are now among the most interesting. It is a sign of maturity when we long to taste more of the

goodness of God and His Word.

The mature Christian also wants to make the Gospel attractive so that others will be willing to taste the goodness of God and in turn desire more until they come to know Jesus as Savior. What would you think if the woman giving samples in the supermarket was all dirty and greasy? What if her electric frying pan was rusty and there were cobwebs on the cord she was using to fry chunks of sausage? Would you be surprised if no one bought the product? Certainly not, for even if her product was excellent, the unattractive presentation would keep people from tasting it even if it was the best on the market. If a Christian lives a slipshod shabby life before the world he ought not to be amazed that people do not respond to the Gospel and taste to see that the Lord is good. The mature Christian is an attractive Christian, and he cannot be attractive if he feeds the old man and starves the new man he is in Christ.

That is why Peter in verse 1 says lay aside the characteristics of the old life, for you have a new life to feed. We must clean out the vultures from the cage of our soul if we expect the dove of the Holy Spirit to dwell there. Even the Roman philosopher Seneca knew the necessity of purity before thinking of God. He wrote, "The mind that is impure is not capable of God and Divine things." If we are full of the poison of hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking we will not be able to grow, and that is the whole purpose of desiring the milk of the Word.

The Bible is not just a reference book. It is to be our daily menu if we want to be mature. It will put muscles on our faith, marrow in our hope and blood in our heart of love. Without it faith becomes flabby, hope empty, and our love grows weak. Peter says we are living stones, and all that is living must grow or it dies. The Christians Peter was writing to were babes in Christ, and Peter says that the only a baby can win this battle is by starving the old man

and feeding the new baby. One of the two natures must die, and the one you starve will be the one to do so. So he says they are to lay aside all that feeds the old nature and nourish the baby on the pure milk of the Word. It is a thrill for parents to see their child grow to the point where they can feed themselves, and it is a thrill to God to see His children grow to the point where they can feed themselves on His Word and clothe themselves with the garments of maturity. The second step we must have is-

II. A SPECIAL DELIGHT IN THE SON OF GOD.

In spite of all we have said about the importance of the Bible, Christianity is not just a religion of a book, but of a Person. The value of the book is that it leads us to Christ. The test of whether or not the milk of the Word is being digested and helping us to grow is the place we give to Jesus in our life. This is the greatest sign to our maturity. How do we know we are growing? If Christ is precious, then you know you are a growing believer. Peter just states it is fact that to those who believe He is precious. This is a present fact. He is precious because He is rare. If you have one stamp or coin of its kind it is worth a fortune, and of how much more value is the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus?

The biggest step to maturity is when a believer really comes to see that Jesus is the center, the circumference, and the capstone of his faith. The danger in the Christian life is not so much unbelief as it is belief in the secondary. We can make idols out of secondary ideas and allow them to divide our loyalty to Christ. We dishonor Christ when we push Him off to the side and make any pet doctrine the primary object of our thought and concern. We must never forget that the redemption Jesus accomplished, and the Lordship of Christ is the foundation of all we believe. Christians become immature when anything or anyone becomes more precious to them than Jesus. Many professing Christians quit going to church for all

kinds of reasons. This is because they put some other issue ahead of Jesus.

It is tragic when Christianity becomes just a religion, for all religions, including the Christian religion, do not have the power to save. The only salvation in the world is found in the person of Jesus Christ, and when He ceases to be the most precious possession we have Christianity becomes a dead religion. Charles Spurgeon use to say that you can talk on all kinds of subjects and the Christian can ignore it, but when you speak of Jesus Christ the Christian has to be full of interest and wide awake. That is why he found a path from every text that led to the person of Christ. He preached on this text often, and even when he was sick, for he said, "If I can say nothing else I have said it all when I say that Jesus Christ is precious. He is the gem of exquisite beauty and the jewel of incomparable brilliance.

Precious Lord beyond expression,
Are the beauties all divine,
Glory, honor, praise and blessing,
Be henceforth forever thine.

Jesus is intrinsically precious. Other values are relative, but He is absolute in all places and times. Gold and diamonds are only precious in society, but for a man dying of thirst in the desert they are worthless. A glass of water is of more value at that point than a bag full of diamonds. They have no intrinsic value, that is they are not valuable in themselves, but Jesus is of the greatest value at all times even if one is dying in the desert, for He alone can give eternal life. When we die and get to heaven we will not need doctrine or any of the outward things of Christianity. But we will never be without our need of Jesus. He is the source of our eternal life. It is through Him that we have life.

The complete story of salvation comes in two volumes. We are only half Christian and immature until we get both volumes. We are born into the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus, but then we must become mature citizens of that kingdom by obedience to Jesus. Those who do not come to Jesus stumble over the cornerstone and get crushed, but those who come to Jesus become the New Israel, and Christ becomes the cornerstone of their new kingdom. Israel fell because of her disobedience and rejection of the cornerstone, but to us who believe He is precious, and we want to obey Him in order to experience His sanctification as well as His salvation.

An experience in the life of Watchman Nee illustrates the point. He bought a book one day in two volumes, and when he got home he discovered he had only one. He went back to the bookstore to pick it up and he said to the clerk, "This has already been paid for. It belongs to me, but I forgot to take it with me." So it is in the Christian life-we often take the salvation in Christ and leave behind the power to live a mature Christian life. It is already ours, for it is paid for. All we have to do is go back and pick it up and ask Jesus to indwell us so that His beauty might be seen in us. When we have a special desire for the Word of God , and a special delight in the Son of God, then we will be ready for the third step which is-

III. A SPECIAL DUTY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Several years ago when there was a fear of war a group of Christians in Benson, Arizona disappeared underground. This part of the church failed to see its duty by trying to hide from the world. It gave the world the impression that it is only here to preserve itself. God has called us and chosen us and commissioned us to be witnesses in the world. We are not here to defend the kingdom, but to extend it. The Jews failed because they shut up the light of revelation and did not let it shine out upon the world. God forbid that we also fail by hiding our light under a bushel. If Jesus is

really precious how can we help but wanting others to know Him.

The mature Christian senses that his most important duty in life is to make Jesus known. This is the greatest service anyone can render to both God and man. It is an immature Christian that wants to get all wrapped up in himself and never get out in the world to witness and intercede on behalf of the world. God does not want us always in church, but out in the world showing forth His praises. The church is not a building, but it is living stones. It is not stuck on the corner, but it breaks into pieces and is scattered through the whole of society. Someone said, "We have too many saints in stained glass windows and not enough in shoe leather."

The mature Christian senses that it is his duty to serve God by witnessing. It is not enough to come to church to worship. He must let his light shine all through the week. Someone wrote,

**Some wish to live within the sound
Of church or chapel bell.
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell.**

General Booth of the Salvation Army was a man with this spirit. One time on the cover of his magazine he had a picture of himself in a boat with men all around the boat drowning. His arm is stretched out taking the hand of one of those perishing in the water. His grandson looked at it and said, "Mama, is grandpa trying to help that man, or is he just shaking his hand?" The question is are we really trying to help the drowning who are sinking without Christ, or are just playing religion and shaking their hands? If we are becoming mature we will recognize that it is our special duty in the service of God to bear witness to the preciousness of Jesus.

7. A PECULIAR PEOPLE Based on I Peter 2:9

Under the Roman system of slavery it was possible for an ambitious slave to gain his freedom. If he had a skill and was determined to work he could hire himself from his master for so much a day, and work for himself. If he was successful, he could accumulate enough savings to buy himself from his master and be free. It was by this method that some slaves rose to high positions. The money that a slave made over and above what he had to pay his master was called his “peculium” and the law protected it as his own private property. This Latin word is the origin of our English word peculiar. The word has come to mean odd, weird, or eccentric, but when the KJV translators used it, it was with the original meaning of privately owned and acquired property. Something peculiar was the private possession of some person.

This is the meaning of the word when Peter calls Christians peculiar people in the King James Version. Christians may be odd, but this is not what Peter is referring to in verse 9, nor what Paul is referring to when he says in Titus 2:14, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works.” Christians are to be distinctly different as being God’s own possession, and as such are to conform to the image and plan of their master in holiness and service. Their peculiarity does not consist in their being a conglomeration of oddities promoting a pack of screwball ideas.

A sect was organized in 1838 called The Peculiar People who took their name from this text. They practiced being peculiar in the modern sense of the word rather than the biblical sense. You can see how almost anything can be justified when a word is taken in a different sense than what it originally meant. That is why we can be grateful for modern translations which use the word chosen people rather than peculiar. We want to examine the concepts that Peter

lays down here which are to be distinctive of God's people.

I. A CHOSEN RACE.

You have probably heard of the lost tribes of Israel, but the fact is that the whole race has been lost in our thinking. The New Testament makes it clear that Christians are a new race of people. We usually credit the Jews as being the only race which is also a religion. Jew stand for one's religion as well as one's race. But in sheer neglect of the New Testament we do not apply this distinctive concept to Christians. Christians are God's chosen people. The Jews were also, but they failed, and so now the New Israel is the chosen race, and it is the only race that is universal. It is the only race that includes those from every other race. It is the only race that is open to all. All other races are by nature exclusive. A person of the white race cannot become a part of the black or yellow race. No race can include another race, but the Christian race is inclusive, and it is composed of people from every race. There are no walls in this race, for there is neither Jew or Gentile, black or white, male or female. All are equal as sinners saved by grace, and all have entered this race by the new birth through submission to Jesus as Savior.

There is no concept like this in all the world. This is peculiar to Christians, for this is their distinctive nature. What an impact this concept could have in a world so full of racial strife. The church has the answer to unity. If men accept Christ and become a part of the chosen race, all walls are broken down. That people are white, red, black or yellow is secondary, for we are primarily of the Christian race. People are born as a certain race, but when they are born again they become a part of a new race. All things become new, even their race. As Christians we believe that the chosen race is the greatest race, for it is the only race that is eternal. It is the only race that can incorporate all others and eliminate all the racial strife, for all in this race become blood brothers through the blood of

Christ. This is a revolutionary concept, and if the implications of it are applied by the church there would be no racial conflict in Christianity. As God's peculiar people we have an obligation to the world to make it clear what God says about race. The second distinctive Peter lists is-

II. A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD.

The first distinctive demolished the walls of distinction between races and made all believers one race. This second distinctive demolishes the wall between clergy and layman. This wall has done more to destroy the ministry of the church than all the external forces of evil. It is a wall that was built within the church, and it has caused the vast majority of believers to neglect and ignore one of the most vital truths of Christianity. Francis O. Ayres begins his book *The Ministry Of The Laity* with this startling paragraph: "You are a minister of Christ. In all fairness, and exposition of the ministry of the laity has to begin with that statement. If you are a baptized Christian, you are already a minister. Whether you are ordained or not is immaterial. No matter how you react, the statement remains true. You may be surprised, alarmed, pleased, antagonized, suspicious, acquiescent, scornful, or enraged. Nevertheless, you are a minister of Christ."

So often people have referred to the peculiar notion of the Jehovah Witnesses that they are all ministers as nonsense. We know they have not gone to school and been ordained, and so we dismiss their claims with a smile. But what a surprise it is to discover that the laugh is on us, for they have the New Testament behind them. We have not been conscious that as a part of the royal priesthood we are all ministers. In the New Testament we do not find any marked distinction between clergy and layman. The only distinction is one of function. The Apostles, teachers and deacons, and others all had different ministries to perform by using their gifts. As time went on

the clergy gained more power, and the church became clergy centered rather than lay centered. This was the beginning of the downfall of the church. It reached its height in the monastic movement where the distinction was sharply drawn between the first class Christians who left the world to live for God as monks, and the second class masses who lived in the world.

Christianity lost its distinctive of the priesthood of all believers, and it became a religion of professionalism. Being religious was the job of the clergy. It was for them to know, and if you needed to know you went to them. Just as the layman does not do his own law, surgery, plumbing or dentistry, but left these areas of life to the professional, so also religion was left in the hands of the clergy. This was a major cause for corruption of the church. The Reformers made it a major issue as they stressed the priesthood of all believers, but we still have not rid ourselves of the concept that the church is clergy centered. It is so ingrained in our thinking that even though we know of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers we tend not to practice it, and we scoff at this truth when it is proclaimed by the Jehovah Witnesses.

Here we see it in black and white written to churches all over Asia that they are a royal priesthood. This is a transfer of a distinctive from Old Israel to the New Israel, which is the church. Peter is applying to the church statements that were concerning Israel in Ex. 19:5-6: "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Peter says this is now the promise to the church, and this is now a Christian distinctive. Everyone in the chosen race is also a priest. There is no distinction between clergy and laity. The clergy are only those chosen out of the laity to fulfill a particular function in the church. The laity are the church. All of the Epistles of the New Testament, except for I Timothy and II

Timothy and Titus are written to layman to teach, train and instruct them in their ministry. Only those three Epistles are written for the instruction of the minister.

Jesus was a layman, and He chose all layman to be His Apostles. The church was founded on layman, and by layman it was promoted. When it was layman centered each member recognized themselves to be in ministry to the world. When the concept of the royal priesthood of all believers is lost, you lose that distinctive that makes the church the peculiar people of God. This does not mean we minimize the role of the clergy, but that we simply see their limits. Paul was the only one of the Apostles chosen from the clergy class, and it makes good sense why this is so. He was to be the theologian of Christianity, and so he needed to be a man with much theological training. But it is the people of God who are the chosen race and the royal priesthood.

Luther stressed this and wrote, “All Christians are truly priests and there is no distinction amongst them except as to office. Everybody who is baptized may maintain that he has been consecrated as a priest.” Peter makes it clear that every believer is a preacher-priest. Their task is not one of ceremony, but one of declaring the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into light. Every believer is to be a preacher and declarer of the glory of God. When preaching is limited to the clergy and the pulpit, the church ceases to be what Christ intended. Sadler said, “It is hypocrisy for men to claim for the laity the honor of priesthood, whilst they do nothing to remind them of the duties of the priesthood.” Peter gives us both. He claims we are royal priesthood, and that the function of each priest is to bring glory to God by their life and their lips. There is one more distinctive we want to consider.

III. A HOLY NATION.

Here is a distinctive that once belonged to the Jews and now is the possession of the church. Christians are now the holy nation among the nations representing the God of Israel, and the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Christians are the true internationalists, for their primary loyalty is to Christ and His body, which is a nation in the world, but not of the world. It is a nation without walls, for it has no boundaries. It's citizens all have a common allegiance to their King the Lord Jesus. It is a kingdom not of this world, but still in this world, and it transcends all the limitations of earthly nations.

The church is a holy nation, and that is what makes it distinct. God is its government, and its laws and principles are in Scripture. This makes the church the most distinctive group of people in the world. We are to rise above the ordinary in all areas. We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation. This means that in race, religion and politics we are to be unique, and we are to have distinctively superior attitudes in comparison to the world, so that the world might see the excellencies of God through us, and be compelled to recognize that we live in the realm of light. What a calling we have as believers. We should be thrilled to be a part of such a group of peculiar people.

8. CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP Based on I Peter 2:13-17

Christians in general and Baptists in particular have played important roles in the patriotism of America. One of the finest patriotic hymns is My Country Tis Of Thee. It was written in 1832 by a Baptist clergyman named Samuel Francis Smith. The Pledge of Alliance to the flag was written in 1892 by another Baptist pastor named Francis Bellamy. Daniel Webster said, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens. Nothing can be more contradictory than a Christian and a traitor. Nothing can be

more in harmony than Christianity and good citizenship.

Christians had to be instructed, however, on what their relationship to the state ought to be. Paul in Rom. 13:1 writes, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Then he goes on to explain that they are ordained of God. He urges Titus to teach this to his congregation, and he writes in Titus 3:1, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." We see then that Peter was not alone in his concern that Christians be good citizens. It is only by ignorance or willful disobedience that a Christian could practice irresponsible citizenship.

As we examine Peter's counsel to the Christians of his day we must recognize that our obligation is even greater than theirs. They did not have the freedom we do. Under their authoritarian system they needed only to be subject to the powers that be, but under our system it is not enough to be submissive, for we have the responsibility of helping to determine that to which we will be subject. Our responsibility is much greater because our freedom is much greater.

In verse 1 Peter makes it clear that good citizenship begins with the duty of being subject to legitimate authority. He did not have to bring in the exceptions and say unless they forbid what God requires, or require what God forbids. This is obvious, and Peter is not giving them a rule book. He is only laying down a basic principle that applies in almost all situations. Submitting to proper authorities is what Jesus meant when He said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." He is the authority in control and it is the obligation of believers to be subject to him.

Peter makes the principle almost absolute, for he says to be submissive to every ordinance to man. This is a real blow to the

mystical type of Christian who feels that he rises above the reality of the world and need not bother with mere human institutions. Here is the text that tells a believer that the law of the land is the law you are to obey. They are often arbitrary and only man made, but Christians are to be ideal citizens by obeying these laws. Peter is writing to believers who had no say in the human institutions. We, on the other hand, can seek to get changes made that are more realistic. But as long as a thing is legally in force it is our duty to obey it. In so doing we reveal that we are good citizens, for we are willing to obey even what we feel is disagreeable.

Christianity is other worldly in its origin and its goal, but no one can charge it with being so in its practical effect in everyday life. It is to produce the most helpful people in the society of the world. The Christians greater vision beyond this world is to make them better servants and citizens. We have a motive that no one else has. We obey human authority, not just out of fear, but for the Lord's sake. Peter says this is to be the motivating power behind Christian submission. Good citizenship is a service to God, and it is to bring glory to God.

Peter than gives examples such as the king or emperor. Peter does not give us a different set of principles to follow if we are under different forms of government, for the same applies to all forms. If the established authority is a dictator, a Christian has the same obligation of submission. If a dictator lays down the law that everyone turn out their lights at 10 o'clock, every Christian home should be dark at 10. Maybe there is no valid reason, and maybe it is a foolish whim, but as long as it does not violate God's law, we are to submit. There are many things that Christians despise about living under a dictator, but his commands are to be obeyed in order to maintain order in the land.

Remember, Nero was the ruler when Peter wrote this. If Peter

can urge submission to him, then no one can be an exception as long as they do not compel Christians to violate their loyalty to God. This really makes sense even if it would be hard and a bitter pill to take. Since everyone else has to do the same thing or be punished the Christian is to demonstrate he is loyal to authority and not subversive. This makes every ruler aware that Christians are good citizens and that they will be loyal if nothing is demanded that is ungodly. It is a powerful witness to the whole nation that Christians are for peace and order and they will not be a problem in society. They become a force for stability in any government.

Peter makes it clear that we are to obey local authorities as well as the federal government. It is not just the Emperor, but all whom he send out to keep order in the land. Peter says government is to punish evil doers and encourage good citizens by rewarding those who do well. Even pagan government is based on the need to protect people from sins consequences and promote goodness. Even a bad government needs to protect its citizens and so any form of government is better than anarchy. Christians are to always be a part of the answer by being supportive of the good goals of even a bad government.

In verse 15 Peter tells us why this is necessary. It is God's will that by doing good and being submissive that you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. By being good citizens Christians will gain a reputation that will make false charges impossible. One of the quickest ways to loose your witness for Christ is to be a disloyal citizen. If you give a non-Christian the impression that you don't have to obey the laws and respect authority, you can count him out when you offer him the good news. The worldly man often takes his politics for his religion, and if you treat it lightly it is something like being sacrilegious, and he will not be much interested in what you have to offer. On the other hand, if you are a loyal citizen, and patriotic, you will capture his admiration.

In the early centuries one of the false charges against Christians was that they were dangerous rebels who should be killed before they infiltrate and cause rebellion. It was only by persistence obedience, and submission even unto death by thousands, that people were convinced Christians were not poor citizens. It is a serious charge if men can say Christians are poor citizens. If it is true, then we are out of God's will. The fact that Peter uses such a strong word for silence, which means to really muzzle, makes it obvious that Christians are to be such good citizens that it leaves critics without a thing to say in opposition.

In verse 16 Peter refers to them as free people. The Christian is not in bondage to any man or government. He is free, but he chooses to obey even a tyrant so that his freedom does not lead to evil, but to the service of God. Peter is concerned that Christians do not abuse their liberty. It would be so easy to use it as a covering to hide maliciousness. That is, one could plot against the law and justify it by saying, "I am free and not bound by human law." This could lead Christians to be anti-government rather than loyal citizens. Peter says that the Christian's freedom is to be always used as a means of serving God. The Christian has freedom of speech, but to use this freedom to speak foul words or cruel criticism is an abuse of the freedom, for it does not serve God's purpose. We need to use all freedom to serve, for to use any freedom for evil is to again be back in bondage. The test of all liberty is this: "Does it serve God, or only self, the state, or even Satan?" Only if it serves God is it true Christian liberty, and this is the liberty we have as believers to be good citizens.

9. THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO INJUSTICE I Pet. 2:18

Injustice is an evil that has been so universally despised that one

need not depend on Christian authors alone to attack it. Cambyses, the king of ancient Persia, had a keen sense of justice. When he discovered that a close friend was taking advantage of his secure relationship to him by selling his decisions to the highest bidder, he ordered arrested and to be skinned alive as a warning to others. To prove it was only out of his love for justice that he was so severe he permitted the son to succeed the father in his office of high honor. Here was a pagan who loved justice, and many are the pagan philosophers who agree with Seneca who said, "A kingdom founded on injustice never lasts." Even Ingersoll, the famous infidel said, "There is but one blasphemy and that is injustice." This is an overstatement, but it shows that one can even be anti-Christian and still despise injustice.

Christians are not unique in their opposition to injustice, but we find their uniqueness as we examine the response they are to make to unjust acts against them, and the reasons for making this response. Peter is writing to first century slaves who are under entirely different circumstances than we are, but the facts of injustice are still present and call for a Christian response. The principles that Peter establishes are as relevant and valid for us today as they were in his day. The two questions that the Christian needs to have answered are: What is to be my response, and why? Peter gives us the answers in that order. First,

I. WHAT IS THE CHRISTIANS RESPONSE TO INJUSTICE?

Peter begins with a clear principle. Here is a way a Christian slave should behave toward his master. He should be submissive. There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and Christianity spread rapidly among this class, and so it is understandable why there is specific instruction to slaves in the New Testament. Without this instruction from the Apostle to guide the slaves in their attitudes the Gospel could have easily produced a revolution. The Gospel

brought to the slaves a sense of their own personal worth. They were not mere property, but persons with eternal souls equal with all men before God, and this included their masters. They were children of God, and it would be so easy for the slaves to become victims of pride, and then conclude that as children of light they should not be serving a master who was a child of darkness.

Jesus said that people cannot serve two masters, and this could have been misinterpreted as a justification for rebellion. Christianity was never in a better position to promote a revolution, but we see instead that it promoted submission. Non-violence is the Christian attitude. Christianity was unique in that it turned the world upside down by the power of the Holy Spirit in love and moral strength rather than by physical violence. There are many books written to defend violence by an appeal to Scripture. The favorite passage is where Jesus in anger drives out the moneychangers from the temple. This is a weak argument, for there is no evidence that anyone was injured, and this was a unique act of Jesus revealing His messiah-ship. Nowhere do we get the impression that He did this as an example for His disciples to follow. If He did, they missed the point, for they never did likewise.

Peter was the sword swinger, and he would have been the first to promote rebellion if that was what he learned from Jesus, but he urges slaves to be subject to their masters. And not just to the good and gentle, but to those who were over bearing. The Christian is not to operate on the natural level, but he is to be different. Peter is not concerned with the civil rights of the slaves, but with their Christian witness. His aim is not political but spiritual. He is not concerned about the feeding the opponent, but in winning him for Christ. Any heathen slaves can be a rebel, but a Christian slave is to be submissive in order to convince his master that Christ is a saving and transforming Lord.

This does not mean that no non-Christian slave could be submissive, for just as there were some good non-Christian masters, so there would be some very loyal and submissive non-Christian slaves. The point is, a Christian must be submissive even if it is against his natural personality just because it is God's will that he be so. This means that a Christian may inwardly rebel but still be submissive because he desires to obey God rather than the leading of his own nature. It is the motive of wanting to obey and please God that enables the Christian to act in contrast to his personality. The non-Christian has no such motivation. If he submits, it is because he has a submissive nature, but a Christian is to submit regardless of his nature. Nathaniel Cotton wrote,

**To be resigned when ills betide,
Patient when favors are denied,
And pleased with favors given,
Dear Christian, this is wisdom's part,
This is that incense of the heart
Whose fragrance smells to heaven.**

Peter actually expected the Christians of his day to apply the Sermon on the Mount to life. He did not think it was to be reserved for the millennium, but was to be lived out in contemporary life. G. Smith wrote, "Nothing indeed marks the divine character of the Gospel more than its perfect freedom from any appeal to the spirit of political revolution. The founder of Christianity and His Apostles were surrounded by everything, which could tempt human reformers to inter on revolutionary courses...Nevertheless our Lord and His Apostles said not a word against the powers and institutions of that evil world. Their attitude toward them was that of deep spiritual hostility, and of entire political submission."

Notice that there is hostility and yet submission. This is the very role Christians must play today under totalitarian governments. To

be spiritually and morally opposed to them and yet submissive to the law of the land is a challenge. Evil must be overcome with good and not more evil. Christianity did not defeat slavery by stirring up a revolution to abolish it, but by introducing into history a new race and a new relationship. It did not abolish the master-slave relationship, but it introduced the brothers in Christ relationship. This was its unique way of overcoming the injustices. This was Paul's method with Philemon and Onesimus.

Both the Bible and history support the truth that the best way to overcome evil is not by violence, but by good. The Christian response to injustice is not to be retaliation. Neither as an individual or as a corporate body can Christians approve of violence as a just method of dealing with injustice. The exception, of course, is when the injustice is a violation of a law of the land, and justice demands that the power of the state be used to punish the violator. The state has powers that the church does not have to suppress evil. Peter is writing to slaves who had few if any civil rights. They had only the choice of submission or rebellion. Today most Christians have a third choice, and that is due process of law. This gets us into an entirely different area of thinking, and we must limit ourselves to situations where we have only two alternatives. In this setting the Christian must choose submission.

Another clarification is also needed lest we confuse non-violent submission with non-violent resistance. Peter in urging Christians to submit to injustice did not mean that the Christian is not to resist an unjust law when it is in conflict with God's law. He resisted the authorities when they tried to forbid him to preach, but he submitted to the punishment for doing so without rebellion. It was unjust treatment, but Peter did not fight it at all. He and the others submitted and counted it all joy to suffer for Christ. They did continue to refuse to obey the unjust demand that they stop preaching Christ. In order then to avoid many questions on related

subjects we need to keep in mind that we are dealing here, like Peter, with the injustice inflicted upon us in which the law of the state, or of God, do not play a part. The principle carries over into other realms also, but not as an absolute, and so now we are limiting ourselves to the suffering of unjust pain, for we can't begin to cover all the rest.

In verse 19 Peter tells them that it is approved of by God to endure grief by suffering wrongfully, or unjustly. God thanks the person who will so submit for His glory. Notice the condition, however. It must be done with a conscientiousness that it is God's will. One must be mindful of God as He submits to injustice, even as Jesus, who said, "Not my will but thine be done." To submit out of fear or lethargy is a natural cause, and it is not thankworthy. The Christian must submit fully aware that he does so because God wills him to do so. The Christian is no mere stoic who bears trial as a matter of philosophy. He does so in obedience to God. We are not looking for thanks from men, but we are to simply do what we know is pleasing to God.

To remain submissive when unjustly made to suffer takes moral courage and spiritual strength that cannot help but impress the unbeliever. Andrew Murray said, "There is nothing harder to bear than injustice from our fellowmen." This is taking up the cross and following Christ, for in bearing His cross He literally did just what Peter urges Christians to do here. He submitted to unjust suffering because it was God's will. A good test of Christian maturity is how much unjust suffering can you take without retaliation? If you cannot take a great deal without hate and a violent response, you are not yet prepared to walk with Jesus all the way.

In order to avoid another misunderstanding that could arise, Peter goes on in verse 20 to make clear that it is only patient

endurance of unjust suffering that counts as a witness for Christ. Often a criminal goes to the place of execution with silent dignity, but this is no credit to him before God, nor is it a witness for Christ, for he may repudiated Christ. If a man suffers for his sin or crime and takes it patiently, it is no more than is to be expected. For those, for example, who break a just law of the land and are thrown in jail for it, it is no virtue that they submit to the penalty without violence. It is just what they must do without adding sin to their crime. If the law is unjust, however, and they take it patiently, that is good.

If those persons in civil rights marches fulfill the first condition of being conscious of obedience to God, and they submit to acts of violence without retaliation, and they break no law, then such have the approval of God. If all those in civil rights were of this mind, they could sing with the certainty of God's promise, "We shall overcome." In verse 21 Peter says Christians are called for the purpose of suffering injustice patiently. Jesus suffered as an example of what we are to do in the world. This has profound implications, which we cannot consider now, but this verse makes it clear that we are literally follow Jesus and submit to injustice without violence. In doing so we not only obey God and please Him, but we become the only hope of winning the world to Christ that is filled with violence and injustice.

10. MAKING MARRIAGE MARVELOUS Based on I Pet. 3:1-7

Some little girls were having a great time playing wedding. They had a couple of bridesmaids, a bride and a maid of honor. The mother of one of the girls observed that the groom was conspicuous by his absence, and she asked, "What about the groom?" One child quickly replied, "We don't need a groom. This is just a small wedding."

There is many a wedding where the groom feels left out, and many where he wishes he was left out, but the fact is, there is no way to get a wedding so small that you do not need a groom. The smallest wedding on record took place without any attendants or guests, and there was no preacher, but even Eve had a groom. When you have cut all the corners possible, and you are down to the bare minimum you still have a groom. The groom is not in limelight like the bride, and his role is very minimal. He gets only a fraction of the published publicity, which is not much more than the ushers get, but he is no mere appendage which can be cut off if necessary. You can eliminate everyone else in the list below the bride, but the groom must remain.

God in His all wise providence ordained that every wedding must have a groom. It is important to man's ego that it is so, for if he was not a necessity he might very well be ignored all together, and the fantasy of the little girls might become fact. It is said with as much truth as humor that some Hollywood brides keep the bouquets and throw the groom away. But why all this rambling about the necessity of a groom? It is because he does play second fiddle when it comes to the wedding, and the fact is, he plays a secondary role in the marriage.

The wife plays the leading role in marriage even though she is to be submissive to her husband. When the biblical view of marriage properly understood, no woman can ever complain that she is treated unfairly. Nowhere is a woman's role as wife and mother so exalted as it is in the Bible. The Bible is almost like the newspaper. It magnifies and glorifies the bride and wife, and just mentions the husband. Proverbs 31 gives the greatest description in literature of the role of an ideal wife and mother. Nowhere in the Bible is there such a description of the ideal husband and father.

Peter was a husband, and he had a great opportunity to write at

length about husbands, but in our text of 7 verses of marriage counseling he devotes 6 of them to the wife, and only 1 to the husband. It looks like typical coverage for the husband, and possibly 6 to 1 is even better than what he gets in the paper. But the question is, why? When the groom is just as essential as the bride, why does he get so much attention? It is not only because he is less beautiful than the bride, but also because his role is less difficult and demanding than that of the bride. Generally speaking it is much more difficult to be a good wife than to be a good husband. It takes so many more virtues, and that is why the Bible and books on marriage are filled with so much more advice for wives than for husbands. One of the reasons is that wives read more on improving their marriage than husbands do. Both Peter and Paul deal with the wife before they do the husband, and they say more about her role.

What a wife is and does determines more in a marriage than any other factor. She is the star at the wedding, and must go on being the star, for when she falls the sky is dark indeed. Don't ever fall for the folly that the biblical role of women makes her second class. If women's lib wants freedom from the biblical role for women, then they want to be free to be less and not more, for the biblical role makes her the primary factor in marriage and the home. It is true that man is dominant in business, government, war, and politics, but when it comes to the home and marriage the wife is the leader.

The analogies of Scripture illustrate what I am saying. Jesus is pictured as the groom, and the church is the bride. It is not hard for the groom to be loving and loyal to his bride, but the bride is constantly struggling to be faithful, and to keep unspotted from the world. The battles of the bride is what the Christian life is all about. The brides side of the union of God and man is the hard side. Husbands, of course, cannot be so easily Godlike as God was with His bride Israel, nor as easily Christlike as Christ is with His bride the church. Nevertheless, I am convinced from Scripture, from

history, and from life, that it is easier to be superior than it is to be submissive. The wife has the harder role, but also the most significant. As in the relationship of Christ and the church, it is the bride that determines the success of the relationship. If the church fails, it is not because Christ has not loved enough. He is the perfect husband, but if the bride fails to be submissive and obedient, the union is not a happy one. Spiritually and literally the role of the wife is the key role in marriage. That is why Peter devotes the majority of his advice on marriage to the wife.

This advice is far from being obsolete. It is becoming more relevant everyday. Anyone who can read knows that marriage is in big trouble today. It is not that it is less popular, for everybody is still doing it, but the problem is they are doing it more and enjoying it less. The quantity is greater than ever, and people are getting married two and three times, but the quality is sadly deficient. People look upon marriage as an experiment, and if nothing develops they move on to another experiment. This approach is fine in the laboratory, for it is the scientific method, but marriage is not designed by God to fit into the scientific method. Marriage is closer to religion than science, and it is a matter of faith and commitment. One must enter marriage with a religious attitude rather than a scientific attitude to make it work.

The world is flooded with advice for those brave adventurers embarking on the sea of matrimony. The advice varies according to the experience of the so-called expert giving the advice. If some have been wrecked on the rocks and sent to the bottom because of a stormy marriage, they will not encourage you to believe it is a blessed blissful journey of sailing into the sun. In fact, they will offer you some such advice as this-

**I would advise a man to pause
Before he takes a wife.**

**In fact, I see no earthly cause
He should not pause for life.**

All too often the negative attitude dominates even in the Christian mind. He begins to think like Elijah, and feel that he is the only one left. In spite of the fact that marriage failure is a major social problem, there are still millions of happy marriages where the mates have not bowed the knee to Baal, and the other idols that break up the marriage duet. For them, marriage is a joyful journey, and not a tragic trip. The sun may not always shine, but they know it is always there even if the clouds are covering it for a time. They can appreciate the truth of what Middleton writes concerning marriage.

**The Treasures of the deep are not so precious,
As are the conceal'd comforts of a man
Lock'd up in woman's love. I scent the air
Of blessings, when I come but near the house;
What a delicious breathe marriage sends forth.
The violet-bed's not sweeter. Honest wedlock
Is like the banqueting-house built in a garden
On which the spring's chaste flowers take delight.
To cast their modest odors.**

Marriage can be so wonderful that it even smells good. It can be all that God intended it to be if we obey the principles He gives us. Making marriage marvelous is a matter of making sure the ingredients that Peter mentions in our text are mixed well into the relationship. As we inspect these ingredients take note of any that you lack, and do some shopping soon in the supermarket of God's abundant grace. Keep them on your prayer shopping list until you are well supplied. We want to concentrate on the ingredients which the wife is to add to the recipe for a marvelous marriage. One is a matter of external action, and the other is a matter of internal attraction. The visible and the invisible are both important. Let's

look first at-

I. EXTERNAL ACTION.

Peter says that what you do as a wife is far more important than what you say. A woman's behavior has a powerful impact on a man even if he is an unbeliever. Peter knows he is writing to many women who are married to men who are not Christians. He says that by beautiful behavior they can win their husbands even without saying a word. Nowhere is it more true than in marriage that actions speak louder than words. So often wives try and convince their husbands by argument that the Bible is true. They are very seldom successful because it is hard for any man to admit that his wife has more good sense than himself. He will not be overly impressed if a religious experience changes his wife's vocabulary, but he will be impressed if it changes his behavior.

Many women do not like the action and behavior that Peter recommends, but when it is understood it is not hard to swallow. Submissiveness frightens a lot of women. They often think this is degrading for a wife. It seems to deny her equality, and it makes her a slave to the male chauvinist. This is a total misunderstanding of the principle involved. Jesus did not grasp at equality with the Father. He humbled Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant. He was obedient even unto the death of the cross. The result was that God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above all names that at His name every knee should bow. The way of submission is the way to sublime exaltation. The wife who fulfills God's role, and is submissive to her husband will soon be on a pedestal of admiration. He will not treat her as mere equal, but as a precious gift far superior to what he is worthy to possess.

The principle of submissiveness is far more effective than the strategy of women's lib. Peter says that even a non-Christian

husband will find it hard to remain an unbeliever if his wife lives with him in submissiveness. Peter is not guilty of a blind and unrealistic optimism. He does not say this is fool proof and will work in every case. He says wives should so live that some may be won by this means. Paul was all things to all men that by all means he might win some. Not all are saved because Christ died for all, and not will be won even if Christian wives obey Peter's advice, but the Christian wife is obligated to try.

It is of interest to note that Peter does not say anything about husbands with non-Christian wives. The implication is clear that right from the start it was easier for women to become Christians than for men. Women can respond to the Gospel on the basis of hearing. Faith comes by hearing to the feminine mind, but men are more skeptical and demand evidence more than women, and that is why the actions of Christian women are such a vital part of evangelism. Satan knew that the best way to influence a man was through a woman, and that is why he went to Eve first. In God's plan women are also leaders who influence men to follow Christ by being living examples of the power that comes through yielding to His lordship.

Jesus said that the servant is the greatest of all, and if women could only see that submission is the means by which they take first place they would not resist the role that makes them the key to God's best. The more the church, as the bride of Christ, submits to Christ, the more power she has to fulfill the will of God. The call to submission is not to degrade but to enrich and exalt. This same principle operates in marriage. Of course there are abusive husbands where submission can be a participation in their evils, but this is not to make the normal marriage be one where this principle is neglected, for it is the way to victory. A wife is not to strive for mere equality, but to aim for a much higher goal where she is exalted because of her submission. When she is pleasing to her

husband by her actions which make him happy, he will exalt her and follow her leading even into the kingdom of God. Shakespeare's Katherine, who was the tamed shrew, finally came to this realization and said,

I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love, and obey.

The idea of obey rubs women the wrong way, but it is only because of the false image of a master and slave. This is not the image of the Bible. Jesus did not obey the Father out of necessity as one who was bound to do what He did not want to do. He chose to obey the Father, and we are to choose to obey Christ, and the wife is to choose to obey the husband as an act of love. There are many exceptions where the wife ought never to obey the husband when he wants her to disobey God, or her own conscience. We are dealing here with the issue of cooperation where the wife gladly goes along with the husbands goals and seeks to be a helpmate. She is a helper and not one who hinders his goals, and the result is he is happy with her, and will honor her for this role. Jesus was not degraded by His obedience to God, and we are not degraded by obedience to Christ, and any idea that a wife is somehow degraded by obeying her husband is contrary to all that the Bible means by obedience. To obey is to be exalted, and that is the only kind of obedience the Word of God expects of a wife. Any obedience and submission that degrades her is not God's will.

Peter holds up Sarah as an example of a submissive wife. She was married to Abraham who was a very godly man, but it was not easy. He pulled up stakes often and was a wandering man. He got her involved in some foolish lies to protect himself and almost had her ending up in another man's harem. He did some foolish things, but

still became a great man because of having a submissive wife. The facts of history make it clear that most great men of God are that because of the partnership they have with submissive wives. We can paraphrase the well known poem and say,

**Wives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.**

Take Emma Revell Moody for example. Who ever heard of her? Her husband was D. L. Moody who turned both England and America upside down for Christ. People all over the world know of and read the works of Moody the great evangelist. But what would he have been without his partner Emma? He met her when she was just 17, and she became a Sunday School teacher in a mission he was starting. She got a good education and was a public school teacher. Moody never finished his education, however, and had handicaps because of it. His wife was a major helper and instructed him all his life. They had three children, and one of the two sons paid her this tribute: "To you, father owed such an education as no one else could have given him." The other son, who was a Presbyterian pastor wrote, "My father's admiration for her was as boundless as his love for her. Till the day of his death he never ceased to wonder two things-the use God had made of him despite what he considered his handicaps, and the miracle of having won the love of a woman he considered so completely his superior."

She did everything for Moody. She wrote all of his letters, and handled all his money. She paid the bills and dozens of things that he might be free to do what God called him to do. Her submission to her husband's authority and goals, even though she was superior to him in many ways, did not degrade her, but made her one of the greatest influences in Christian history. She made her marriage a

marvelous tool for the kingdom of God, and millions were added to the kingdom because of her submission.

Submission is not always easy even with a godly man, and it can be near torture with an ungodly man, but the principle is universal. The hope for a happy marriage lies in a wife's ability to be a good vice-president. Sometimes a president is absent, sick, or unable to function, and the vice-president has to be able to take over the duties of the president. The vice-president has to be equal with the president, and be ready to take over, but also have the added virtue of being a servant of the president. Such is the role of the wife in marriage. She is capable of being president, but her primary task is to help the president be successful in his task, and her submissive behavior is the means to this end. To be equal and yet submissive is exactly what we see in Christ. This means the wife has the most Christlike role in marriage. Lets look briefly at the second point which is-

II. INTERNAL ATTRACTION.

Peter urges wives to focus on the inner beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit. To be gentle and quiet rather than aggressive and loud is to be submissive. But where is the power in that to change life for the better? Gary Smalley in his book The Joy Of Committed Love tells of Mike and Gail. Their only competition was who hates who the most. They had no love for each other, or their two children. Mike went to a bar after work, and spent his night with other women. He came home late at night drunk, and he and Gail would have violent fights. Gail's only dream was to save up enough money to leave him.

A friend got hold of Gail and showed her this idea of Peter's about a gentle and quiet spirit. She was persuaded to try it. The first week nothing happened, but the second week she saw Mike begin to

change in response to her radical change in behavior. They began to fall in love all over again. And now for over two decades they have helped many hundreds of other couples make the same discovery of the power of gentleness and quietness. These feminine qualities of life are not weak, but very powerful. Submission can conquer where aggression can never win. It is the tool by which a wife becomes a queen and not a slave. Submission is power, and it is folly to avoid it by thinking it is a form of weakness. It is the very power that is the basis for our salvation.

Jesus taught that the one who wants to be the greatest will need to learn how to be a servant. The wife who learns the power of submission and service will be the greatest leader in the marriage. All the ideas that make this issue of submission negative to women are a distortion. It is simply being Christlike in a way that will lead to exaltation. When seen in relation to Christ's spirit of submission it becomes the noblest of virtues. If a husband does not respond to a wife's submission by exalting her and making her delighted to submit, then he is the one failing to fulfill his role as a husband. He is in the place of God the Father in the relationship, and just as God exalted Jesus for His submission and obedience, so the husband is to do for the wife. If he does this, he fulfills his role and makes the marriage marvelous. If your marriage is not marvelous, one of you, or both of you, are not playing the role that God has ordained. Each partner doing their part, as Peter commands, will be daily making their marriage marvelous.

11. HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL HUSBAND I Peter 3:7

The question was asked of a class of Catholic girls-"What is matrimony?" One girl confidently stood and said, "Matrimony is a state of terrible torment which those who enter are compelled to

undergo for a time to fit them for heaven." "No, no," said the priest, "You have given the definition of purgatory."

"Let her alone," said the Archbishop, "Maybe she's right." Her definition of the word was wrong, but her description of the experience of many in the state of marriage was right. Matrimony can be a purgatory rather than the paradise God intended it to be.

Marriage can produce a paradise, or it can produce a paradise to ashes by means of the fires of conflict. Marriage is a paradox. It can be the best or the worst state. We commit ourselves in marriage for better or for worse because both are equally possible. Conflict is just as real a potential as cooperation. There are those who tell us that even conflict can have its values, and there is truth in this perspective. What of the couple who reached the height of their argument, and the wife exploded, "I wish I'd taken mother's advice and never married you." The husband said, "Do you mean to say your mother tried to stop your marrying me?" She nodded. "Well now," sighed the husband, "How I've wronged that woman." Whatever value was gained, it is doubtful that the quarrel can be counted a positive factor in marriage bliss, even if there are poets who claim it is so.

O we fell out, my wife and I,
O we fell out, I know not why,
And kissed again with tears.
And blessing on the falling out
That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love,
And kiss again with tears.

The only reason there is any truth to this poetry is because some mates only show affection to each other when they make up. Just like some children can only get attention by causing a disturbance, or by getting in trouble. It is not the conflict that is of any value, but

the peace settlement, and the kiss of peace. Anyone with a taste for kissing, however, knows that its better without any salty sauce from the eyes. Kissing again with tears is not a gourmet delight. Far superior is the relationship where affection does not depend on conflict.

I read of a wise man who quarreled with his wife during their 50th year of wedded life. He tucked this note under his wife's pillow. "My darling bride, let's put off quarreling until after the honeymoon is over. Your devoted husband." Here was a husband who took the high road to marital bliss by avoiding quarrels instead of the low road of squeezing some value out of conflicts. Carlton could write-

**And if ever we meet in heaven
I shouldn't think it queer
That we loved each other the better
For the way we quarreled here.**

**My response is- When we meet in heaven
I should think it odd
If we loves each other better
For disobeying God.**

It is always true that God can bring good out of evil, but it is never wise to do evil in the hopes that good will come of it. Our objective as Christians and as mates is to live in harmony and never desire discord. What Paul says to Christians in general applies to mates in particular. In Eph. 4:31-32 he wrote, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Following this path will lead to successful marriage, and Peter

tells husbands how they can be successful in seeing that their marriage follows this path. Any husband who will follow Peter's advice will not only be a successful husband, but he will be an exceedingly happy husband. Any wife whose husband treats her with the respect involved in what Peter says in this one verse will lavish upon him more devoted love than all the harem of Solomon. What does Peter say a husband must do to be successful? He must first-

I. RESPECT HER EXISTENCE AS A PERSON.

Peter says the husband is to be considerate as he lives with his wife. This means that a husband is to care about what his wife needs as a person to make her life fulfilled. She is a person who has special needs and desires, and it is a husband's obligation to know what they are. To ignore another's needs is to lack respect for them as persons. Wives need to be treated as people worth understanding. Phillips translation puts it, "You husbands should try to understand the wives you live with." The NEB has it, "You husbands must conduct your married life with understanding."

Peter clearly implies that it is possible for a man to understand a woman. Peter has a high view of the perceptive powers of the male. He says these powers are to be applied in marriage. Someone said there are two periods in a man's life when he feels it is impossible to understand a woman. One is before marriage, and the other is after. Peter does not agree. It may take more than a grain of faith to remove the mountain of doubt that has accumulated in the minds of men on this issue, but it can be removed. The Gospel according to Peter is that wives can be understood, and not only by experts who study them and write books about them, but even by their husbands.

This opens up a great hope for marriage from a Christian perspective. For most of history men have not been able to treat

women as equals because they could never accept them as persons. They never tried to understand the needs of wives, but only the function whereby wives met the needs of husbands. Christianity raised the level of women from possessions to persons who are created in the image of God, and endowed with intelligence, and great potential as children of God. Understanding this makes a Christian husband desire to treat his wife in a manner worthy of a person made in the image of God.

D. H. Lawrence in one of his assorted articles wrote, "Man is willing to accept woman as an equal, as a man in skirts, as an angel, a devil, a baby-face, a machine, an instrument, a bosom, a womb, a pair of legs, a servant, an encyclopedia, and ideal or an obscenity; the one thing he won't accept her as is a human being, a real human being of the feminine sex." Peter says a Christian husband is obligated to rise above this historical hang up of men.

Before marriage men tend to see women as persons, and they treat them as such. They are aware of the needs of the female to be appreciated. They are free with compliments, and they give them undivided attention. Marriage, however, often causes a man to regress. He ceases to think of his wife as a real person. He ceases to live with her with a considerate attitude. He takes her for granted as part of the total machinery of life. She keeps the wheels of life rolling in the home. He forgets that she is a person who needs to feel loved and appreciated. She needs to talk and be heard. Helen Rowland complained, "Before marriage a man will lie awake all night thinking about something you said; after marriage he'll fall asleep before you finish saying it. Its as hard to get a man to stay home after you've married him as it was to get him to go home before your married him."

When husbands do this it is because they have ceased to be considerate. They are not thinking of their wife as a person but as a

possession. Peter says don't do that, but respect her as a person. Everything you gain in terms of fulfillment in the world of your job she must gain through you, and this is often just as true for wives who work. A wife needs a husband who makes her feel important. She needs compliments and encouragement. She needs to feel she has value, and only a husband can adequately meet these needs. Listen to the tribute of a wife to her husband who succeeded in doing this. Jessie Rittenhouse wrote,

My debt to you, beloved,
Is one I cannot pay,
In any coin of any realm
On any reckoning day:
For where is he shall figure
The debt, when all is said,
To one who makes you dream again
When all the dreams were dead?
Or where is the appraiser
Who shall the claim compute,
Of one who makes you sing again
When all the songs were mute?

When we respect individuals as persons we make an effort to be interested in them, and in their interests and problems. Often a husband tends to lose interest in anything his wife does. It is often just boring to him. He's like the man standing at a fork in the road when a woman tourist stopped and asked if it made any difference which road she took to Vermont? He replied, "Not to me." Indifference like this towards one's mate is a common fault of husbands. The saying is true that a wife with good horse sense doesn't nag, but often her nagging is a desperate attempt to break through her husband's wall of indifference.

If a husband lives in respect for his wife as a person he will avoid

many of those problems that develop because of indifference. In a moment of bitterness a husband said to his wife, "You should have married a better man." She replied, "I did." If a husband will respect his wife the way he did before they married he will be a successful husband. The way to get ahead is to go back to how you were when you first met. The second thing he must do is-

II. RESPECT HER EQUALITY AS A PARTNER.

Peter says you are joint heirs of the gracious gift of life. There is equality of the sexes as partners in the business of life. A husband cannot produce life by himself, nor does he receive more grace from God than does his wife. She is an equal partner in both. The inequality she has of being the weaker sex physically is not a disadvantage for her, for Peter says that her weakness is to call forth greater honor from the husband. Just as you treat your china better than you do your everyday dishes, so a wife is to be treated with greater care because of her delicacy. Peter says that wives are marked as fragile, and husbands should handle them with care. The greater strength of a man is for the protection of the female, and not for domination.

The inequalities of the sexes are only temporary, and are for the purpose of fulfilling different functions, but the equalities of the sexes are permanent. It is like the trinity. Each of the three Persons in the Godhead have different roles to play in the plan of salvation. Jesus took on the weakness of human flesh, and He gave up equality with the Father. This was only temporary, however, for He was then restored again to the equality that is eternal. In the things that really matter for eternity husbands and wives are equal. When a child is born they are parents as equal partners. They are equal as joint heirs in the kingdom of God. In Christ there is neither male or female. God does not have one standard of salvation and rewards for wives, and another for husbands. They are one in Christ, and

husbands are to respect this equality and treat her as an equal partner.

When two become one in marriage they become a new whole. It is not a 50-50 relationship, but each is a 100% partner. There is no division for you cannot divide a living thing. Solomon was going to cut the baby in half and give each of the feuding mothers a half. That was a 50-50 compromise. If you are dealing with butter or milk or anything that is a matter of quantity you can divide it, but qualities of life are indivisible and cannot be divided. The true mother knew that half a baby is no baby at all, and so she prevented the division. In marriage the partners must see they are one in such a way that there can be no division. Mathematics does not apply in the realm of quality. In marriage one plus one does not equal two, but one. As in the trinity there is a oneness of unity where one plus one plus one equals one, and not three.

If two people enjoy the same music they do not share it 50-50. The husbands does not enjoy 50% of it, and the wife another 50%. They each enjoy the whole of it, and are 100% partners in the qualities they enjoy. There oneness and partnership is such that any failure in the marriage is a failure of the whole, and not just of one partner. If a fuse burns out, you do not try and figure out which side of the seal is to blame. It is a one piece and only has two sides because it burned out. If husbands will respect the equality of their wives as partners, and treat them accordingly, there will be greater communication and a deeper sense of oneness. A wife who is respected as a person and as a partner will not find it hard to obey her role of being submissive. It will, in fact, be pure pleasure. A successful husband is one whose wife enjoys her role in the partnership of marriage. If she doesn't there is something missing that robs her of that joy, and likely it is the lack of respect she receives from her husband. Thirdly Peter says,

III. RESPECT HER EXCELLENCE AS A PRAYER PARTNER.

Peter implies that mates are so much one that a husband cannot even be successful in his spiritual life without his wife. A husband who assumes that he can serve God and go forward in the service of Christ without reference to the way he treats his wife has an inadequate concept of marriage. Peter says a right relationship to your wife is essential to a right relationship to God. If you do not communicate with your wife, and live with her according to these principles, God may refuse to answer your prayers. God will not listen to the prayers of a man who will not listen to the pleas of his wife.

God is a God of justice, and He does not reward injustice. If you refuse to meet the needs of your wife as a person, and as a partner, it would be wrong for God to reward you by meeting the needs you look to Him to meet. You need your wife as a prayer partner to be effective in prayer. Marriage is not a mere secular matter unrelated to the spiritual life of the believer. Marriage is a religious experience, and it affects your relationship to God. Prayer is no automatic matter like a machine where you put in your money and get what you request with no questions asked. Before God responds to your requests He takes a look at your relationship to your wife. If you disrespect the image of God in her, it will hinder your prayers.

God may want to grant many requests of men, but He will not do it because their home life is not worthy of such favor. Unanswered prayer is not always because God does not want it to be, but because it would be unfair to grant it to one who has little or no respect for the needs and desires of his wife. If, for example, you refuse to forgive your wife for some folly whereby she has offended you, you have no ground of hope in Scripture to believe that God will forgive you as long as you withhold it from your mate.

God will not put His stamp of approval on the husband who lives like the man in the moon. The moon shines bright on one side, but is dark and cold on the other. If a man is all bright and smiles before the world, but dark and cold toward his wife in the home, he injures his relationship to God, and is the stumbling block in the road to having his own prayers answered. Few husbands ever think of it, but Peter says a good relationship to your wife is essential to a good relationship with God. The bottom line of all that Peter is saying is that a man who respects his wife in the same way that he respected her when they first met will be a successful husband.

12. RESPECT IN THE HOME based on I Pet. 3:7-12

Waren Webster, missionary to Pakistan, tells of his first attempt to be friendly to the children who came to watch him as he tore a crate apart to rebuild it as a desk. He said, "Hello," and they frowned and ran. He felt disappointed, but later they came back and he said it again, and again they took off like a shot. He was puzzled, and later he asked an English speaking Palestinian what was happening. He explained to him that in their language the sound of hello meant scam, get out of here. In our culture it is a friendly sound, but in that culture it is the sound of hostility and rejection.

Communication of love is often very complex in the world of cross-cultural ministry. When Webster preached his first sermon to the people they began to laugh and giggle, and he was preaching a serious message on the feeding of the 5000. He had to ask again what was going on, and he got another lesson on the fine points of the language. There are two words very much alike. The word for fish is kurady, and the word for lizard is kirady. When he told of the lad who gave him lunch he said that he had 5 loaves and 2 lizards.

They were laughing first at what kind of a mother would pack such a lunch. He said it was a sacrifice, but anybody would be glad to give it away, and it was no wonder that there were 12 baskets left over, for no one could imagine who would eat the stuff.

That slight difference in the sound of one word turned his serious sermon into a stand-up comedy routine. It is a very humbling experience to try and communicate across cultural barriers. You wonder why anybody ever tries, but the reason is simple. They do so because Jesus said go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. If Christians are to honor their Lord's final command, they have no choice but to tackle the tough job of cross-cultural communication. We also help pay for the very expensive job of teaching missionaries the language of the people where they are going to serve. It is all costly and time consuming, but it is done because of respect for the command of Jesus.

To forsake the task of fulfilling the Great Commission would be to dishonor our Lord and lose respect for His will. The theme of honor revolves around Jesus in the New Testament. Paul, Peter, and John used the word honor frequently as they exalt Jesus as the one who was worthy of honor, glory, and power forever and ever. It is the theme song of heaven that Jesus is worthy of honor. The Greek word to describe the honor of Christ is time. It is the same spelling as our word for time. This word translated honor 32 times in the New Testament means the worth one ascribes to a person. In I Tim. 2:7 where Peter, referring to Christ, says, "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious." The Greek word for precious is time.

This word for honor can mean precious, for that is the value you can place on a person. They can be precious to you, and if you honor Christ He will be precious to you. This is a word you use to describe someone you treasure. They are worthy of honor, praise,

and your highest respect, because you value them and esteem them highly, and you long to dignify them with your devotion. It is no wonder that such a powerful word is used most often for the honor we are to give to Christ. But it is a wonder when the same word is used to describe how we are to relate to one another within the family. When Peter says in I Peter 3:7 that husbands are to treat their wives with respect, that is the word time. It is the same word used of the honor and respect we are to show Christ.

The very dignity you ascribe to your Lord you are to give to your mate. This does not mean we worship our wives, but it means we are to treasure them as one of our most precious gifts. We are to treat them like we do a new car that we do not want to get scratched or dented. They are of great value and we do not want to see them damaged. We have paid a great price to possess the car, and so why should we not long to preserve its value and beauty. Many a wife would love to be treated with the respect her husband gives to his new car. But instead, she often feels like a junker, for he does not seem to care about keeping her feeling good about herself by building her self-image, which he could do by ascribing to her the worth she is to him.

We honor dignitaries and people of power, wealth, and popularity, but the greatest responsibility we have is to honor the people God has given to us to be our family. The family is a mini kingdom with rulers and followers, and with power, rank, and responsibility. In this kingdom all are to be honored and respected for their role in the kingdom. If we can succeed in respecting each member of this kingdom of the home, we will have succeeded as kings and queens of an empire that may not be important to man, but one of great importance to God.

In Ex. 20:12 God's command to children is that they honor their father and mother. The honor and respect due to kings, and to God

himself, is also due to parents. Within the family of God each member is to treat the other members with respect. Paul used this same word time in Rom. 12:10: "Honor one another above yourselves." We have not exhausted the study of this word, but one thing is evident, and that is where Christ is present a high sense of honor and respect will characterize all who are aware of his presence. In other words, if we open our home to Christ and become aware of His presence, we will be a people who develop a greater respect for one another. We would not throw rocks through a stained glass window, nor wipe our shoes on a communion table. We respect these material things because they are connected with Christ. How much more should we respect and treasure persons in whom Christ dwells?

The ideal home is one where every member of the family is treated like royalty with each esteeming the other higher than themselves. This is an ideal, of course, and we are consistent of falling short of it, but that is the way it will be in eternity where we will be like Christ, and be able to truly show honor to whom honor is due. The reason it is so hard to respect people we live with is because we know them too well. We can easily show respect and give honor to some foreign dignitary we don't know from Adam because we don't know him from Adam. We don't know that he snores at night; leaves his socks on the floor, and forgets to put the cat out. Our ignorance is bliss, and so we honor the man even if his wife is a nervous wreck because of his bad manners. Closeness and familiarity do breed contempt because we know too much to honor those whose flaws are so obvious to us.

The problem with this is that it can lead us to the power of negative thinking where we miss out on God's best because of our misconceptions. Jesus said that a prophet has no honor in his own country. He could not do much in His home- town of Nazareth because He was known. They refused to give a hometown boy the

honor He deserved, and the result was, they lost out on the wonder of His miracles. We think the same about our family so often. We know our mates and children too well, and so we deny them the honor and respect they need. By so doing we lose the potential of what they might be had they gotten the respect they needed in order to be their best.

Instead of saying, "What good can come out of Nazareth," our goal should be to be to reverse this natural pessimism and begin to look at the members of our family like Jesus does. He sees each one of us, not just for what we are, but for what we can be. Jesus does not necessarily respect the actual, but He does respect the potential. This is why He became our Savior. He did not die for us because we were so good. It is yet while we were yet sinners that He died for us. Jesus does not save anyone because of what they are, but because of what they can be. He showed great respect for the harlot, the Publican, and other sinners. He did them the honor of talking with them, eating with them, and entering their homes. It was not because He loved what they were, but because He loved what they could become. Every sinner is a potential saint, and so He saved the sinner for the sake of the saint.

In the presence of Christ this is how we will treat people if we are aware of His presence. If we open our home to Christ, it means we will treat each other in the home with honor and respect. This does not mean we have to praise their flaws, and pretend they are pleasant when they are rotten. Since all people tend to be selfish, this is a major problem with all family members. Mother scolded, "How many times have I told you to share your toys with your brother?" The older brother replied, "I am doing it mom. I'm using the sled going down hill, and he's using it going up." It's hard to respect this kind of 50-50 sharing.

There are a lot of things hard to respect about children. One

baby sitter said to the late arriving parents, "Don't apologize. I wouldn't be in any hurry to come home either." Bad behavior is not what Jesus respected in anyone. Jesus never honored anyone for their sin or folly. He did not respect any kind of behavior but righteous behavior, but He did respect people who fell short of righteousness. If you don't do this, there is no one left to respect. Christ expects us to respect persons because it is by means of respect that persons are motivated toward the potential that God has in mind for them. People need to be respected to bring out the best in them, and this is especially true for the people in our family. Let's consider for example-

I. RESPECT FOR CHILDREN.

Children are so often a nuisance and a distraction from adult goals. This led even the disciples of Jesus to treat them without respect. They tried to keep children from bothering the master. But Jesus had a great respect for children, and He told them to stop it and let the children come to Him. Jesus gave honor to children by giving them access to His presence, and by using their childlike faith as an example to adults. "You must become like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus. We could argue that Jesus was never married and never had to endure the trials of the terrible two's, the traumatic teens, or the temperamental twenties, but the fact is, Jesus helped His mother raise the other children after Joseph died. He did experience the trials of parenting.

Jesus did not have it made, for there was resistance to His authority. He did not have the respect He should have from His family. The Gospels tell us that they thought He was going crazy when He proclaimed Himself the Messiah. They did not believe Him until after the resurrection. He knew what it was like to live with children who saw life from a different perspective. Maybe He even had a Dennis the Menace brother to raise. I found this Dennis the

Menace prayer that reveals just how different a perspective can be. He prayed, "I got into a good fight with Tommy. Mrs. Wilson chased me home again, and Margaret said she hates me. Thank you Lord for another perfect day." Jesus was not blind to this side of childhood, but He saw beyond the actual to the potential, and this demanded that children be respected as persons of worth.

Modern studies reveal that the one factor that all successful and stable adults have in common is a sense of self-esteem they developed in childhood. Dr. Stanley Coopersmith of the University of California did a study of 1,748 boys that ran for 6 years. He found that social class, ethnic background, and outside environment played only a minor role in building self-esteem. A child's attitude toward himself is formed primarily within the home. As his parents see him, so he will see himself. If we are aware of the presence of Christ in our home, we will be conscious of the need to respect our children, and do these things Jesus would do to build their self-esteem. Dr. Coopersmith discovered these three things about successful parenting:

- 1. First of all love was expressed and felt. He writes, "It was a love expressed in respect and concern for each child. When the child feels he is respected and the object of parental pride, he sense he is a person of significance."**
- 2. Secondly, the parents do not pretend to be perfect, but share with their children in the struggle of failure and guilt. They let the child know they are loved even though they are sinners, and that self-esteem need not be destroyed because they fail.**
- 3. Thirdly, good parents help their teens believe they will make it as adults. Teens fear the future, and they are full of self-doubt. This is not the time to say that they will never amount to anything. That is just what they fear. They need a family who has faith in them to spur them on to fulfill their potential.**

The key to a healthy family is respect. Each member of the family must respect the worth of the others and seek to build that worth rather than diminish it. If we are aware of the presence of Christ in our home, we will not degrade our children and treat them as worthless and insignificant. Parents need to work constantly in making their children feel valuable as persons. This means listening to them, and letting them have some say in decision making. It means being sensitive to their feelings so that you do not condemn them in front of their friends. Even discipline needs to be done in such a way as to preserve their dignity and self-respect.

Parents need to make a conscious effort to try and see life from their child's perspective. Children tend to be very literal minded, and this leads to some strange communication. A small girl heard that the neighbors had fired their cook, and for weeks she lived in fear of them thinking they had set their poor cook on fire. A mother told her boy to be sure to look up and down before he crossed the street. He faithfully looked up to the sky and then down to the curb, but out of a natural sense of self-preservation he also looked to the right and to the left for cars. Parents sometimes think they are communicating with their children, but it is just like cross-cultural communications where what you think just is not so.

Respecting a child means seeking for feedback to know if what you say is understood on their level. Don't take things for granted, and don't assume they know the difference between things you mean and things you don't. Parents do not realize they are conditioning their children by their common expressions of frustration like: "You never remember anything." "You always forget everything." "You are such a klutz." Carelessness with our words can hurt a child's self-esteem. If you open your home to Christ, one of the evidences that you are growing in your awareness will be the attitude of respect you develop for your children.

Believe it or not, this spirit of respect begins to effect the child from the day of birth. Mothers and fathers relate to a child differently, and they experience different things, or the same things at different times. Mothers get nausea after a baby is conceived. Fathers do not experience this until they change their first diaper. There are a lot of differences, but one of the things that is the same is that both parents are constantly communicating a sense of respect or disrespect. Studies show that a baby receives many non-verbal messages before it understands language. A baby can feel whether or not the parent is holding it in love, out of duty, or with feelings of resentment. They can feel if the holder enjoys their presence or not. We are broadcasting feeling messages from day one.

Respecting a baby means to get your act together, forget your frustrations and other problems, and concentrate on communicating love to the baby. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If you are full of negative thoughts when you care for your baby, you are conveying negative vibrations to the child. The second point we want to focus on is really the first, but I want to close with it in order to impress on our minds that it is the foundation for a happy home.

II. RESPECT FOR OUR MATES.

F. J. Sheed in his book Society And Sanity makes a profound statement when he says, "In marriage reverence is more important even than love...A steady awareness in each that the other has a kinship with the eternal." In other words, even when you are not feeling very loving toward your mate you are to respect them as children of God. Loyalty to the royalty we have as children of the King is possible in the presence of Christ. We do not always live as children of the King, and so what we do is often not worthy of respect, but we must be consistent in recognizing respect for a person is not the same as condoning behavior, or approval of attitudes. We need to develop the ability to reject negative behavior

and attitudes without rejecting the person behind them.

This is touchy business, and we will probably never get it down pat in this life, but we must be ever working toward the goal of giving our mates a sense of security about our respect for them. Our security in Christ is based on the fact that we know He does not reject us because of what He does not approve in our behavior and attitudes. He is willing to forgive and respect us even when He rejects what we do. Parents have to establish this same relationship with children and with one another. The best partners are not those who married the best people, but those who bring out the best in the people they marry.

It scares me sometimes to think of what I would be like without Lavonne. She did not know before she married me just how many qualities I lack that make a man lovable to a woman. I was selfish with workaholic tendencies, and had little interest in the virtues of cleanliness, courtesy, and thoughtfulness. Had she dumped me before she got me half-way civilized she would have missed out on the pleasure of what she now has. But it was hard work. If there are still some rough edges, which we know there are, my wife isn't finished with me yet. What I am saying is, there is a cost involved in showing respect. The price you have to pay to respect your mate is the enduring of that less than their best as you seek to draw out their best. This is a time consuming process, and frequent failure is the norm, but this is what respect is all about.

Let's go back to that Greek word again, which is time. It has to do with the value you put on a person. If you value a person and treasure their worth you will pay a price for building a relationship with them. This word for respect is also used to refer to the price or value of something in the New Testament. You are bought with a price. We still use honor in this way in one context. We pay an honorarium to a guest speaker, and by this price we honor them by

saying that their service has been worthy of our respect, and so we share this with you to show that we value you. To respect and honor our mates means that we pay the price that is necessary to show them that we treasure them, and that we consider them of value and worthy of sacrifice.

Respect involves cost. To honor anyone you have to give them something. If it cost you nothing to relate to another there is little respect involved. The more you pay to relate to another, and the more it cost you to please them, the more you honor them. This is why courtship is such a time of romance. This is when all of one's resources are channeled toward the building of your relationship. Your time and money are consumed on one another. You feel treasured and of great value to one another. After marriage your resources need to go in many other directions, and this can lead to a loss of the sense of your worth to each other. Mates need to work hard at saving money and time so they can devote them solely to one another just as they did in courtship. This is part of the whole idea of respect and honor.

The cross is the perpetual symbol of just how greatly Christ treasured His bride the church, and how great a price He was willing to pay to purchase her and bring her to her full potential. We need symbols in our relationship as mates also. Maybe it's some special annual event or get away. Maybe its some weekly or monthly outing, but we need to work at paying a price to honor our mates. This is also the key element in respecting our children in giving them the best. Many will argue with psychiatrist Justin S. Green who wrote, "In my 25 years of practice, I have yet to see a serious emotional problem in a child whose parents love each other and whose love for the child was an outgrowth of their love for each other."

If you respect your mate, you are also respecting your Lord and

your children. This is supported by many modern studies. Delores Curran, a family specialist, asks 551 specialists who work with families to select out of 56 items those they felt were the key to healthy families. Respect came up as number 3. James R. Hine, professor of family relations and a marital therapist, did an intensive study of 50 couples over a period of years, and he concluded that mutual respect was one of the foundations for a happy and enduring marriage.

John Drescher, author of 27 books, says in his book If We Were Starting Our Marriage Over Again, "The more areas of respect, the more satisfying the marriage." There are no end to the authorities who will support the vital importance of respecting your mate to achieve God's best. Jesus respects His bride even though she is far from being without spot or wrinkle. He respects her potential and relates to her in grace by giving much that is not deserved. He relates in mercy and withholds judgment that is deserved.

To respect another person is to reflect to that person the presence of Christ. If we are living in the awareness of Christ's presence in our home, we will be asking often, "What would Jesus do?" This will help us to show respect and honor where we would fail going by our own feelings. May God help us bring this high level of respect into our homes.

13. THE AGE OF ANXIETY Based on I Peter 5:7

Almost every chapter of the New Testament was written to and for people who were having hard times. God knows that life is filled with trouble and anxiety, and so He gave us His word to be the ark to carry us through this world where the flood of sorrow never ceases. Where else can we find help and hope? So many modern

scholars have become pessimistic because of their rejection of God. Ernst Jungers in his essay Man In The Moon wrote, “I as a man on the moon, can no where find sense, being truly an icy lunar with its craters. Since I have given up seeking the point of my life, I am completely tormented.” The best that man can give us will be of no benefit when the flood strikes. The comforts of man’s theories of life are shallow. The coin of their comforts ring like wooden nickels in the hour of crisis.

Man wants an answer for his anxiety. He wants to be delivered from his dread and cured of his care. Joshua Leibman in his best seller Peace Of Mind wrote, “That men want peace is no private opinion of mine. Heap worldly gifts at the feet of foolish men, give me the gift of the untroubled mind.” Man wants peace, but where can he go? All the world has to offer is sounding brass and a tinkling symbol. There is only once source he can go to, and that is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. We want to focus our attention on verse 7 for His message of challenge and comfort.

I. THE REALITY OF ANXIETY IS RECOGNIZED.

The Bible does not escape problems by pretending they are not real. It recognizes that anxiety is very real and that even the Christian is in danger of falling into its grasp. We would not have to be told to cast our care upon Him if we had no care to cast. The Bible assumes that Christians, like all people, suffer with worry and anxiety in times of trouble. Anxiety comes from the root meaning to divide.” The anxious Christian is a divided personality and cannot give full devotion to Christ. Anxiety is to the personality what fever is to the body. It registers the presents of something foreign causing a reaction. Often we can no more help being anxious than we can help getting an infection.

Someone has said, “Anxiety will not empty tomorrow of its

sorrows, but it empties today of its strength. It does not enable you to escape the evil, but makes you unfit to cope with it when it comes.” Jesus told us that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. You will have all you can deal with each day without adding to the load worries about the future. Man has the power to imagine the worst, and so he is capable of anticipating the future, and it is the future that is the cause for so much anxiety. There is an old story of a man walking along with a heavy burden, and the angel of knowledge comes and says, “What are you caring?” The man said, “My worries.” “Let us examine them,” said the angel. So the man let down the load, and when they looked in the bag it was empty. “I don’t understand,” said the man. “I had two great worries that were so heavy I could hardly lift them.” “Yes,” said the angel, “but one was of yesterday, and it is gone. The other was of tomorrow, and it is not yet here.” We need to learn to bear only the worries of today, and then we need not bear such a heavy load. God will not give us burdens too great to bear, but if you take burdens beyond today, they are not God given.

Every person has a breaking point, and if you choose to worry about enough things anyone can destroy their peace of mind. If only we could learn to live for today as the hymn says.

I’ll live for today nor anxious be,
Jesus my Lord I soon shall see.

Sometimes when the sky of our life is dark and dreary we feel like the poet when he said:

Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years!
I am so weary of toil and of tears-
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain-
Take them and give me my childhood again!

But there is no escape from life's trials like that. The past is gone and we must face the present and the future with a greater power than that which seeks to crush us. The Bible recognizes the reality of anxiety and worry, but it also recognizes that faith in Jesus Christ is sufficient to gain the victory over all that the world can throw at us. Professor Royce of Harvard said, "Faith is the discovery of a Reality that enables one to face anything that can happen to one in the universe. Therefore, let us not bear the burdens of the future until they come, knowing that when they do His grace will be sufficient. Lady Teignmouth has put the words of Jesus in poetry from where He urges us-

**Oh, ask not thou, "How shall I bear
The burden of tomorrow?"
Sufficient for the day its care,
It's evil, and its sorrow.
Thy God imparteth, by the way
Strength that's sufficient for the day.**

A housewife can stand to do the dishes a day at a time, but if she were to see all the dishes she will have to wash for the rest of her life, she would want to give up. So it can be in the Christian life if one gets so concerned about what the future holds. The flower of faith can be choked out. Jesus in the Parable of the Sower told of some seed that actually began to grow but was then choked out because of the cares of the world.

One of the greatest concerns that the future holds for all of us is the concern about dying. Herman Feifel, a clinical and research psychologist wrote, "Life is not comprehended truly or lived fully unless the idea of death is grappled with honestly." Christians react different depending on their emotional makeup. George Foch wrote to his wife: "If you should hear that our cruiser was sunk and none were saved, then do not weep. The sea in which my body sinks is

nothing but the hollow of my Savior's hand and nothing can snatch me from it. Pages could be filled with the testimonies of Christians who faced death in calmness and peace. On the other hand, studies have shown that many Christians face death with great anxiety.

Dr. Paul Tournier in A Doctor's Case Book in The Light Of The Bible told of a near relative who opened her heart to him on her death bed. She said, "When I realized that death was not far off, I felt shattered and rebellious. I cried out inside of myself. No, I won't die, it isn't fair at my age. At the same time I was reproaching myself for these interior explosions. A Christian woman such as I ought to be accepting death quite differently. But it was too strong for me. I was kicking against death with everything I had. Dr. Tournier points out that the Bible does not condemn this attitude, but understands it. The Bible calls death the king of terrors and the last enemy to be destroyed. Jesus faced it with great strain, and so we see that the Bible recognizes the reality of the anxieties we face, but it doesn't just leave us there, for we see also in this 7th verse-

II. THE REMEDY FOR ANXIETY IS REVEALED.

How did Jesus face the dreadful future of mockery and crucifixion? He faced it with anxiety. But what did He do with it? He cast it upon His heavenly Father, and then went forth to bear it in perfect peace. The peace of Christ is not an escape from trouble and anxiety, but is a peace in the midst of it. Jesus humbled himself and God exalted Him. Anxiety comes from an unwillingness to submit to the providence of God. We will not say, "Thy will not mine be done." We cannot begin to find a cure for care and an answer for anxiety if we do not let go of our own plans and pride and submit to the will of God.

We must recognize the power of God, for we would not worry so much about what man is going to do if we recognized the power

of God. He is still doing wonders in the realm of creation. In 1918 an astronomer on Mt. Wilson watched the heavens declare the glory of God. At midnight a new star appeared glowing with increasing intensity, and in 36 hours it increased in brilliance 30 thousand times. Creation is constantly revealing God is at work. The poet used the words of Jesus to remind us of this.

**When we see the lilies spinning in distress,
Taking thought to manufacture loveliness;
When we see the birds all building barns for store,
'Twill be time for us to worry-not before.**

God is not only the mighty one who creates, He is the merciful one who cares. A leading psychiatrist said that most who comes to him "Lacked a sense of personal significance." They feel that they do not count in life. This never needs to be the feeling of the Christian, for God cares for you and considers you precious. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. St. Augustine said, "God loves everyone of us as though there were only one of us to love." Therefore, let all your anxieties fall upon Him.

**Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.**

Cast your care upon Him for He cares for you. Cast here means "To throw upon." There is more to it than just letting go and letting God. It takes effort for you have to cooperate with God. The birds are not fed without searching, nor would they keep from freezing if they did not obey their God given instinct to fly south. God expects us to do our part. We cannot cast on God the problems we can handle ourselves. Cast on Him the anxiety, but then get busy doing what you can do to change the cause of your anxiety. Jesus

said that we cannot add one cubit to our stature by being anxious, and so we must accept what cannot be changed.

A woman told me of an experience that she had with anxiety and granted me permission as an illustration. Her problem was nothing serious, but it was aggravating. There were two nails by a doorway on which the broom was hung. The wife used the lower nail, and when the husband used the broom he always put it back on the upper nail. This was disturbing to the wife until it dawned on her that this was a situation she could change. And what profound plan did she come up with to deal with her problem? She removed the upper nail, and her worries were over. Don't worry about what you can change. If you are walking around with a thousand dollars cash in your pocket, you will naturally have anxiety about its safety. All you have to do is put it in the bank and you can relax. Don't carry things around that create worry. Cast them on Him who cares for you.

**Cast thou thy care upon thy God;
The care that loads thy heart;
Take Him this moment at His word,
And let Him do His part.**

**Thy need is deep, thy care is great,
Thy burden hard to bear.
Role it on Him with all its weight,
And leave it resting there.**

Dr. Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission, was so burdened down with responsibility that he had very little soul rest until he learned to cast his care on God. When he learned this through a fresh meeting with God he said, "As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible or so difficult, but the weight and strain are all gone." This is what Jesus meant when He said that His

yoke was easy and His burden light. We have much to bear in many trials to face, but He carries the heaviest part, which is the cares and anxieties that we cast upon Him.

The remedy is not in escape, but in the power to see it through. Philips Brooks said, “Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks.” The power is available if we will only cast off the anxieties that sap our energy. Jesus is our example. When He said don’t worry about tomorrow and about food and clothing, He was not speaking as one who had no experience. Joseph died when he was young, and he had the responsibility fo providing for His family. He knew what it was to go through hard times, but we see him constantly going aside to cast His care upon His heavenly Father. Anxiety is real, but the remedy is real as well, if we will, like Jesus, cast all our cares upon Him who care for us.